

To Avoid, or Not to Avoid?

A quantitative study of the reasons for brand avoidance and how they take form in avoidance behaviors

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Abstract

The concept of brand loyalty has gained extensive attention from academia and from companies, in an attempt to understand what makes consumers loyal to a brand. There is however a lack of understanding of what makes consumers avoid a brand. The research field of brand avoidance has investigated reasons for why consumers avoid brands, but ignored how these reasons take form in behavior. This thesis aims to fill that gap by connecting how reasons for brand avoidance take form in avoidance behaviors. This thesis also investigates if the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior provides additional explanatory value in the relationship mentioned above, and if consumers are more or less willing to engage in avoidance behaviors depending on level of involvement. By using a quantitative questionnaire-based method, significant evidence was found for that experiential avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid purchasing the brand, and avoid the brand's stores. Identity avoidance was found to significantly take form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, and avoid the brand's stores. Deficit-value avoidance was found to significantly take form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand, and avoid the brand's stores. Moral avoidance was found to significantly take form as negative word-of-mouth and avoid purchasing the brand. Significant evidence was also found for that the social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior affects negative word-of-mouth and avoid considering the brand, and for that highly-involved consumers are more willing to engage in avoidance behaviors. These results provide valuable theoretical and managerial implications.

Keywords: Brand Avoidance, Avoidance Behavior, Subjective Norms, Level of Involvement, Persistency Over Time.

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List of Definitions

Brand Loyalty: A non-random behavioral response (such as a purchase) expressed over time by consumers with respect to one brand out of a set of similar alternative brands, and as the outcome of a decision-making process (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973).

Brand Avoidance: A phenomenon whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from, or reject a brand, despite having the financial means to purchase and ability to access that brand (Lee et al. 2009a, 2009b). It is persistent over time (Huefner & Hunt, 1992).

Experiential Avoidance: Occurs when a brand is not able to meet a consumer's expectations, in terms of poor performance, hassle factors and store environments (Lee et al. 2009a, 2009b).

Identity Avoidance: Occurs when a brand is not able to meet a consumer's self-identity. By avoiding the brand, the consumer moves away from an undesired self, a negative reference group, a lack of authenticity and deindividuation (Lee et al. 2009a, 2009b).

Deficit-value Avoidance: Occurs when a brand is perceived deficit in value, in terms of quality, price, aesthetics and celebrity endorsements (Lee et al. 2009b).

Moral Avoidance: Occurs when a brand has negative impact on the society, in terms of country-effects, hegemony, corporate irresponsibility and sustainability (Lee et al. 2009a, 2009b).

Avoidance Behaviors: How brand avoidance takes form in behavior, in terms of negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

Subjective Norms: The perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Level of Involvement: The extent to which a consumer is motivated to achieve a specific goal (Hoyer et al., 2013). In the context of brand avoidance, this goal is to not consume a particular product or service.

1. Introduction

In this section, the background and problem formulation will be presented. Based on this, a purpose and research questions will be presented. This will be followed by delimitations to define the scope of the study and expected contributions. The section ends with a disposition of the study.

1.1 Background

The cost of acquiring a new customer is estimated to be five to twenty-five times higher than that for retaining a customer (Gallo, 2014). With this in mind, it is reasonable that the concept of brand loyalty has gained extensive attention from academia (for example by Brakus et al., 2009; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Jacoby & Kyner, 1973) and from companies that strive to make consumers brand loyal. This can take form as loyalty programs, which provide consumers with incentives such as discounts and offerings, to increase customer retention and thereby profits (Sharp & Sharp, 1997). However, building brand loyalty among consumers is increasingly challenging, since it is determined by the complete customer experience across multiple interactions with a brand. Some even argue that consumers are not as brand loyal as before (McKinsey, 2014). Companies are nevertheless increasingly investing in loyalty programs, growing at a rate of 9 percent a year in the US, but less than every other consumer is actively participating in these (McKinsey, 2018).

Bill Gates once said that “your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning” (Walter, 2010). In this spirit, the research field of brand avoidance has emerged. Brand avoidance is defined as an act whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from or reject a brand, despite having the financial means to purchase and ability to access that brand (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b), and is persistent over time (Huefner & Hunt, 1992). It is seen as the antithesis to brand loyalty (Olivia et al., 1992). Within brand avoidance research, a brand is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional value constellation. Thus, a brand can be perceived differently by consumers (Lee et al., 2009a), opening up for various reasons for and behaviors of brand avoidance.

When interviewing consumers about brand avoidance, it is evident that consumers today take a stance against certain brands, although the reasons and behaviors vary. While one consumer feels a strong hate toward the fast-food brands McDonalds and Coca Cola due to their unethical behavior that constitutes a severe threat to public health in emerging markets (E. Ahlantzberg, personal communication, September 12, 2018), another consumer argues that fast-fashion

companies such as H&M do not deliver the requested quality and style in clothing, and that it is too much of an unsustainable wear and tear mentality (A. E. Wadelius, personal communication, September 16, 2018). Whereas the first consumer states that he talks negatively about the brands whenever he has the chance, the other consumer said that he avoids purchasing from the brand.

Given the current development of brand loyalty, there is a need to explore why consumers avoid certain brands. Having insights in the reasons for why consumers avoid brands, and how that takes form in behavior, will deepen the understanding of unhappy consumers and hopefully give companies indications on how to advance their business offerings to achieve customer retention. Yet, there is no evidence of how reasons for brand avoidance take form in avoidance behavior.

1.2 Problem Formulation

In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, where many different brands can satisfy consumers' needs (Swimberghe et al., 2014), the risk of being the avoided brand is bigger than ever before. It can even be argued that consumers that are loyal to one brand, simultaneously avoid all other brands within the same product category. The problem is that although significant resources have been used in attempting to understand what makes consumers loyal to a brand, there is a lack of understanding for how consumers avoid brands. Anecdotal evidence around consumers avoiding brands that they are not loyal to, is not sufficient. There is thus a need of further research on the reasons for brand avoidance, and how it takes form in avoidance behavior.

There has been limited research on brand avoidance within the field of anti-consumption, which aims to investigate reasons against consumption (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b), however four distinct areas have emerged. The first two areas consist of consumers that aim to reduce the general level of consumption (Iyer & Muncy, 2009), which often requires a radical change in lifestyle (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). *Global Impact Consumers* argue that consumption is causing irreparable damage to the earth's ecosystem, and that over-consumption by the wealthiest nations in the world is contributing to poverty problems in less developed nations or poorer classes in society. *Simplifiers* wish to exit the fast-paced and high-consumption society, and move toward a less consumption-focused lifestyle (Iyer & Muncy, 2009).

The second two areas within anti-consumption consist of consumers that aim to reduce consumption of specific brands, which is where the concept of brand avoidance fits in. These consumers can be viewed as the opposite to brand loyal consumers. Whereas brand loyalty is

characterized by a commitment to repurchase a brand due to its perceived superiority, anti-loyalty is characterized by a commitment to avoid purchasing a product of perceived inferiority (Olivia et al., 1992). *Market Activists* believe that brands are sing specific problems such as environmental degradation or negative social behaviors. *Anti-loyal Consumers* avoid brands for personal concerns, and these brands are often as personally and socially important to them as brands that they seek to purchase (Iyer & Muncy, 2009).

However, the current body of research on brand avoidance has focused on the reasons for consumers to avoid brands, and left out how these reasons take form in avoidance behaviors (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018; Knittel et al., 2016; Rindell et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b). To a large extent, it has simply been assumed that brand avoidance takes form as avoid purchasing a brand, while other avoidance behaviors have been ignored. When consumers engage in avoidance behaviors, they consistently behave unfavorably around the brand during the complete customer experience. It should therefore be of interest that consumers may engage in avoidance behaviors such as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand and avoid the brand's stores, in addition to avoid purchasing the brand. Furthermore, it has neither been investigated how social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior, nor if level of involvement with a product or service, affect the extent to which consumers engage in brand avoidance. These two concepts could nevertheless broaden the current state of knowledge within brand avoidance.

In the same way that brand loyalty is a component in positive customer-based brand equity, brand avoidance is a component in negative customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993). Negative customer-based brand equity decreases a company's effectiveness and efficiency in the marketplace, thus it could be a disadvantage for a company to possess a brand that consumers avoid (Lee et al., 2009b). As such, academia as well as companies should direct more attention toward brand avoidance than they do today.

1.3 Purpose

Based on the background and the problem formulation, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the current state of knowledge within brand avoidance. Therefore, this study will investigate the reasons for brand avoidance and how they take form in avoidance behaviors. Building upon this, the study will explore if the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior generates additional explanatory value in the relationship between brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. It will also be investigated if consumers are more or less willing to engage in avoidance behaviors depending on level of involvement, and if avoidance behaviors are persistent over time.

As follows, the research questions of this thesis are:

What are the reasons for brand avoidance?

How do they take form in avoidance behaviors?

1.4 Delimitations

In order to fulfill the purpose and answer the research questions, delimitations have been made. Firstly, this study is delimited to the Swedish consumer market, focusing on business-to-consumer brands. Secondly, this study is delimited to elaborate Lee's et al. (2009a, 2009b) framework of reasons for brand avoidance, consisting of experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance. The framework is considered as well-established within brand avoidance research, and is therefore suitable to connect to avoidance behaviors. However, this study will consider each reason for brand avoidance separately, while how they may co-explain an avoidance behavior is outside the scope of this study. This study is also delimited to the avoidance behaviors negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Thirdly, this study is delimited to connect Lee's et al. (2009a, 2009b) framework to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1973), to investigate if the variable subjective norms, capturing the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior, provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. Fourthly, this study is delimited to investigate if level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors mentioned above. Fifthly, the investigation of whether avoidance behaviors are persistent over time is delimited to examine behaviors one year from now. Lastly, this study is delimited to investigate brands that consumers themselves state that they actively

avoid. These brands operate within the industries fashion and make-up, tourism and transportation, entertainment and leisure, electronics, fast-moving consumer goods and groceries, and fast-food restaurants.

1.5 Expected Contribution

By answering the research questions, this study is expected to contribute theoretically by investigating how the reasons for brand avoidance take form in avoidance behaviors. This is expected to contribute to the current state of knowledge, since brand avoidance has not been connected to avoidance behaviors to date. By connecting Lee's et al. (2009a, 2009b) framework to the variable subjective norms (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1973), it will be investigated if subjective norms provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. This will contribute to the current state of knowledge, as prior research has not investigated brand avoidance with this variable, which is commonly used within consumer behavior research. This study is also expected to contribute to the current state of knowledge by investigating if level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors, and if avoidance behaviors are persistent over time. This have, to the authors' knowledge, not been investigated to date.

What is more, this study is expected to contribute methodologically by distributing the questionnaire that constitutes the base of this study both physically and digitally. As such, it will be investigated how different sampling approaches affect the quality of questionnaire responses, which should be of interest for future quantitative research. Lastly, this study is expected to contribute managerially by giving an understanding to companies regarding why and how consumers may avoid their brand. This should be of interest, since it is a disadvantage for companies to have a brand that consumers avoid.

1.6 Thesis Disposition

This study is divided into five main sections; Introduction, Theory, Methodology, Empirical Findings, and Discussion and Conclusion. The first section gives an introduction to the topic and presents the identified research gap that is of focus in this study. Hereafter, the purpose of the study is outlined together with the research questions. This is followed by delimitations and expected contributions. The second section outlines a literature review and a theoretical framework, which is used for the hypothesis generation. The third section outlines the scientific

approach of this study, and presents the pilot study and the main study. The section ends with a critical review of the data quality in terms of reliability, validity and replicability. The fourth section presents the empirical findings from the hypothesis testing. The last section analyses the empirical findings and connects these to the theoretical framework. Further, theoretical, managerial and methodological implications are outlined. Lastly, limitations and criticisms of the study is stated, and suggestions on future research are given.

2. Theory

In this section, a literature review of the current body of research is presented, and a theoretical research gap is defined. Based on this, a theoretical framework of avoidance behavior and brand avoidance is presented, from which hypotheses are generated and summarized.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as a non-random behavioral response (such as a purchase) expressed over time by consumers with respect to one brand out of a set of similar alternative brands, and as the outcome of a decision-making process (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973). Brand loyalty can take form as both purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. For example, purchase loyalty leads to greater market share, as the brand is continuously repurchased by loyal consumers. Similarly, attitudinal loyal consumers are willing to pay more for a brand because they perceive a unique value in the brand that no other brand can provide, allowing the company to charge a premium price (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The concept of customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand. Brand knowledge is composed by brand awareness and brand image, and these two concepts constitutes brand loyalty. As such, brand loyalty is an important component in customer-based brand equity. A brand is considered to have positive customer-based brand equity when consumers react more favorable to an element of the marketing mix for the brand's products or services than they do for the same marketing mix element for unbranded products or services. Customer-based brand equity can result in enhanced revenues, lower costs and higher profits (Keller, 1993).

2.1.2 Brand Avoidance

Brand avoidance is defined as a phenomenon whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from, or reject a brand (Lee et al. 2009a, 2009b), and is persistent over time (Huefner & Hunt, 1992). In Lee's et al. (2009a, 2009b) framework of brand avoidance, four reasons for brand avoidance are presented; experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance.

Consistent with the reasoning of brand loyalty and customer-based brand equity, brand avoidance that is persistent under a significant period of time can result in negative customer-based brand equity, as consumers consistently behave unfavorably around the brand (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). Specifically, a brand is said to have negative customer-based brand equity when consumers react less favorable to an element of the marketing mix for the brand's products or services than they do for the same marketing mix element for unbranded products or services (Keller, 1993). Lee et al. (2009b) develops this further by introducing the concept of market-based liability, which arises when a brand is avoided to the extent that it decreases the company's efficiency and effectiveness in the marketplace.

2.1.3 Avoidance Behavior

The existing body of research on brand avoidance has focused on reasons for why consumers avoid certain brands, but not on how that avoidance takes form in behavior. Closely related to brand avoidance is however the concept of anti-choices (Hogg, 1998) and inept sets (Narayana & Markin, 1975), which both explains why certain brands are not purchased. Hogg (1998) states that anti-choices include products and services that are not purchased because they are seen as incompatible or inconsistent with the consumer's preferences or choices. This refers to aversion, abandonment, and avoidance of brands. Building upon this, Narayana and Markin (1975) explains probable consumer behavior when consumers are faced with multiple brands. All brands that consumers know exist within a product category make up an awareness set. The inept set consists of brands that a consumer has rejected from his or her purchase consideration, and hence has decided to not consider purchasing at all.

2.1.4 Theoretical Research Gap

Existing theory maps out reasons for brand avoidance, however there is a gap in the existing theory of how brand avoidance takes form in avoidance behavior. This research aims to fill the theoretical research gap by firstly elaborating the reasons for why brand avoidance arises, and secondly how brand avoidance takes form in avoidance behavior.

What is more, the current body of research was conducted with the usage of a qualitative method, but this study is conducted with the usage of a quantitative method. Therefore, the concept of brand avoidance is connected to the classical consumer behavior model the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1973), which originally explains how attitudes toward a behavior and

subjective norms together shape an individual's behavioral intentions and behavior. This model has been used in various research fields, such as to explain brand loyalty (Lyong Ha, 1998).

However, the assumption in the Theory of Reasoned Action about the correlation between intention and behavior is argued to be oversimplified (Morwitz et al., 2007; Young et al., 1998), and attitudes are only 20 to 30 percent correlated to behavior (Dahlén et al., 2017). Moreover, the model's relationship between attitudes, intentions, and behavior isolates decision-making and neglects external factors such as environmental and situational effects on behavior (Fukukawa, 2003; Foxall, 1993). For these reasons, this study will only use the variable subjective norms, and investigate its influence on behavior.

Furthermore, prior brand loyalty research has found level of involvement to be a moderating variable (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Sirgy et al., 2008; Olsen, 2007; Yi & Jeon, 2003), but to the authors' knowledge, it has not been investigated in brand avoidance research. It is nevertheless likely that level of involvement will have a moderating effect on the relationship between brand avoidance and avoidance behavior.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Generation

2.2.1 Avoidance Behavior

The customer experience is the external and subjective response a customer has to any direct or indirect contact with a brand throughout the customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Direct contact occurs for example when considering a brand, purchasing a brand or spending time in the brand's stores, and is usually initiated by the customer. Indirect contact involves unplanned encounters with a brand. It takes form as word-of-mouth recommendations or criticisms among other things (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Brand avoidance can arguably occur during the complete customer experience. The theoretical framework will therefore include the avoidance behaviors negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

2.2.1.1 Negative Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth is a powerful source of information in the consumer marketplace. Negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) includes all negatively valenced, informal communication between consumers about a brand and the evaluation thereof (Wetzer et al., 2007). It often takes form as complaining

about a brand to friends and family (Blodgett et al., 1993). A dissatisfied consumer engages in negative word-of-mouth to find a referent that feel the same dissatisfaction, and to distance themselves from the brand (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). It can also be motivated by violations of the consumer's expectations (Blodgett et al., 1993), unsatisfying quality and price (Nguyen et al., 2015), and corporate wrongdoings (Zarantonello et al., 2016; Grappi et al., 2013).

2.2.1.2 Avoid Considering the Brand

As a result of no prior brand experience, an unpleasant brand experience or negative feedback, a consumer can exclude a brand from their purchase consideration set (Bogomolova & Millburn, 2012) and place it in their inept set (Narayana & Markin, 1975). One of the most common reasons for a consumer to not consider a brand of which they have no prior experience, is negative reactions to product or service attributes. Dissatisfaction of a product or service is the dominant factor for a consumer to not consider a brand they have experienced before (Bogomolova & Millburn, 2012). Besides this, a consumer can exclude a brand from their purchase consideration set if a brand is not perceived as authentic or associated with a favorable country-of-origin (Ballantyne et al., 2006).

2.2.1.3 Avoid Purchasing the Brand

According to Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty, consumers who stop purchasing from a brand engage in exit behavior. Dissatisfied consumers are likely to exit if problems they have encountered with a brand have been stable over time (Blodgett et al., 1993). The exit behavior can be motivated by service failures, inconvenience and pricing (Keaveney, 1995). What is more, consumers' negative perception of a brand and the people consuming it can cause consumers to exit the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Consumer can also exit a brand that is perceived as unethical (Creyer, 1997).

2.2.1.4 Avoid the Brand's Stores

If a consumer's expectations of a brand are not met, they will be dissatisfied and consequently avoid the stores of the brand (Huefner & Hunt, 1992; Hunt & Hunt, 1990). Store avoidance can be caused by lacking service, product quality or price (Huefner & Hunt, 1992). However, the length of store avoidance can be reduced if the service provided after a consumer complaint is perceived as satisfying (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). Consumers may further avoid a brand's stores if they perceive them as being higher or lower in social class than the consumer (Dickson & MacLachlan,

1990). Store avoidance can also be caused by a brand engaging in unethical practices or using unsustainable activities in the stores (Ailawadi et al., 2014; Rizkallah, 2012).

2.2.2 Brand Avoidance

Brands can be viewed to be multi-dimensional, thus there are several reasons for brand avoidance (Knittel et al., 2016). This study is based on Lee's et al. (2009a, 2009b) framework of brand avoidance, which is considered as the most extensive and widely used framework with in the field of research. As mentioned, the framework identifies four reasons for brand avoidance; experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance (Lee et al 2009a, 2009b). These variables are sufficient in their solitude to represent reasons for consumers to avoid a brand. All four variables in the framework have also gained robustness when being tested by Knittel et al. (2016) and Kim et al. (2013).

However, it can be argued that the framework does not capture all reasons for brand avoidance. In the pilot study, it was found that sustainability factors were of high relevance when engaging in avoidance behavior. Thus, this study develops the concept of moral avoidance, in accordance with Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher (2018) and Rindell et al. (2013), to include sustainability aspects.

2.2.2.1 Experiential Avoidance

Consumers have expectations of a brand when interacting with it (Grönroos, 2006). If the experience is congruent with the expectations of the brand, a consumer will be encouraged to repurchase from the brand. Conversely, if the brand is not able to meet the expectations, the consumer will be dissatisfied. Unmet brand expectations can be experienced via poor performance, hassle factors and store environments (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b).

Poor performance stands for the negative disconfirmation between what a consumer expects from a brand and what the brand actually delivers (Lee et al., 2009a). It can also derive from brand associations, and specifically when one brand association does not share meaning and content with another brand association (Leclerc et al., 1994). If a consumer experiences this disconfirmation, it can result in brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a).

Hassle factors are the inconvenience of being victim of the negative disconfirmation (Lee et al., 2009a). It derives from when a consumer has deal with the failure of a product, for example by raising complaints to receive a refund, exchange or repair (Zarantonello et al., 2016; Blodgett et al.,

1993). This may take too much time or energy for a consumer to value the effort as worth it, hence it can result in brand avoidance (Knittel et al., 2016).

A store environment can generate a negative store experience (Lee et al., 2009a), caused by a dissatisfaction of the store and unfriendliness in the store (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). During this negative store experience, a consumer develops non-favorable opinions and feelings toward the store, which transforms into negative brand perceptions (Oxenfeldt, 1974). This creates a desire to leave the store and not return (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

From the reasoning above, experiential avoidance is theorized to constitute of poor performance, hassle factors and store environments. As such, it is hypothesized that experiential avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

H1: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.2.2.2 Identity Avoidance

Consumers construct their identity and express themselves through the brands they use (Aaker, 1999). What is more, disidentification theory suggests that consumers develop their self-identity and self-image through disidentifying with brands perceived to be conflicting with their own values and image (Bhattachar & Elsbach, 2002). Hence, consumers avoid brands they perceive associate them with negative values and meanings (Banister & Hogg, 2004). Thereby, consumers move away from an undesired self, a negative reference group, a lack of authenticity, or a loss of individuality (Lee et al., 2009a).

A consumer can avoid a brand due to it being congruent with the undesired selves. The view of the self is a dynamic construct involving multiple possible selves with either positive or negative

end states (Hogg et al., 2009). These selves provide an evaluative context for the current view of the self, motivating people to approach desirable possible selves and to avoid undesirable ones. Thus, negative or rejected possible selves function as a direction for avoidance behaviors.

A negative reference group consists of a group of people whose behavior and opinion a consumer does not want to conform to (Burnkant & Cousineau, 1975). Building on the notion of undesired self, consumers can avoid a brand that associates them to a negative reference group (Lee et al., 2009a). However, the negative reference group may be harder for a consumer to specify than the undesired selves, since it is less accurate and takes on a more stereotypical form (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002).

A consumer can avoid a brand that is perceived as inauthentic. Brand authenticity is the subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand by a consumer (Napoli et al., 2014). It can serve as a symbolic resource to help the consumer define who he or she is (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2016). However, if a brand becomes too popular, it may be victim of over-commercialization, hence being perceived as inauthentic. The brand can no longer be used as a symbolic tool to add meaning in the creation of a self-identity (Lee et al., 2009a).

Deindividuation arises when a consumer feels that a brand is too mainstream, resulting in that he or she no longer can express his or her identity by consuming the brand. It derives from the feeling of not wanting to be like everyone else (Lee et al., 2009a). As a result, a consumer avoids the brand because it no longer provides meaning in the creation of self-identity (Kim et al., 2013).

From the reasoning above, identity avoidance is theorized to constitute of undesired selves, negative reference groups, inauthenticity and deindividuation. As follows, it is hypothesized that identity avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

H2: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.2.2.3 Deficit-value Avoidance

A consumer may avoid a brand that is perceived as deficit in value. This occurs if the consumer perceives the brand to represent an unacceptable cost to benefit trade-off. With this follows that the consumer must not have first-hand experience of a brand in order to avoid it (Lee et al., 2009b).

The perceived quality and price can cause a consumer to avoid a brand. Perceived value is conceptualized as the cognitive trade-off between perceived quality and price. It is positively influenced by the quality consumers believe they are getting by acquiring and using a brand, and negatively influenced by the price for acquiring and using the same brand (Dodds et al., 1991; Monroe & Krishnan, 1985). On one hand, some consumers avoid budget brands that they construe to be of low quality, and consequently, deficient in value. On the other hand, some consumers consider that obtaining a product of adequate quality for low a price is a more acceptable trade-off than gaining a high-quality product for a high price (Lee et al., 2009b).

The appearance of a brand can be used as an indicator of its functional value, meaning that aesthetic insufficiently can signal deficit value. Much value is placed on aesthetic beauty, and the halo-effect of attractiveness is well known. Thus, ugly packaging design or lack of colors can constitute an inability to satisfy consumers utilitarian requirements (Lee et al., 2009b). When a consumer has a negative feeling about a design (Bitner, 1992; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), he or she will distance himself or herself from the object (Bloch, 1995). From this reasoning, it is expected that consumers avoid aesthetically insufficient brands.

Celebrity endorsers are often closely associated to a brand. However, a consumer reacts either positively or negatively to a brand depending on the celebrity's likability (Spry et al., 2011; Louie et al., 2001). With this follows that disliking of a celebrity can be transferred into disliking of a brand

(Knittel et al., 2016). This implies that a consumer can avoid a brand that is connected with an unfavorable celebrity.

From the reasoning above, deficit-value avoidance is theorized to constitute of perceived quality and price, aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement. As follows, it is hypothesized that deficit-value avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

H3: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.2.2.4 Moral Avoidance

While the other reasons for brand avoidance presented are based on a brand's negative impact on the individual, brand avoidance can also occur at an ideological level due to a brand's negative impact on the society. Ideology refers to a political and socio-economic set of beliefs, and brand avoidance can be pursued to seek moral and ethical changes to the consumerist ideology. Thus, moral avoidance can arise due to country effects, anti-hegemony or corporate irresponsibility (Lee et al., 2009b). Furthermore, the growing awareness among consumers of how consumption affects both the society and the environment has led some to favor more sustainable consumption choices. Based on this, moral avoidance can also arise due to sustainability (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018; Rindell et al., 2013).

A consumer can avoid a brand as a result of country effects (Lee et al., 2009a). A brand's country-of-origin can be used as a signal for overall product or service quality (Verlegh et al., 1998), which influences a consumer's evaluation and purchase decision (Kaynak et al., 2000; Hong & Wyer, 1990). If a consumer feels animosity toward a country, his or her dislike may be transferred to a brand associated to that country (Lee et al., 2009b). Therefore, a consumer may refrain from interacting with brands from countries with objectionable activities (Duman & Ozgen, 2018;

Verlegh et al., 1998). Furthermore, some consumers feel a patriotic connection with local brands. Instead of supporting global brands, a consumer can buy domestically to resist global homogenization of brands, preserve cultural identity and ensure that financial profits remain in his or her own country (Lee et al., 2009a; Verlegh et al., 1998; Elliot & Cameron, 1994).

Anti-hegemony is another reason for a consumer to avoid a brand. If a brand is perceived as too dominant, a consumer can experience reductions in choices, product knowledge and trust. With this follows that hegemonic brands often cause a strong sense of disempowerment among consumers (Cromie & Ewing, 2009). Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that consumers avoid certain brands to resist domination and prevent monopolies (Lee et al., 2009b).

Social corporate responsibility is growing increasingly important, and corporate irresponsibility can cause brand avoidance. Any inconsistencies between a brand's corporate actions and their communication are seen as unacceptable (Rindell et al., 2013). Furthermore, consumers' reactions to actual corporate irresponsibility, such as exploitation of employees and social exclusion, can be harmful for companies (Jones et al., 2009), leading to consumers' avoiding their brand (Lee et al., 2009b).

Recently, sustainability has been recognized to incorporate both social and environmental issues, and consumers can avoid brands that have negative impact on humans and the planet (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018). Furthermore, a consumer may perceive a brand to be motivated by self-interest and return-of-investment alone and thus distrust acts of altruism (Lee et al., 2009a). However, it might not be possible for consumers to stop using a product or service that is perceived as unsustainable. They can then engage in trade-offs between the brands offering these products and services, and consume the least harmful brand and avoid the rest (Rindell et al., 2013).

From the reasoning above, moral avoidance is theorized to constitute of country effects, anti-hegemony, corporate irresponsibility and sustainability. As such, it is hypothesized that moral avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

H4: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.2.2.5 Subjective Norms

Subjective norms are the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior. Firstly, it is dependent on normative beliefs, which are formed by the likelihood of a positive reference individual or group (such as friends, family or partner) to approve or disapprove of a behavior. Secondly, it is dependent of the motivation to comply with that referent (Ajzen, 1991). In contrast to the negative reference group, mentioned in section 2.2.2.2, an individual strives to conform to the behaviors and opinions of the positive reference group (Burnkant & Cousineau, 1975). In the context of consumer behavior, reference groups are found to significantly influence brand choices (Radder & Huang, 2008; Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Witt, 1969). From this, it is hypothesized that subjective norms provide additional explanatory value in the relationships between the reasons for brand avoidance and the avoidance behaviors.

H5: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

H6: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

H7: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

H8: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.2.3 Level of Involvement

Level of involvement is defined as the extent to which a consumer is motivated to achieve a specific goal. In the context of consumer behavior, this goal is to consume a particular product or service (Hoyer et al., 2013). Level of involvement has been found to be a moderating variable in brand loyalty research (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015; Chen & Tsai, 2008; Sirgy et al., 2008; Olsen, 2007; Yi & Jeon, 2003). As brand avoidance is seen as the antithesis to brand loyalty (Olivia et al., 1992), it is expected that level of involvement will have a moderating effect on the relationship between brand avoidance and avoidance behavior. However, in the context of brand avoidance, level of involvement can be seen as the extent to which a consumer is motivated to not consume a particular product or service.

A product or service can be of high-involvement or low-involvement (Hoyer et al., 2013). The stronger linkage between a consumer's self-image and a brand, the higher is the consumer's level of involvement (Hoyer et al., 2013). Thereby, it can be argued that the fashion and make-up industry offers high-involvement products, as a consumer uses such products to reinforce his or her self-image (Radder & Huang, 2008). Moreover, the electronics industry offers products that are complex (Liljedal, 2016), expensive (Manrai et al., 1998) and bought infrequently (Mitchell,

1992). As such, electronics can be considered high-involvement products. Furthermore, a consumer's level of involvement is influenced by perceived risk, where involvement increases when the perceived risk increases (Mitchell, 1999). Perceived risk is enhanced by a consumer's limited experience, a complex decision-making process and infrequency of purchases (William & Baláž, 2013). In general, services generate higher perceived risk than products (Laroche et al., 2003). With this follows that the tourism and transportation industry and the entertainment and leisure industry are considered to generate high-involvement.

Low-involvement products or services are characterized by low product differentiation and by not demanding extensive information search. As such, they can be purchased using heuristics (McWilliam, 1997; Kotler, 1996; Mitchell, 1992). With this follows that the fast-moving consumer goods and grocery industry, as well as the fast-food restaurant industry is considered to offer low-involvement products or services.

From above reasoning, it is hypothesized that level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors, where it is expected that highly-involved consumers engage in avoidance behavior to a larger extent than low-involved consumers.

H9: Level of involvement will moderate the relationships between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d) and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

2.3 Summary of Hypotheses

The theory presented in this section is summarized in a conceptual model that is constructed to show a visual overview of the hypotheses (figure 1). Hypothesis 1 to 4 is testing if each reason for brand avoidance separately has a positive effect on each avoidance behavior. Hypothesis 5 to 8 is testing if each separate reason for brand avoidance together with subjective norms have a positive effect on each avoidance behavior. Hypothesis 9 is testing if level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship stated in hypothesis 1 to 4.

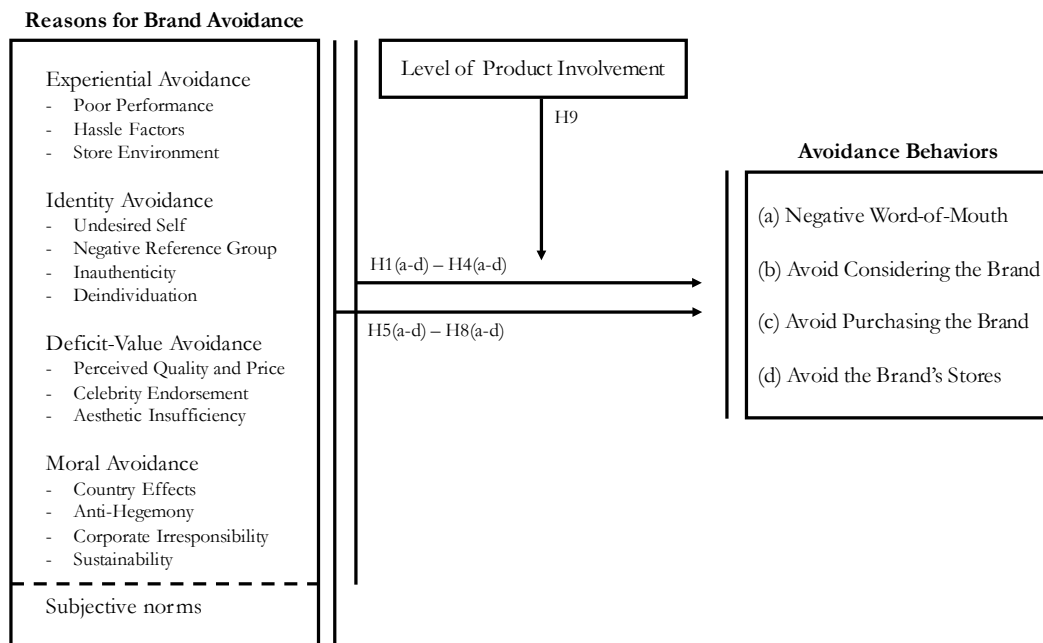


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the thesis

In total, 9 hypotheses are developed to lead the empirical investigation and analysis. See the summary where all hypotheses are presented below (table 1).

Summary of Hypotheses	
Main effects of the reasons for brand avoidance	<p>H1: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H2: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H3: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H4: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d).</p>
Additional explanatory value of subjective norms	<p>H5: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H6: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H7: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).</p> <p>H8: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).</p>
Level of involvement as a moderator	<p>H9: Level of involvement will moderate the relationships between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d) and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).</p>

Table 1: Summary of hypotheses

3. Methodology

This section focuses on elaborating the methodology used for the empirical study. The scientific approach and the reasoning behind the chosen method are outlined. After this, the pilot study is reviewed, before discussing the main study and the chosen approaches for preparatory work, design, and sampling method of the questionnaire. The section ends with a discussion of the study's reliability, validity and replicability.

3.1 Scientific Approach to the Research Design

This study has used a deductive research methodology, where hypotheses were derived from existing theory and tested through empirical analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The main study was designed to investigate if a correlation between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors exists. Specifically, the reasons for brand avoidance were composed of several independent variables, which were tested against four dependent variables capturing four avoidance behaviors. As follows, a quantitative questionnaire-based research design was applied in the main study to guarantee a methodological fit to the chosen deductive approach. Moreover, this quantitative method was supported by a pilot study building on qualitative interviews, to ensure that the questionnaire included suitable and relevant measures.

3.2 Pilot Study

In the beginning of this study, a pilot study was conducted in order to investigate if brand avoidance is a phenomenon that exists in a consumer's everyday lifestyle. Eight exploratory interviews were conducted with friends and family of the authors, and the results were used to design a subsequent quantitative main study (Tashakkori et al., 1998). The interviewees were therefore asked if and why they avoid brands and how they engage in avoidance behavior (see appendix 1).

Based on the interviews, it was concluded that people avoid brands in all industries. It was also concluded that the reasons for brand avoidance could be summarized into four categories; unmet expectations, incongruence with identity, bad quality and price, and country-of-origin and market position. The ways that the interviewees avoided brands ranged from not purchasing the brand and not entering the brand's stores, to spreading negative word-of-mouth. Based on the pilot study, it was concluded that the phenomenon of brand avoidance existed and took part in a consumer's everyday lifestyle.

3.3 Main Study

3.3.1 Preparatory Work of the Questionnaire

The main study used a quantitative method building on a questionnaire-based data collection. In order to assure the quality of the questionnaire, it was pilot tested two times. The first pilot test aimed to evaluate whether the questionnaire captured all essential parts of the theoretical framework and insights from the pilot study. The second pilot test aspired to test if the data collected was valid.

3.3.1.1 Pilot Test of the Questionnaire

The first pilot test was conducted using four respondents that was similar to those respondents used in the main study. They were asked to answer the questionnaire with one of the authors sitting next to them, to articulate their interpretations and ask questions whenever needed. Thereby, misinterpretations could be discovered and corrected instantly. It was found that some respondents interpreted some questions incorrectly. Hence, some questions were adjusted to truly correspond to theory. Afterwards, other respondents were asked to respond to the questionnaire, but no alteration was required. Letting a respondent give feedback while answering the questionnaire has been proved to be a suitable method of revising questionnaires (Malhotra, 2010).

The second pilot test was conducted to investigate whether the questions were valid and significant measurements of the theory. Twenty questionnaire responses were collected to investigate if the batteries of questions could be transformed into variables, hence Cronbach's Alpha or Pearson's Correlation were used to test for indexes. For the variables consisting of three or more questions, Cronbach's Alpha was applied, however the test was not applicable for variables consisting of less than three questions. Thus, Pearson's Correlation was applied when testing indexes for variables consisting of two questions. Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson's Correlation values over 0.7 were considered acceptable when creating indexes (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bearden et al., 2011). It became evident that some variables were insignificant or did not have acceptable levels of internal consistency. The questions were therefore revised to improve the internal consistency, and the questionnaire was sent out again, in order to ensure that the variables met the limit of Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson's Correlation values over 0.7.

3.3.2 Sampling Approach

The sampling of respondents for the main study was conducted between the 25th of October and 8th of November 2018. The questionnaire was distributed online using the social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn. Further, the questionnaire was sent by email to 600 randomly picked students at the Stockholm School of Economics. These students were selected based on their enrollment number to enable randomization of respondents answering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also distributed physically in the atrium at the Stockholm School of Economics during lunch hour, where it was handed out on paper to 60 respondents.

The questionnaire was estimated to take approximately ten minutes. An incentive was included, and each completed questionnaire were translated into a donation of 5 SEK to the organization Save the Children. In total, 253 applicable responses were collected, out of which 239 responses could be used in the hypothesis testing. This was considered a sufficient amount of responses based on the time limit of this study.

3.3.2.1 Comparison of Sampling Approaches

When comparing the sampling approaches online and physically, the response rate differed significantly between the two contexts. However, the response rate for the online distribution was approximate, due to the fact that the questionnaire was both published on social media and sent out by email. The ability to control for the proliferation on social media was limited. As such, the response rate for the online distribution could only be calculated for by the questionnaire sent out by email. It was found that 193 questionnaires were completed out of the 600 sent emails, compared to the physical distribution where 54 out of 60 questionnaires were completed. Thus, the response rate for online distribution, 32.2 percent, is considerably lower than for the physical distribution, 90 percent. The difference in response rate can be explained by the impact of social presence, which results from the social forces when a respondent is approached in person, i.e. physically (Argo et al., 2005).

When distributing the questionnaire online, the function “forced responses” was applied in the survey tool Qualtrics, ensuring maximum amount of useful responses. This function forced a respondent to answer the current question to be able to proceed to the next one. This could not be controlled for physically, hence 14 respondents did not answer all questions and could not be used in the data analysis.

3.3.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made in the online survey tool Qualtrics. In the beginning of the questionnaire, the respondents were prompted to think of a brand that they actively avoid. A short introduction and explanation of the phenomenon of brand avoidance was included to minimize the number of inapplicable responses. The first block of questions regarded attributes of the brand. Firstly, the respondents were asked about the accessibility and affordability of the brand. They were further asked about the brand's industry, type of offer in terms of product or service, and where the brand was available in terms of a brand-owned store, retail store or website. The second block included questions regarding what types of avoidance behaviors they engaged in. The third block involved questions about their experiences with the brand. Then, a control question was included to ensure that the respondents were paying attention. The fourth block consisted of questions about their identity and its connection to the brand, and the fifth block consisted of questions about the brand's perceived value. The sixth block included questions about moral concerns and the brand, and the seventh block consisted of questions about subjective norms. The eighth block included questions aimed to estimate the respondents' future involvement with the brand. The final block included a control question and demographic questions. The questionnaire was structured in a way where the most important questions were presented in the beginning and the least important questions were presented in the end (Malhotra, 2010).

All questions in the questionnaire were closed, with the exception of the first question where the respondents were requested to name the brand they avoid and a question in the final block where the respondents were requested to name the brand they had stated in the first question again. Closed questions are to prefer to facilitate the analysis, as they can be pre-coded. The analysis was further favored by the fact that a seven-point likert scale was used for all closed questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3.4 Questionnaire Measures

In the questionnaire, a vast majority of the batteries of questions were modified to include a negotiation, as the questionnaire investigated brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. In those cases where no predefined batteries of questions existed, they were composed by the authors. The questionnaire is fully disclosed in section 3.3.4.1 to section 3.3.4.5. In appendix 2, the batteries of questions regarding brand avoidance is presented in-depth, including the Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson's Correlation for all batteries of questions.

3.3.4.1 Brand Attributes

In the beginning of the questionnaire, the consumers were asked about what brand they avoid. Since a respondent must be able to access and afford a brand for it to be considered as brand avoidance, the respondents were asked to state whether “*The brand is available for me to consume*” and “*I can afford purchasing from the brand*”. These two self-composed statements were measured on a two-point nominal scale with the options “Yes” or “No”. They were further asked what industry the brand operated in, where they could choose between “*fashion and make-up*”, “*tourism and transportation*”, “*entertainment and leisure*”, “*electronics*”, “*fast-moving consumer goods and groceries*” and “*fast-food restaurants*”. The respondents were also asked to state where the brand was available, where they could choose between “*brand-owned stores*”, “*retail stores*” and “*brand-owned website*”.

3.3.4.2 Avoidance Behavior

Since this study aims to investigate how avoidance behaviors take form, the respondents were asked to estimate their level of avoidance based on statements derived both from prior research and the pilot study: “*I talk negatively about the brand with people around me*”, “*I do not consider the brand when I buy something from the same product category*”, “*I do not purchase from the brand*”, and either (1) “*I avoid entering the brand’s stores*”, (2) “*I avoid entering stores where the brand is sold by retailers*” or (3) “*I avoid entering the brand’s website*”, where all three alternatives could be applied depending on where the brand was stated to be available.

3.3.4.3 Brand Avoidance

Based on the theoretical framework presented in section 2.2, batteries of questions were formulated to measure the different reasons for brand avoidance (see appendix 2). Firstly, experiential avoidance was measured with three batteries of questions: one for poor performance (Napoli et al., 2014), one for hassle factors (Lee et al., 2013) and one for store environment (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Secondly, identity avoidance was measured with four batteries of questions: one for undesired selves (Nam et al., 2011; Sirgy et al., 1997), one for negative reference groups (Nam et al., 2011; Sirgy et al., 1997; self-composed statements), one for deindividuation (self-composed statements), and one for inauthenticity (Napoli et al., 2014). Thirdly, deficit-value avoidance was measured with four batteries of questions: one for perceived quality (Spry et al., 2011), one for perceived price (Lee et al., 2013; Richardson et al., 1996), one for aesthetic insufficiency (self-composed statements) and one for celebrity endorsement (Spry et al., 2011). Lastly, moral avoidance was measured with four batteries of questions: one for country effects (self-composed

statements), one for anti-hegemony (self-composed statements), one for corporate irresponsibility (Wagner et al., 2008; Chen, 2010; self-composed statements), and one for sustainability (Stanaland et al., 2011; Chen, 2010).

3.3.4.4 Future Avoidance Behavior

Since avoidance behaviors were theorized to be persistent over time (Huefner & Hunt, 1992), the questionnaire measured the respondents' estimated future involvement with the brand. A battery of questions based on prior research and the pilot study measuring the respondents' avoidance behavior in twelve months was included: "*I will talk negatively about the brand with people around me*", "*I will not consider the brand when I am going to buy something from the same product category*", "*I will not purchase products from the brand*", and either "*I will avoid entering the brand's stores*", (2) "*I will avoid entering stores where the brand is sold by retailers*" or (3) "*I will avoid entering the brand's website*", where all three alternatives could be applied depending on where the brand was stated to be available.

3.3.4.5 Control Measures and Demographics

In the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked about the demographic variables gender, age, highest completed education, main occupation and approximate post-tax income. Two control questions were further included. The first one was presented in the middle of the questionnaire where the respondent was asked to mark number eight on a multiple-choice question with several numbers. The second control question was presented in the end of the questionnaire where the respondents were asked what brand they chose in the beginning.

3.3.5 Quantitative Sampling

Since the questionnaire was distributed and completed without supervision from the authors, it was hard to control for fatigue of the respondents. However, fatigue was controlled for by eliminating inapplicable responses based on the control questions. If a respondent did not answer number eight on the first control question and if the brand stated in the beginning differed from the one stated in the end, the respondent was excluded from the dataset. Respondents were further removed from the dataset if they stated that the brand was not available to them or that they could not afford purchasing the brand, since it then did not meet the definition of brand avoidance. Lastly, respondents were removed if they did not complete the questionnaire, as the complete questionnaire provided valuable information for the analysis. After removing incorrect or

inapplicable responses, a total number of 239 respondents were included in the analysis. Out of these, 51.9 percent were female and 48.1 percent male.

3.3.6 Analytical Tools

The statistical tool IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 was used for the analysis of the data. As the data was exported directly from Qualtrics to SPSS, no intermediary part could affect the results. All batteries of questions in the questionnaire were transformed into variables in SPSS. Thus, the batteries of questions were combined into indexes and the internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's Alpha for variables consisting of three or more questions, and Pearson's Correlation for variables consisting of two questions. Both Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson's Correlation were accepted on a level equal to or higher than 0.7 (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bearden et al., 2011).

The regressions were further tested for multicollinearity to be able to reject high correlations among predictor variables. Multicollinearity was tested with the VIF and Tolerance Value, where 0.1 was used as a lower limit for VIF and 10 was used as a higher limit for tolerance. Since the tests used in the hypothesis testing require the regressions to meet the requirements of homoscedasticity, normal distribution and absence of outliers (Saunders et al., 2012), appropriate methods were undertaken to ensure this. Specifically, scatter-plots and histograms were analyzed, and identified outliers excluded.

3.4 Critical Review of Data Quality

When conducting quantitative research, the parameters reliability, validity and replicability are important to take into account. These were used when critically reviewing the data.

3.4.1 Reliability

This study is considered as reliable, since the results were generated from hypothesis testing in a correct way. When reviewing the reliability of quantitative research, stability and internal reliability are important to consider (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Firstly, this study is considered to meet the requirements of stability, since it is consistent and repeatable over time based on the defined time-frame and contextual condition of this study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The fact that the questionnaire was pilot tested two times, in order to ensure comprehensibility and clarity in the questions to the largest extent possible, favored the stability of

the study. Secondly, this study is internally reliable, since the prior research used in the theoretical framework was controlled for by number of citations of other researchers. The study was also conducted with a questionnaire built on established previous research to the extent that previous research existed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, the variables used in the hypothesis testing were built on indexes with a Cronbach's Alpha or Pearson's Correlations equal to or higher than 0.7, implying a high level of internal reliability (Bearden et al., 2011).

3.4.2 Validity

This study is considered valid, since the hypothesis testing generated discussions and conclusions in an accurate way. The validity was reviewed based on the four parameters internal validity, measurement validity, external validity and ecological validity (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Firstly, this study is considered to be internally valid, since there were a correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variables to a large extent, in accordance with what theory proposed. Secondly, measurement validity is accomplished, due to the fact that the questionnaire was pilot tested two times, meaning that actions were taken to ensure that the variables measured what they were aimed to. The measurement validity is further strengthened by the Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson's Correlation tests mentioned in section 3.3.6. What is more, in the introduction of the questionnaire, the respondents were given examples of industries from which they could chose a brand, instead of existing brands, to reduce influence from the authors. Thirdly, the study is to some extent externally valid and generalizable to other contexts than that of the study. This study is delimited to the Swedish population, but the dataset is skewed toward students in the Stockholm region which decreases the generalizability of the results. Nevertheless, the questionnaire was distributed online to accomplish the widest geographical reach possible, based on the time-frame and scope of the study. Building upon external validity, this study is considered as ecologically valid since the study and the results are applicable to a consumer's natural social settings. This is because it was found in the pilot study that brand avoidance was a phenomenon that consumers encountered in their everyday lifestyle. The fact that the study is conducted with a quantitative method somewhat limits the ecological validity, since questionnaires can bring a feeling of the unnaturalness for the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.4.3 Replicability

This study is considered as possible to replicable due to well-detailed theoretical, methodological and empirical sections. The procedures can be followed step by step and performed in accordance with this study. Since the research field of brand avoidance is unaccustomed to quantitative methods, the inclusion of the full questionnaire in section 3.3.4.1 to 3.3.4.5, as well as in appendix 2, further unease the replicability for additional quantitative research on brand avoidance (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

4. Empirical Findings

In this section, the results derived from the hypothesis testing are presented. The order of which the results are presented is in accordance with the hypothesis generation in the theory section. Experiential avoidance is presented first, identity avoidance second, deficit-value avoidance third, and moral avoidance last. Thereafter, the results of the effect of social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior and level of involvement is presented. Lastly, persistency over time is presented.

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

4.1.1 Experiential Avoidance

The first hypothesis states that experiential avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. Experiential avoidance was constructed out of three independent variables: poor performance, hassle factors and store environment. In order to investigate how several independent variables jointly explained the behavior of a dependent variable, four multiple regressions were conducted (Newbold et al., 2013). For each regression, a F-test was conducted to test if the combination of independent variables had a significant effect on each dependent variable. The results presented in table 2 indicate that experiential avoidance had a significant effect on all dependent variables ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that H1 is supported.

As a complement to the hypothesis testing, T-tests were performed to investigate if each independent variable was significantly different from zero. It was expected that they would have a significant positive effect on each dependent variable. From the regressions, it was evident that poor performance ($p < 0.01$) and hassle factors ($p < 0.05$), but not store environment, had a positive significant effect on negative word-of-mouth, that poor performance ($p < 0.01$), but not hassle factors and store environment, had a significant positive effect on avoid purchasing, and that poor performance ($p < 0.01$) and store environment ($p < 0.01$), but not hassle factors, had a significant positive effect on avoid stores. What is more, poor performance had a positive significant effect ($p < 0.01$), but hassle factors had a significant negative effect ($p < 0.05$), on avoid considering. This was opposite to what was expected and H1b is thus only considered partly supported.

	NWoM	Avoid Considering	Avoid Purchasing	Avoid Stores
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Poor Performance	0.430*** (0.093)	0.259*** (0.081)	0.497*** (0.114)	0.283*** (0.093)
Hassle Factors	0.183** (0.075)	-0.134** (0.065)	0.041 (0.092)	-0.007 (0.075)
Store Environment	0.075 (0.067)	0.104* (0.058)	-0.036 (0.082)	0.588*** (0.067)
Constant	1.100*** (0.414)	4.590*** (0.360)	2.755*** (0.506)	1.134*** (0.414)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.189	0.058	0.092	0.336
F-test	19.501***	5.867***	9.030***	41.223***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 2: Regressions between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables

H1: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	PARTLY SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	SUPPORTED

4.1.2 Identity Avoidance

The second hypothesis states that identity avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. Identity avoidance was constructed out of four independent variables: undesired selves, negative reference groups, deindividuation and inauthenticity. As for the first hypothesis, four multiple regressions were conducted to investigate how several independent variables jointly influenced a dependent variable (Newbold et al., 2013), and F-tests were performed to test if the combination of the independent variables had a significant effect on each dependent variable. From table 3, it was evident that identity avoidance had a significant effect on negative word-of-mouth ($p < 0.01$),

avoid considering ($p < 0.01$), avoid purchasing ($p < 0.05$) and avoid stores ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that H2 is supported.

In accordance with the procedure for testing the first hypothesis, T-tests were performed as a complement to investigate if each independent variable was significantly different from zero, and it was expected that they would have a significant positive effect on each dependent variable. The regressions showed that negative reference groups ($p < 0.01$) and inauthenticity ($p < 0.01$), but not undesired selves and deindividuation, had a positive significant effect on negative word-of-mouth, that only undesired selves ($p < 0.01$) had a significant effect on avoid considering, and that undesired selves ($p < 0.01$) and inauthenticity ($p < 0.01$), but not negative reference groups and deindividuation, had a significant effect on avoid stores. Furthermore, while undesired selves had a positive significant effect ($p < 0.05$), negative reference groups had a significant negative effect ($p < 0.01$), on avoid purchasing. This contradicts what was expected and H2c is hence only considered partly supported. Deindividuation never had significant effect on any dependent variable.

	NWoM (a)	Avoid Considering (b)	Avoid Purchasing (c)	Avoid Stores (d)
Undesired Selves	0.031 (0.087)	0.339*** (0.070)	0.233** (0.104)	0.272*** (0.096)
Negative Reference Group	0.229*** (0.074)	0.005 (0.060)	-0.268*** (0.090)	0.014 (0.082)
Deindividuation	-0.109 (0.075)	-0.088 (0.060)	-0.062 (0.090)	-0.134 (0.083)
Inauthenticity	0.293*** (0.077)	0.035 (0.062)	0.123 (0.092)	0.332*** (0.085)
Constant	2.131*** (0.458)	4.303*** (0.368)	4.694*** (0.551)	2.328*** (0.507)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.106	0.114	0.035	0.105
F-test	8.045***	8.649***	3.158**	7.967***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Regressions between identity avoidance and the dependent variables

H2: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	PARTLY SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	SUPPORTED

4.1.3 Deficit-value Avoidance

The third hypothesis states that deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. Deficit-value avoidance consists of four independent variables: perceived quality, perceived price, aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement. Four multiple regressions were performed to investigate if these independent variables jointly influenced each dependent variable, and F-tests were performed to test if the independent variables had a significant effect on each dependent variable (Newbold et al., 2013). The results presented in table 4, showed that deficit-value avoidance had a significant effect on negative word-of-mouth ($p < 0.01$), avoid considering ($p < 0.05$), avoid purchasing ($p < 0.01$) and avoid stores ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that H3 is supported.

What is more, T-tests were performed to investigate if each independent variable was significantly different from zero. It was expected that they would have a significant positive effect on the dependent variables. From the regressions, it was clear that only perceived price ($p < 0.05$) had a significant effect on negative word-of-mouth, that only perceived quality had a significant effect on avoid considering ($p < 0.05$) and on avoid purchasing ($p < 0.01$), and that both perceived quality ($p < 0.01$) and perceived price ($p < 0.1$) had a significant effect on avoid stores. Aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement did not have significant effect on any dependent variable.

	NWoM	Avoid Considering	Avoid Purchasing	Avoid Stores
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Perceived Quality	0.117 (0.075)	0.146** (0.061)	0.332*** (0.087)	0.273*** (0.082)
Perceived Price	0.169** (0.075)	-0.007 (0.061)	0.025 (0.087)	0.136* (0.082)
Aesthetic Insufficiency	0.083 (0.077)	0.040 (0.063)	-0.147 (0.089)	0.000 (0.085)
Celebrity Endorsement	0.126 (0.090)	0.084 (0.073)	0.019 (0.104)	0.117 (0.098)
Constant	2.216*** (0.439)	4.879*** (0.358)	3.956*** (0.508)	2.591*** (0.481)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.052	0.030	0.049	0.070
F-test	4.250***	2.870**	4.041***	5.503***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 4: Regressions between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables

H3: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	SUPPORTED

4.1.4 Moral Avoidance

The fourth hypothesis states that moral avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. Moral avoidance consists of four independent variables: country effects, anti-hegemony, corporate irresponsibility and sustainability. In order to investigate if these independent variables jointly influenced the four dependent variables, four multiple regressions were performed. F-tests were then conducted to test if the effect of the independent variables on each dependent variable was significant (Newbold et al., 2013). From the results presented in table 5, it is evident that moral

avoidance had significant effect on negative word-of-mouth, ($p < 0.05$), avoid considering ($p < 0.05$) and avoid purchasing ($p < 0.05$). However, moral avoidance did not have significant effect on avoid stores. This implies that H4a, H4b and H4c is supported, while H4d is not supported.

As in above described procedures for the hypothesis testing, T-tests were performed to investigate if the independent variables were significantly different from zero. It was expected that they would have a significant positive effect on the dependent variables. However, the regressions suggest that only sustainability ($p < 0.1$) had a significant positive effect on negative word-of-mouth. Anti-hegemony ($p < 0.05$) had a significant negative effect on avoid considering, which was the opposite to what was expected. This suggests that H4b is only partly supported. Country effects and corporate irresponsibility never had a significant effect on any of the dependent variables.

	NWoM (a)	Avoid Considering (b)	Avoid Purchasing (c)	Avoid Stores (d)
Country Effects	0.120 (0.083)	0.066 (0.067)	0.079 (0.096)	-0.030 (0.093)
Anti-hegemony	0.029 (0.075)	-0.136** (0.060)	0.012 (0.087)	0.009 (0.084)
Corporate Irresponsibility	-0.029 (0.120)	0.116 (0.096)	0.176 (0.139)	0.021 (0.135)
Sustainability	0.222* (0.123)	0.065 (0.099)	0.096 (0.142)	0.146 (0.138)
Constant	2.565*** (0.508)	5.240*** (0.407)	3.478*** (0.587)	3.797*** (0.569)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.024	0.037	0.024	-0.001
F-test	2.493**	3.259**	2.473**	0.944

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Regressions between moral avoidance and the dependent variables

H4: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d):

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	PARTLY SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	NOT SUPPORTED

4.1.5 The Additional Explanatory Value of Subjective Norms

Hypothesis 5 to 8 test if adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. To test this, multiple regressions were conducted, in the same manner as in section 4.1.1 to 4.1.4, but the independent variable subjective norms was added to each regression. Table 6 to table 9 present the original multiple regressions between the reason for brand avoidance and the different avoidance behaviors in columns (a), (b), (c) and (d), and the multiple regressions where subjective norms was added in columns (a.1), (b.1), (c.1) and (d.1).

4.1.5.1 Experiential Avoidance and Subjective Norms

The fifth hypothesis states that adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d). To test this hypothesis, a multiple regression was conducted, in the same manner as in section 4.1.1, but the independent variable subjective norms was added to the regression.

When adding subjective norms to the regression between experiential avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, between experiential avoidance and avoid purchasing, and between experiential avoidance and avoid stores, the coefficient of subjective norms was insignificant in all three cases (see table 6). The other coefficients remained relatively stable in regression (a.1) in relation to regression (a), in regression (c.1) in relation to regression (c), and in regression (d.1) in relation to regression (d). What is more, the adjusted R-square marginally increased with less than 1% when subjective norms were added to the relationship between experiential avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, it marginally decreased with less than 1% when subjective norms were added to the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid purchasing, and remained unchanged when

subjective norms were added to the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid stores. Overall, this suggests that subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, between experiential avoidance and avoid purchasing, or between experiential avoidance and avoid stores.

However, when adding subjective norms to the regression between experiential avoidance and avoid considering, the coefficient of subjective norms was significant ($p < 0.1$), and the coefficient store environment changed from being significant in regression (b) to insignificant in regression (b.1). The adjusted R-square somewhat increased with 1.2%. This suggests that subjective norms provided additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid considering.

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	(a)	(a.1)	(b)	(b.1)	(c)	(c.1)	(d)	(d.1)
Poor Performance	0.430*** (0.093)	0.443*** (0.093)	0.259*** (0.081)	0.272*** (0.081)	0.497*** (0.114)	0.497*** (0.114)	0.283*** (0.093)	0.227*** (0.093)
Hassle Factors	0.183** (0.075)	0.169** (0.075)	-0.034** (0.065)	-0.149** (0.065)	0.041 (0.092)	0.041 (0.092)	-0.007 (0.075)	0.000 (0.075)
Store Environment	0.075 (0.067)	0.049 (0.069)	0.104* (0.058)	0.076 (0.06)	-0.036 (0.082)	-0.035 (0.085)	0.588*** (0.067)	0.602*** (0.069)
Subjective Norms		0.148 (0.092)		0.162** (0.080)		-0.003 (0.113)		-0.078 (0.092)
Constant	1.100*** (0.414)	0.571 (0.527)	4.590*** (0.360)	4.014*** (0.457)	2.755*** (0.506)	2.764*** (0.648)	1.134*** (0.414)	1.413*** (0.529)
Observations	239	239	239	239	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.189	0.195	0.058	0.070	0.092	0.088	0.336	0.336
F-test	19.501***	15.374***	5.867***	5.484***	9.030***	6.744***	41.223***	31.061***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 6: Regressions between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables, adding subjective norms

H5: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	NOT SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	NOT SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	NOT SUPPORTED

4.1.5.2 Identity Avoidance and Subjective Norms

The sixth hypothesis states that adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d). To test the hypothesis, four multiple regression were conducted, using the same procedure as in section 4.1.2, but the independent variable subjective norms was added to the regression. From table 7, it is clear that subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and each dependent variable. In all four regressions, the coefficient of subjective norms was insignificant, and the other coefficients remained relatively stable in the regressions including subjective norms compared to the regressions without subjective norms. Further, the adjusted R-squares somewhat decreased in all regressions when subjective norms was added.

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	(a)	(a.1)	(b)	(b.1)	(c)	(c.1)	(d)	(d.1)
Undesired Selves	0.031 (0.087)	0.023 (0.088)	0.339*** (0.070)	0.335*** (0.072)	0.233** (0.104)	0.221** (0.106)	0.272*** (0.096)	0.273*** (0.097)
Negative Reference Group	0.229*** (0.074)	0.217*** (0.077)	0.005 (0.060)	-0.013 (0.063)	-0.268*** (0.090)	-0.286*** (0.093)	0.014 (0.082)	0.015 (0.085)
Deindividuation	-0.109 (0.075)	-0.108 (0.075)	-0.088 (0.060)	-0.066 (0.061)	-0.062 (0.090)	-0.059 (0.090)	-0.134 (0.083)	-0.134 (0.083)
Inauthenticity	0.293*** (0.077)	0.292** (0.077)	0.035 (0.062)	0.065 (0.062)	0.123 (0.092)	0.122 (0.092)	0.332*** (0.085)	0.332*** (0.085)
Subjective Norms		0.063 (0.103)		0.040 (0.085)		0.090 (0.124)		-0.007 (0.114)
Constant	2.131*** (0.458)	1.963*** (0.535)	4.303*** (0.368)	3.986** (0.434)	4.694*** (0.551)	4.452*** (0.644)	2.328*** (0.507)	2.248*** (0.593)
Observations	239	239	239	239	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.106	0.104	0.114	0.111	0.035	0.033	0.105	0.101
F-test	8.045***	6.493***	8.649***	6.921***	3.158**	2.627**	7.967***	6.347***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 7: Regressions between identity avoidance and the dependent variables, adding subjective norms

H6: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth **NOT SUPPORTED**
b: Avoid Considering **NOT SUPPORTED**
c: Avoid Purchasing **NOT SUPPORTED**
d: Avoid Stores **NOT SUPPORTED**

4.1.5.3 Deficit-value Avoidance and Subjective Norms

The seventh hypothesis states that adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d). To test the hypothesis, four multiple regression were conducted, as in section 4.1.3, but the independent variable subjective norms was added to the regression. As presented in table

8, when adding subjective norms to the regression between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering, the coefficient of subjective norms was significant in both cases ($p < 0.1$). The other coefficients remained relatively stable in regression (a.1) in relation to regression (a), as well as in regression (b.1) in relation to regression (b). What is more, the adjusted R-square marginally increased with less than 1% in both cases. This indicates that subjective norms provided additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering.

What is more, when adding subjective norms to the regressions between avoid purchasing and avoid stores, the coefficient of subjective norms was insignificant in both cases. The coefficient of aesthetic insufficiency went from being insignificant in regression (c) to significant ($p < 0.1$) in regression (c.1), and the coefficient of perceived price went from being significant ($p < 0.1$) in regression (d) to being insignificant in regression (d.1). This could indicate that subjective norms provided additional explanatory value. However, as the adjusted R-squares somewhat decreased in both cases, it is more reasonable to assume that that subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid purchasing, or in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid stores.

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	(a)	(a.1)	(b)	(b.1)	(c)	(c.1)	(d)	(d.1)
Perceived Quality	0.117 (0.075)	0.118 (0.075)	0.146** (0.061)	0.147** (0.061)	0.332*** (0.087)	0.332*** (0.087)	0.273*** (0.082)	0.274*** (0.082)
Perceived Price	0.169** (0.075)	0.166** (0.075)	-0.007 (0.061)	-0.010 (0.061)	0.025 (0.087)	0.024 (0.087)	0.136* (0.082)	0.134 (0.082)
Aesthetic Insufficiency	0.083 (0.077)	0.059 (0.078)	0.040 (0.063)	0.020 (0.064)	-0.147 (0.089)	-0.151* (0.091)	0.000 (0.085)	-0.014 (0.086)
Celebrity Endorser	0.126 (0.090)	0.107 (0.090)	0.084 (0.073)	0.069 (0.073)	0.019 (0.104)	0.016 (0.105)	0.117 (0.098)	0.107 (0.099)
Subjective Norms		0.164* (0.099)		0.137* (0.081)		0.026 (0.115)		0.095 (0.109)
Constant	2.216*** (0.439)	1.679*** (0.544)	4.879*** (0.358)	4.431*** (0.444)	3.956*** (0.508)	3.871*** (0.634)	2.591*** (0.481)	2.282*** (0.599)
Observations	239	239	239	239	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.052	0.059	0.030	0.038	0.049	0.045	0.070	0.069
F-test	4.250***	3.974***	2.870**	2.889**	4.041***	3.230***	5.503***	4.548***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 8: Regressions between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables, adding subjective norms

H7: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	NOT SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	NOT SUPPORTED

4.1.5.4 Moral Avoidance and Subjective Norms

The eighth hypothesis states that adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d). To test the hypothesis, four multiple regression were conducted, in the same way as in section 4.1.4, but the independent variable subjective norms was added to the regressions.

From table 9, it is clear that when subjective norms was added to the regression between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and to the regression between moral avoidance and avoid considering, the coefficients of subjective norms were significant ($p < 0.05$). The other coefficient remained relatively stable in regression (a.1) compared to regression (a), as well as in regression (b) compared to regression (b.1). The adjusted R-squares increased with around 2% in both cases. This suggests that subjective norms provided additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid considering.

However, when subjective norms was added to the regression between moral avoidance and avoid purchasing, the coefficient of subjective norms was insignificant and the other variables were almost unchanged in regression (c.1) compared to regression (c). The adjusted R-square slightly decreased. As stated in section 4.1.4, the total effect of the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid stores was insignificant in regression (d), and remained insignificant when subjective norms was added in regression (d.1). This implies that subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid purchasing, or in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid stores.

	NWOM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	(a)	(a.1)	(b)	(b.1)	(c)	(c.1)	(d)	(d.1)
Country Effects	0.120 (0.083)	0.106 (0.083)	0.066 (0.067)	0.053 (0.066)	0.079 (0.096)	0.077 (0.097)	-0.030 (0.093)	-0.040 (0.093)
Anti-hegemony	0.029 (0.075)	0.022 (0.075)	-0.136** (0.060)	-0.143** (0.060)	0.012 (0.087)	0.011 (0.087)	0.009 (0.084)	0.003 (0.084)
Corporate Irresponsibility	-0.029 (0.120)	-0.011 (0.119)	0.116 (0.096)	0.132 (0.096)	0.176 (0.139)	0.178 (0.139)	0.021 (0.135)	0.034 (0.135)
Sustainability	0.222* (0.123)	0.210* (0.122)	0.065 (0.099)	0.055 (0.098)	0.096 (0.142)	0.095 (0.143)	0.146 (0.138)	0.138 (0.138)
Subjective Norms		0.213** (0.097)		0.192** (0.078)		0.025 (0.114)		0.157 (0.110)
Constant	2.565*** (0.508)	1.729*** (0.633)	5.240*** (0.407)	4.485*** (0.506)	3.478*** (0.587)	3.380*** (0.739)	3.797*** (0.569)	3.179*** (0.713)
Observations	239	239	239	239	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.024	0.040	0.037	0.057	0.024	0.020	-0.001	0.004
F-test	2.493**	2.981**	3.259**	3.880***	2.473**	1.980*	0.944	1.171

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Regressions between moral avoidance and the dependent variables, adding subjective norms

H8: Adding the independent variable subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth	SUPPORTED
b: Avoid Considering	SUPPORTED
c: Avoid Purchasing	NOT SUPPORTED
d: Avoid Stores	NOT SUPPORTED

4.1.6 Level of Involvement as a Moderator

The ninth hypothesis states that level of involvement moderates the relationships between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d) and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d). To the authors' knowledge, there are no tests in a statistical program such as SPSS or in its extensions that can investigate if a variable moderates the relationship between several independent variables and one dependent variable. Therefore, the complete dataset of $n = 239$ observations was divided into two datasets depending on level of involvement, presented in table 10. The observations were divided into the datasets depending on what industry the brand operated in. The high-involvement dataset included the industries fashion and make-up, tourism and transportation, entertainment and leisure, and electronics, which resulted in $n = 149$ observations. The low-involvement dataset included the industries fast-moving consumer goods and groceries, and fast-food restaurants, which resulted in $n = 90$ observations.

High-involvement		Low-involvement	
Industry	Examples of Brands	Industry	Examples of Brands
Fashion and Make-up	H&M	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods and Groceries	ICA
	Calzedonia		Barilla
	MAC Cosmetics		Nutella
Tourism and Transportation	RyanAir	Fast-food Restaurants	McDonald's
	Volkswagen		Starbucks
	AirBnB		Joe and the Juice
Entertainment and Leisure	Unibet	Fast-food Restaurants	McDonald's
	Fitness 24 Seven		Starbucks
	Electronic Arts		Joe and the Juice
Electronics	Apple	Fast-food Restaurants	McDonald's
	Samsung		Starbucks
	Microsoft Office		Joe and the Juice
N = 149		N = 90	

Table 10: Division of the dataset depending on level of involvement

Then, the same multiple regressions as described in section 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 were conducted, but this time with the high-involvement and low-involvement dataset respectively. This means that the relationship between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables, the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables, the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables, and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables were investigated with both the high-involvement and low-involvement dataset (see appendix 3-6).

The adjusted R-squares and the significance levels of the F-tests were then compared for each regression between the two datasets (see table 11). If level of involvement moderated the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, the multiple regressions conducted with the high-involvement dataset were expected to generate higher adjusted R-squares than the multiple regressions conducted with the low-involvement dataset. The F-tests were also expected to be significant more frequently. However, there are no clear guidelines on how to statistically test if two adjusted R-squares are significantly different from each other. Therefore, a sign-test was conducted. It is a simple nonparametric test that is often employed when carrying out hypothesis testing for paired samples (Newbold et al., 2013).

When performing the sign-test, if a significant regression with a positive adjusted R-square was paired with an insignificant regression, it was assumed that the positive adjusted R-square was

greater than the insignificant adjusted R-square. If both of the paired regressions were insignificant, they were excluded from the sign-test. This resulted in a sample of $n = 13$ pairs of adjusted R-squares, whereof $S = 12$ adjusted R-squares were higher in the high-involvement dataset than in the low-involvement dataset. The null hypothesis that there is no tendency that the adjusted R-squares differs between the regressions using the two different datasets, was tested against the alternative hypothesis that the adjusted R-squares are higher for the regressions using the high-involvement dataset than for the regressions using the low-involvement dataset:

$$H_0: p = 0.5, H_1: p > 0.5$$

$$p - value = P(X \geq 12) = 1 - P(X \leq 12) = 0.0017$$

From the sign-test, it is evident that the adjusted R-squares for the multiple regressions using the high-involvement dataset are higher than for the regressions using the low-involvement dataset ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that level of involvement moderates: the relationships between experiential avoidance and all dependent variables, the relationships between identity avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering and avoid stores, the relationships between deficit-value avoidance and all dependent variables, and the relationships between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth and avoid purchasing. It further suggests that, in the scope of this study, that highly-involved consumers are more likely to exercise avoidance behaviors.

	High-involvement	Low-involvement	Sign
	Adjusted R ²	Adjusted R ²	
Experiential Avoidance on NWoM	0.292***	0.049*	+
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Considering	0.075***	0.017	+
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing	0.118***	-0.025	+
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Stores	0.239***	0.374***	-
Identity Avoidance on NWoM	0.136***	0.035	+
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Considering	0.165***	0.039	+
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing	0.025	0.007	0
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Stores	0.209***	-0.012	+
Deficit-value Avoidance on NWoM	0.077***	-0.020	+
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Considering	0.039**	-0.018	+
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing	0.087***	-0.018	+
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Stores	0.202***	0.108***	+
Moral Avoidance on NWoM	0.058**	-0.027	+
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Considering	0.024	0.019	0
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing	0.048**	-0.001	+
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Stores	0.003	-0.001	0

Significance of F-test for the regression: * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

n = 13, S = 12

Table 11: Sign-test of the adjusted R² between the high-involvement and low-involvement datasets

H9: Level of involvement will moderate the relationships between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d) and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).

a: Negative Word-of-Mouth **SUPPORTED**

b: Avoid Considering

c: Avoid Purchasing

d: Avoid Stores

4.1.7 Persistency Over Time

Brand avoidance is theorized to be persistent over time, however future behavior is hard to estimate. In addition to the above hypothesis testing, it was nevertheless indicatively investigated if the avoidance behaviors were persistent over time. Sixteen multiple regressions were performed in the same way as in section 4.1.1 to 4.1.4, with the same independent variables (experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance), but with the new dependent variables (a) negative word-of-mouth in 12 months, (b) avoid considering in 12 months, (c) avoid purchasing in 12 months and (d) avoid stores in 12 months (see all regressions in appendix 7-10). These dependent variables were supposed to give an indication of the consumers future behaviors. It was expected that experiential avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d), that identity avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d), that deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d) and that moral avoidance will have positive effect on the dependent variables (a-d). Hence, the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables were expected to be the same as were hypothesized in H1 to H4.

From the F-tests, presented in table 12, it is clear that experiential avoidance and identity avoidance had effect on the dependent variables (a-d) ($p < 0.01$), and that moral avoidance had effect on the dependent variables (a-c), which is consistent with the results in section 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.4. However, deficit-value avoidance did not have a significant effect on avoid purchasing in 12 months, but the effect of deficit-value avoidance on avoid purchasing was significant in section 4.1.3. With this exception, the results overall indicate that avoidance behavior may be persistent over time.

Multiple Regressions	F-tests	Adjusted R ²
Experiential Avoidance on NWoM in 12 Months	14.385***	0.144
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Considering in 12 Months	11.633***	0.118
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing in 12 Months	11.221***	0.114
Experiential Avoidance on Avoid Stores in 12 Months	32.498***	0.284
Identity Avoidance on NWoM in 12 Months	8.175***	0.108
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Considering in 12 Months	10.524***	0.138
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing in 12 Months	10.161***	0.134
Identity Avoidance on Avoid Stores in 12 Months	7.803***	0.103
Deficit-value Avoidance on NWoM in 12 Months	6.631***	0.086
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Considering in 12 Months	4.968***	0.063
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing in 12 Months	3.215	0.036
Deficit-value Avoidance on Avoid Stores in 12 Months	4.743***	0.059
Moral Avoidance on NWoM in 12 Months	2.383*	0.023
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Considering in 12 Months	5.156***	0.065
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Purchasing in 12 Months	2.740**	0.028
Moral Avoidance on Avoid Stores in 12 Months	0.420	-0.010

Significance of F-test for the regression: * = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Table 12: F-tests for the regressions between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors in 12 months

4.2 Summary of findings

A summary of the empirical findings is presented in table 13. In short, experiential avoidance had a positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Identity avoidance had a positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Deficit-value avoidance had a positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Moral avoidance had a positive effect on negative word-of-mouth and avoid purchasing the brand. Subjective norms provide additional explanatory in the regressions between experiential avoidance and avoid considering the brand, between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering the brand, between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and between moral avoidance and avoid considering the brand. What is more, level of involvement had a moderating effect on the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors.

Summary of Hypotheses

Main effects of the reasons for brand avoidance	H1a: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on negative word-of-mouth.	Supported
	H1b: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on avoid considering.	Partly supported
	H1c: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on avoid purchasing.	Supported
	H1d: Experiential avoidance will have positive effect on avoid stores.	Supported
	H2a: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on negative word-of-mouth.	Supported
	H2b: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on avoid considering.	Supported
	H2c: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on avoid purchasing.	Partly supported
	H2d: Identity avoidance will have positive effect on avoid stores.	Supported
	H3a: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on negative word-of-mouth.	Supported
	H3b: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on avoid considering.	Supported
	H3c: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on avoid purchasing.	Supported
	H3d: Deficit-value avoidance will have positive effect on avoid stores.	Supported
	H4a: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on negative word-of-mouth.	Supported
	H4b: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on avoid considering.	Party supported
	H4c: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on avoid purchasing.	Supported
	H4d: Moral avoidance will have positive effect on avoid stores.	Not supported
The additional explanatory value of subjective norms	H5a: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and negative word-of-mouth.	Not supported
	H5b: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid considering.	Supported
	H5c: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid purchasing.	Not supported
	H5d: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid stores.	Not supported
	H6a: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and negative word-of-mouth.	Not supported
	H6b: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and avoid considering.	Not supported
	H6c: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and avoid purchasing.	Not supported
	H6d: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and avoid stores.	Not supported
	H7a: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth.	Supported
	H7b: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering.	Supported
	H7c: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid purchasing.	Not supported
	H7d: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and avoid stores.	Not supported

	<p>H8a: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth.</p> <p>H8b: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid considering</p> <p>H8c: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid purchasing.</p> <p>H8d: Subjective norms will provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between moral avoidance and avoid stores.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Supported</p> <p>Not supported</p> <p>Not supported</p>
Level of involvement as a moderator	H9: Level of involvement will moderate the relationships between experiential avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between identity avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d), the relationship between deficit-value avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d) and the relationship between moral avoidance and the dependent variables (a-d).	Supported

Table 13: Summary of empirical findings

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this section, the results of the study are discussed. The discussion is organized after the purpose formulation and the research questions. From the discussion, conclusions of the study are drawn. Thereafter, theoretical, managerial and methodological implications are presented. Lastly, limitations and criticism of the study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are given.

5.1 Discussion of the Results

5.1.1 The Reasons for and Behaviors of Brand Avoidance

This section discusses the research questions: *What are the reasons for brand avoidance?* and *How do they take form in avoidance behavior?*

The findings from hypothesis 1 suggest that experiential avoidance had a significant positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. What is more, experiential avoidance had a significant effect on avoid considering, but the independent variable hassle factor had a significant negative effect on avoid considering, contradicting what was hypothesized in hypothesis 1b. Hassle factors captures the inconvenience of having to complain, exchange or repair (Zarantonello et al. 2016), and it was theorized that consumers will avoid considering a brand due to an unpleasant brand experience or dissatisfaction with a product or service (Bogomolova & Millburn, 2012). One possible explanation to this negative effect of hassle factors could be that if consumers have to complain, exchange or repair, they could still have an overall pleasant brand experience and be satisfied with the product or service, on the condition that their redress seeking was met in a good way. Hence, they may still perceive it as worth it to consider the brand (Knittel et al., 2016).

The findings from hypothesis 2 implies that identity avoidance had a significant positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering and avoid stores. Although identity avoidance had an effect on avoid purchasing and the independent variable undesired selves had a significant positive effect on this behavior, negative reference groups had a significant negative effect on avoid purchasing. This contradicts what was hypothesized in hypothesis 2c. It was theorized that a consumer's negative perception of a brand and the people consuming it would urge the consumer to avoid purchasing the brand (Zarantonello et al., 2016). However, it was also stated in the theory that undesired selves and negative reference groups are two concepts that build on each other.

While undesired selves capture that a consumer avoids a brand he or she feels incongruent with, the negative reference group may be stereotypical in nature and hard for consumers to specify (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002). A possible explanation for the negative effect of negative reference groups on avoid purchasing could hence be that a consumer perceives it as more valuable to not be associated with a brand, than to not be associated with a vaguely defined negative reference group of that brand. Furthermore, the independent variable deindividuation was insignificant in all regressions, meaning that it was not possible to determine if it had a positive, negative or no effect at all on the dependent variables. This could in one hand indicate that deindividuation is not a reason for brand avoidance, but deindividuation could on the other hand together with the other independent variables co-explain avoidance behaviors (Newbold et al., 2013).

The findings from hypothesis 3 suggests that deficit-value avoidance had a significant positive effect on negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores. However, the independent variables aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement were insignificant in all regression, meaning that it is not possible to determine if they had a positive, negative or no effect at all on the dependent variables. Consistent with the reasoning around deindividuation, it could indicate that aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement are not reasons for brand avoidance. It could also be interpreted as that aesthetic insufficiency and celebrity endorsement are independent variables that co-explain together with the independent variables perceived quality and perceived price how brand avoidance takes from in behavior (Newbold et al., 2013).

The findings from hypothesis 4 implies that moral avoidance had a significant positive effect on negative word-of-mouth and avoid purchasing, supporting hypothesis 4a and 4c. The findings also suggest that moral avoidance did not have a significant effect on avoid stores, meaning that no support for hypothesis 4d was found. Although moral avoidance had a significant effect on avoid considering, the independent variable anti-hegemony had a significant negative effect on avoid considering, contradicting what was hypothesized in hypothesis 4b. The concept of anti-hegemony explains that consumers can avoid certain brands that are perceived as too dominant, as a way to prevent monopolies (Lee et al., 2009b). However, as brand-hegemony reduces the number of brands available on the market (Cromie & Ewing, 2009), it might not be possible to avoid consider a brand, if it does not exist other options within the same product category on the market. Furthermore, anti-hegemony and sustainability were the only significant independent variables. This means that the independent variables in general were insignificant, which could indicate that they are not reasons to brand avoidance or that they together co-explain avoidance behavior

(Newbold et al., 2013). This, together with low adjusted R-squares, nevertheless indicates that there probably are more and other moral reasons to why avoidance behavior arises than those included in the study.

In addition, all regressions conducted to test the hypotheses of this study had adjusted R-squares that ranged between 2.0 percent and 37.4 percent. The regressions for experiential avoidance and identity avoidance had generally higher adjusted R-squares than the ones for deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance. The range can be considered low, indicating that the independent variables do not explain very much of the variance in the dependent variable, and as follows do not provide much explanatory value. However, a meta-meta analysis with more than 7,500 primary studies conducted between 1918 to 2012 has shown that the average R-square within the research field of consumer behavior is 14.7 percent (Eisend, 2015). In this study, adjusted R-squares have been used, and they are penalized for the number of variables in the regressions, meaning that they are generally lower than R-squares. With this in mind, the regressions in this study are considered acceptable, since they provide about as much explanatory value as regressions in other studies within the same research field.

5.1.2 The Additional Explanatory Value of Subjective Norms

This section discusses *if avoidance behaviors are affected by the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior*.

After testing the hypothesis 5 to 8, subjective norms can be considered to provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid considering, between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering, between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and between moral avoidance and avoid considering. Although the independent variable subjective norms was insignificant in the regression between experiential avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, the adjusted R-square of the regression increased compared to the when subjective norms was excluded from it.

Subjective norms capture the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior. As theorized, it depends on the likelihood that a positive reference group, such as friends or family, approve of a particular behavior, and the motivation to comply with the referent (Ajzen, 1991). Negative word-of-mouth is theorized to be negatively valenced conversations between consumers

about a brand, which often includes complaining to friends or family (Wetzer et al., 2007; Blodgett et al., 1993). Avoid considering is theorized to be a result of negative feedback from a referent (Bogomolova & Millburn, 2012). As such, both of these behaviors include interacting with a reference group, which can explain the additional explanatory value that subjective norms contributed with in the regressions mentioned above. In contrast, avoid purchasing and avoid stores are not theorized to be behaviors that include interacting with a reference group. This can explain why subjective norms did not provide any additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance, deficit-value avoidance, identity avoidance and moral avoidance and these avoidance behaviors.

Contradicting what was hypothesized in hypothesis 6, subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity avoidance and any of the avoidance behavior. Identity avoidance occurs when consumers create their self-identity through disidentifying with brands that are conflicting with their values and image (Bhattachar & Elsbach, 2002), while subjective norms is, as stated, the social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In a previous study, self-identity has been incorporated in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2006). The Theory of Planned Behavior is an extension of the theory of Reasoned Action, hence it also incorporates the variable subjective norms which is used in this study. However, it includes the independent variable perceived behavioral control in addition to the variables in the Theory of Reasoned Action. When self-identity was added to the Theory of Planned Behavior, it was found to be an independent variable predicting behavioral intentions. What is more, it was found that the effect of self-identity was independent of the effect of subjective norms, and that self-identity had a significant effect on behavioral intentions while subjective norms had a weak or insignificant effect on behavioral intentions. Although this study only used the subjective norms and behavior, the patterns of subjective norms and self-identity were still the same as those of Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2006). Identity avoidance had a significant effect on behaviors and this effect did not change when including subjective norms, which had an insignificant effect on behavior. This provides evidence that subjective norms and self-identity captures two distinct social influences on behavior, and that self-identity might be a better predictor of behavior (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2006).

5.1.3 Level of Involvement as a Moderator

This section discusses *if consumers are more or less willing to engage in avoidance behaviors depending on level of involvement.*

The findings from hypothesis 9 suggest that level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between most of the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. Highly-involved consumers are more likely to engage in avoidance behaviors. This can be put in relation to brand loyalty, where level of involvement also is found to have a moderating effect (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015).

However, due to experiential reasons, low-involved consumers were more willing to avoid the brand's stores. Based on theory, the low-involvement dataset consists of brands in the fast-moving consumer goods and groceries, and fast-food restaurants, industries. In appendix 3, it is evident that store environment had a strong positive effect on avoid stores for the low-involvement dataset. It can be assumed that stores selling low-involvement products present a worse store environment than stores selling high-involvement products, leading to higher levels of store avoidance. This is supported by Aylott and Mitchell (1999) who states that grocery shopping is the most distressful form of shopping, and further by Lee et al. (2009a) who state that store environments that are stressful, dirty, or low in quality generate a negative store experience, leading to store avoidance.

Due to insignificance in both datasets, it could not be determined if level of involvement had a moderating effect in the relationship between identity avoidance and avoid purchasing, moral avoidance and avoid considering, and moral avoidance and avoid stores. Though, the results show that there is a tendency for a moderating effect of level of involvement, where highly-involved consumers are more likely to exercise avoidance behaviors.

5.1.4 Persistency Over Time

This section discusses *if avoidance behaviors are persistent over time*.

In addition to the hypothesis testing, it was investigated if avoidance behaviors were persistent over time. It was overall found that the effect of experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance on the avoidance behaviors negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering, avoid purchasing and avoid stores was the same in the present state as in a future state (one year from now). However, as future behavior is hard to estimate, the results should only be interpreted as an indication that brand avoidance may be persistent over time. Nevertheless, this can be put in relation to negative consumer-based brand equity, as previous research has found that brand avoidance that has been persistent over a significant period of time can result in negative customer-based brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). When consumers consistently behave

unfavorably around a brand, it can decrease the company's efficiency and effectiveness in the marketplace, and hence be harmful for the company (Lee et al., 2009b). Thus, although the results should be interpreted with caution, brand avoidance should still be seen as a serious issue for companies.

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to contribute to the current state of knowledge by answering the first research question: *What are the reasons for brand avoidance?*

The conclusion based on the results and discussion of this thesis is that consumers avoid brands due to four reasons: experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance.

The purpose of this thesis was also to contribute to the current state of knowledge by answering the second research question: *How do they take form in avoidance behavior?*

Avoidance behaviors were measured in terms of whether the reasons for brand avoidance have positive effect on avoidance behaviors. The conclusion based the result and discussion of this thesis is firstly that experiential avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Secondly, identity avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Thirdly, deficit-value avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. Lastly, moral avoidance takes form as negative word-of-mouth and avoid purchasing the brand.

This thesis further investigated *if avoidance behaviors are affected by the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior.*

Based on the results and discussion of this thesis, some avoidance behaviors are affected by the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior. Subjective norms were found to provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid considering the brand, between deficit-value avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, between deficit-value avoidance and avoid considering the brand, between moral avoidance and negative word-of-mouth, and between moral avoidance and avoid considering the brand. On the contrary,

subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value on avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores. This can be explained by the fact that negative word-of-mouth and avoid considering a brand are two avoidance behaviors that include social interaction with a reference group. What is more, subjective norms did not provide any additional value in the relationship between identity avoidance and any of the avoidance behaviors. This suggests that self-identity may be a better predictor for the behaviors in this study than subjective norms. All in all, the social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behavior affected negative word-of-mouth and avoid considering the brand.

This thesis also aimed investigated *if consumers are more or less willing to engage in avoidance behaviors depending on level of involvement.*

Based on the results and discussion of this thesis, consumers are more or less willing to engage in avoidance behavior depending on level of involvement. Level of involvement was found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between most of the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. This suggests that consumers are more likely to engage in avoidance behaviors if their involvement with a product or service is high. However, the moderating effect of level of involvement on the relationship between experiential avoidance and avoid the brand's stores were the opposite, since consumers were more willing to avoid stores if their involvement with a product or service was low. In addition, it could not be determined if level of involvement had a moderating effect on the relationship between identity avoidance and avoid purchasing the brand, between moral avoidance and avoid considering the brand, and between moral avoidance and avoid the brand's stores, due to insignificant regressions in both the high and low-involvement dataset. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for a moderating effect of level of involvement, where highly-involved consumers are more likely to exercise avoidance behaviors. Overall, highly-involved consumers are more willing the engage in avoidance behaviors.

This thesis also investigated *if avoidance behaviors are persistent over time.*

Based on the results and discussion of this thesis, avoidance behaviors are persistent over time. However, as future behavior is hard to estimate, the results should only be interpreted as an indication of behaviors twelve months from now.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The results of this thesis contribute with multiple theoretical implications. First and foremost, the results of this study suggest that brand avoidance can take form as negative word-of-mouth, avoid considering the brand, avoid purchasing the brand and avoid the brand's stores.

Secondly, the results confirm that experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance are all reasons for brand avoidance. However, they also suggest that deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance do not explain as much of the variance in avoidance behavior as experiential avoidance and identity avoidance do. In one hand, this can imply that these are not very strong reasons for consumers to avoid a brand. On the other hand, this can imply that the concepts deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance need to be further theoretically developed to include more accurate reasons for brand avoidance.

Thirdly, the results of this thesis suggest that subjective norms have more effect on behaviors that include social interaction with reference groups. This is shown as subjective norms provided more explanatory value on avoidance behaviors such as negative word-of-mouth and avoid considering, than avoid purchasing and avoid stores. Furthermore, as subjective norms did not provide additional explanatory value in the relationship between identity-avoidance and any of the tested avoidance behaviors, the results suggest that self-identity may be a better predictor of behavior than subjective norms.

Lastly, the results of this thesis show that level of involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behavior. This pattern has been evident for the concept of brand loyalty, but to the authors' knowledge, it has never been shown for the concept of brand avoidance.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The results of this thesis contribute with managerial implications. Similar to consumers being loyal to brands, consumers also avoid brands. This thesis provides managers with reasons for why brand avoidance arises, and how it takes form in avoidance behaviors. This should be of managerial interest as brand avoidance that is persistent over time can cause negative customer-based brand equity, which in the long run can decrease the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the company. As such, understanding the reasons for brand avoidance and how it takes form in behavior can be

considered a competitive advantage for companies. Moreover, brand avoidance should be of particular interest for managers offering high-involvement products or services, as level of involvement moderates the relationship between the reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors.

Specifically, there are some managerial actions that can be undertaken to counteract brand avoidance. In the case of experiential avoidance, companies need to make sure that they meet their customers' expectations and provide a good customer experience. This can for example be enabled by customer service and support functions. Moreover, identity avoidance can be considered as consumer-created, and adjusting a brand to be congruent with additional consumers' identity is difficult without any re-branding efforts, as most companies have a predefined target group which they aspire to attract. In order to counteract deficit-value avoidance, companies need to make sure that they have an attractive value proposition and provide their consumers a suitable price to quality trade-off. What is more, companies can adjust their packaging design and use of celebrity endorsement to appeal to the target group. In the case of moral avoidance, companies need to monitor how they are perceived when it comes to moral aspects and adjust their operation to be more ethical.

5.5 Methodological Implications

This thesis also provides methodological implications in terms of two different sampling approaches for questionnaires. The response rate was higher for questionnaires that were distributed physically than for questionnaires that were distributed online. However, as the online survey tool offered a "force-response" alternative, the quality of the responses was higher for questionnaires that were distributed online. What is more, it was more time consuming to distribute questionnaire physically and did not allow for as much geographical spread of the responses. As such, the online sampling method is to prefer, as it generated higher-quality responses, a better geographical spread and was less time consuming.

5.6 Limitations and Criticism of the Study

This thesis has broadened the current level of knowledge of brand avoidance in various ways. Nevertheless, limitations and criticism of the thesis should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, a criticism that can be directed toward the study is that although the questionnaire was distributed online to a large extent to get a wider geographical spread, the sample

was still skewed toward students in the Stockholm region. This restricted the possibility to analyze variables such as how income affect brand avoidance, as a vast majority of the students possessed a lower-level income.

A second criticism that can be directed toward the study is regarding the formulation of the questionnaire. Since the majority of previous research on brand avoidance has been conducted using a qualitative method, the authors had to formulate some questions in the questionnaire by themselves. Although the questionnaire was pilot tested, it is possible that some questions did not capture the phenomenon they were supposed to. This can possibly explain why deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance did not explain much of the variance in avoidance behaviors. What is more, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that respondents were asked to think of a brand they avoided when answering the questions. Therefore, it was not possible to investigate if unfamiliarity and associated risk were components of deficit-value avoidance, which previous research has suggested (Lee et al., 2009a, 2009b). Moreover, the respondents were given a set of example industries when requested to choose a brand in the questionnaire. They were further restricted to choose a brand that sells commercial products or services, i.e. products or services that can be consumed by a consumer on a market for money. This might have induced a risk of directorial formulation, which have been noticed in the analysis of the results. This was handled by changing the example industries halfway through the data collection.

Lastly, the authors of this thesis wanted to investigate brand avoidance with a broad approach. Therefore, multiple regressions were used to investigate several possible reasons for brand avoidance, and how these reasons take form in different avoidance behaviors. Consequently, it was due to time constraints not possible to analyze all independent variables in each regression in-depth. Furthermore, this thesis was originally supposed to connect brand avoidance to the Theory of Planned Behavior which is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action, to investigate how both subjective norms and perceived behavioral control influence behavior. However, to capture perceived behavioral control in a good way, a questionnaire must include several questions about a very specific behavior. Due to the fact that this thesis took a broad approach and investigated four avoidance behaviors, it was not possible to capture perceived behavioral control in a good way. Hence, it was left out of the study.

5.7 Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis has investigated brand avoidance with a broad approach, focusing on how experiential avoidance, identity avoidance, deficit-value avoidance and moral avoidance separately takes form in avoidance behaviors. In future research, it would be of interest to investigate individual reasons of brand avoidance more in-depth, and to investigate how they co-explain avoidance behavior.

What is more, it would be interesting for future research to investigate brand avoidance in a business-to-business context, since it is possible that it differs from a business-to-consumer context. Future research can also contribute to the current body of research by investigating brand avoidance in a specific industry. The questionnaire responses collected in this thesis implies that brand avoidance of for example fashion takes form differently than brand avoidance of groceries.

Moreover, it would be interesting for future research to investigate how level of income affects brand avoidance. This can be considered as somewhat controlled for as the definition of brand avoidance only includes brands that a consumer can afford. However, consumers with a high-level income arguably have more consumption alternatives, and perhaps avoid more brands.

Since this thesis was originally supposed to connect brand avoidance in the Theory of Planned behavior, and not only subjective norms, it would be interesting for future research to investigate how perceived behavioral control affects brand avoidance. It is expected that consumers with a high level of perceived behavior control are more likely to avoid brands.

Also, the authors of this thesis have reasons to expect that brand attitude has a mediating effect on the relationship between reasons for brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors. Since this thesis used multiple regressions and no statistical program, to the authors' knowledge, can test mediating effects between several independent variables and a dependent variable, it could not be tested for in a suitable way. Therefore, future research could contribute to the current body of research by investigating the mediating effect of brand attitude, suggestively in combination with focus on one reason for brand avoidance.

Lastly, this study found that avoidance behaviors are persistent over time. Though, as future behavior is hard to estimate, it could be of interest for future research to elaborate on the importance and impact of brand avoidance and avoidance behaviors on brands, based on persistency.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Pilot Study

	Do you avoid any brand?	Why do you avoid the brand?	How do you avoid the brand?
E. Ahlantzberg, personal communication, September 12, 2018	Cubus	Lacking quality Unfriendly store environment	Does not enter store
	GAP	Unethical value chain	Talks negatively about the brand
	McDonalds	Too dominant market position Unethical	Talks negatively about the brand
	Coca Cola	Too dominant market position Unethical	Talks negatively about the brand
H. Rondahl, personal communication, September 12, 2018	NA-KD	Lacking quality Does not meet expectations Does not fit my identity	Does not purchase
	RyanAir	Delays	Does not purchase
D. Faustmann, personal communication, September 12, 2018	Primark	Lacking quality Hidden value chain	Does not purchase Does not enter website
	Abercrombie & Fitch	Unfriendly store environment	Does not purchase Does not enter website
	H&M	Lacking quality Unfriendly store environment	Does not purchase Does not enter website
	Gucci	Difficult to return Does not fit my image	Does not purchase Does not enter website
C. Gosenius, personal communication, September 14, 2018	Dressmann	Lacking quality Does not fit my identity Too mainstream	Does not enter store
	Renault	Lacking quality Unappealing design	Does not purchase
M. Gleichmann, personal communication, September 14, 2018	RyanAir	Bad brand values	Does not purchase
	H&M	Unappealing design Stressful store environment Too cheap	Does not purchase
A. E. Wadelius, personal communication, September 16, 2018	H&M	Unsustainable Unappealing design Does not fit my image	Does not purchase
	ICA (own brands)	Lacking quality Not good for competition	Does not purchase
	Weber	Do not like their heritage	Does not purchase

A. C. Wadelius, personal communication, September 16, 2018	Cubus	Lacking Quality	Does not purchase
P. Gosenius, personal communication, September 17, 2018	Flash	Does not fit my style Not age-appropriate	Does not enter store Does not enter website
	BikBok	Does not fit my style Not age-appropriate	Does not enter store Does not enter website
	Euro Shopper	Lacking quality	Does not purchase

Appendix 2 – Batteries of Questions

Experiential Avoidance				
	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
Poor Performance	Does not meet my expectations	0.730	239	Napoli et al. (2014)
	Does not meet my requirements		239	Napoli et al. (2014)
	Is dishonest in its communication		239	Own
	Is not as good as it is described in its communication		239	Own
Hassle Factors	Causes me inconvenience since additional costs post purchase are high	0.823	239	Lee et al. (2013)
	Causes me inconvenience since I need to complain		239	Pilot study
	Takes unnecessary time and energy from me		239	Pilot study
Store Environment (Brand Owned)	I do not like the environment in the brand's stores	0.867	126	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I do not like to shop in the brand's stores		126	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I avoid the type of environment that occurs in the brand's stores		126	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
Store Environment (Brand Owned Online)	I do not like the environment on the brand's website	0.887	171	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I do not like to shop on the brand's website		171	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I avoid the type of environment that occurs on the brand's website		171	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
Store Environment (Retailer)	I do not like the environment in stores where the brand is sold by retailers	0.914	103	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I do not like to shop in stores where the brand is sold by retailers		103	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
	I avoid the type of environment that occurs in stores where the brand is sold by retailers		103	Donovan & Rossiter (1982)
Identity Avoidance				
	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
Undesired Selves	Has an image that is inconsistent with how I like to see myself	0.925	239	Nam et al. (2011)
	Has an image that is inconsistent with how I like others to see me		239	Nam et al. (2011)
	Does not reflect who I am		239	Sirgy et al. (1997)
Negative Reference Group	Is consumed by people whose image differ from my identity	0.921	239	Nam et al. (2011)
	Is consumed by people I do not want to be identified with		239	Own
	Is consumed by people that do not reflect who I am		239	Sirgy et al. (1997)
Deindividuation	Is consumed by too many	0.792	239	Own
	Is too common		239	Own
	Does not allow for me to express my identity		239	Own
Inauthenticity	Does not remain true to its espoused values	0.758	239	Napoli et al. (2014)
	Does not remain true to its principles		239	Napoli et al. (2014)
	Does not exude a sense of tradition		239	Napoli et al. (2014)

Deficit-Value Avoidance				
	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
Perceived Quality	Is of low quality	0.900	239	Spry et al. (2011)
	Is of inconsistent quality		239	Spry et al. (2011)
	Is of unreliable quality		239	Spry et al. (2011)
Perceived Price	Has an unreasonable price level	0.826	239	Lee et al. (2013)
	Offers products that gives me bad value for money		239	Richardson et al. (1996)
	Has a price that does not match the product quality		239	Richardson et al. (1996)
Aesthetic Insufficiency	Has a design that does not appeal to me	0.895	239	Own
	Has a logo that does not appeal to me		239	Own
	Has a tonality that does not appeal to me		239	Own
Celebrity Endorsement	Is associated with a celebrity that is a bad fit for the brand	0.921	239	Spry et al. (2011)
	Is associated with a celebrity that is inappropriate for the brand		239	Spry et al. (2011)
	Is associated with a celebrity that is not logical for the brand		239	Spry et al. (2011)
Moral Avoidance				
	Statement	Pearson's Correlation	N	Source
Country Effects	Originates from a country that I have a bad perception of	0,792***	239	Own
	Originates from a country that produces low quality products		239	Own
	Statement	Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
Anti-Hegemony	Has a too dominant market position	0.883	239	Own
	Has a market share that is too big		239	Own
	Penalizes the sale of local brands		239	Own
	Penalizes my availability of options of other brands within the same product category		239	Own
Corporate Irresponsibility	Has bad working conditions for their employees	0.850	239	Wagner et al. (2008)
	Does not take responsibility in minimizing their negative impact on animals		239	Own
	Does not meet my expectations regarding social responsibilities		239	Chen (2010)
	Does not meet my expectations regarding environmental responsibilities		239	Chen (2010)
Sustainability	Only acts on the basis of a profit interest	0.729	239	Stanaland et al. (2011)
	Does not keep its promises regarding sustainability		239	Chen (2010)
	Is performing worse than other brands in the same product category regarding sustainability		239	Chen (2010)

Subjective Norms				
Statement		Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
	Many people whose opinion I value consent that I avoid this brand	0.770	239	Ajzen (2013)
	Generally, it is important for me to do what my family thinks I should do		239	Ajzen (2013)
	Generally, it is important for me to do what my friends think I should do		239	Ajzen (2013)
	Generally, it is important for me to do what my partner think I should do		239	Ajzen (2013)
Brand Attitude				
Statement		Cronbach's Alpha	N	Source
	Good to Bad	0.899	239	Söderlund (2005)
	Like to Do not like		239	Söderlund (2005)
	Positive to Negative		239	Söderlund (2005)
	Interesting to Uninteresting		239	Söderlund (2005)

Appendix 3 – Regressions Experiential Avoidance, High and Low-involvement Datasets

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	High- involvement	Low- involvement	High- involvement	Low- involvement	High- involvement	Low- involvement	High- involvement	Low- involvement
Poor Performance	0.579*** (0.117)	0.262* (0.150)	0.292*** (0.104)	0.218 (0.132)	0.587*** (0.146)	-0.050 (0.184)	0.308*** (0.109)	0.155 (0.150)
Hassle Factors	0.221** (0.087)	0.144 (0.171)	-0.128* (0.077)	-0.222 (0.150)	-0.022 (0.108)	0.141 (0.210)	-0.122 (0.081)	-0.068 (0.171)
Store Environment	0.113 (0.084)	0.076 (0.111)	0.146* (0.074)	0.050 (0.097)	0.066 (0.104)	0.066 (0.136)	0.438*** (0.078)	0.734*** (0.111)
Constant	-0.108 (0.566)	2.195*** (0.641)	4.252*** (0.501)	5.074 (0.563)	2.215*** (0.704)	2.189*** (0.786)	2.357*** (0.527)	0.705 (0.643)
Observations	149	90	149	90	149	90	149	90
Adjusted R ²	0.292	0.049	0.075	0.017	0.118	-0.025	0.239	0.374
F-test	21.373***	2.520*	4.972***	1.525	7.588***	0.267	16.533***	18.729***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 4 – Regressions Identity Avoidance, High and Low-involvement Datasets

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement
Undesired Selves	0.019 (0.113)	0.063 (0.137)	0.372*** (0.086)	0.297** (0.118)	0.242** (0.134)	0.252 (0.167)	0.387*** (0.097)	0.168 (0.172)
Negative Reference Group	0.314*** (0.097)	0.093 (0.118)	0.045 (0.074)	-0.057 (0.102)	-0.244** (0.115)	-0.298** (0.144)	0.042 (0.083)	0.005 (0.148)
Deindividuation	-0.174* (0.093)	0.018 (0.128)	-0.141** (0.071)	0.002 (0.111)	-0.127 (0.110)	0.051 (0.157)	-0.265*** (0.080)	0.058 (0.161)
Inauthenticity	0.320*** (0.105)	0.237* (0.119)	0.092 (0.080)	-0.081 (0.103)	0.125 (0.125)	0.014 (0.146)	0.298*** (0.090)	0.110 (0.150)
Constant	2.026*** (0.602)	2.195*** (0.733)	4.009*** (0.458)	4.728*** (0.635)	5.042*** (0.712)	4.293*** (0.898)	2.890*** (0.517)	2.008** (0.924)
Observations	149	90	149	90	149	90	149	90
Adjusted R ²	0.136	0.035	0.165	0.039	0.025	0.007	0.209	-0.012
F-test	6.810***	1.798	8.310***	1.885	1.964	1.153	10.783***	0.746

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 5 – Regressions Deficit-value Avoidance, High and Low-involvement Datasets

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement
Perceived Quality	0.181*	0.015	0.161**	0.131	0.410***	0.118	0.398***	-0.163
	(0.095)	(0.131)	(0.075)	(0.113)	(0.106)	(0.157)	(0.080)	(0.152)
Perceived Price	0.215**	0.112	-0.019	0.007	0.002	0.055	-0.189**	0.498***
	(0.101)	(0.116)	(0.080)	(0.100)	(0.112)	(0.139)	(0.084)	(0.134)
Aesthetic Insufficiency	0.087	0.099	0.094	-0.014	-0.079	-0.095	0.144*	0.065
	(0.103)	(0.125)	(0.082)	(0.108)	(0.114)	(0.150)	(0.086)	(0.145)
Celebrity Endorser	0.149	0.045	0.054	0.110	-0.134	0.244	0.005	0.162
	(0.113)	(0.158)	(0.090)	(0.136)	(0.125)	(0.189)	(0.095)	(0.182)
Constant	1.634***	2.969***	4.736***	5.024***	3.902***	3.877***	3.490***	2.054**
	(0.611)	(0.676)	(0.483)	(0.584)	(0.677)	(0.810)	(0.510)	(0.782)
Observations	149	90	149	90	149	90	149	90
	0.077	-0.020	0.039	-0.018	0.087	-0.018	0.202	0.108
F-test	4.094***	0.567	2.497**	0.613	4.546***	0.603	10.348***	3.685***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 6 – Regressions Moral Avoidance, High and Low-involvement Datasets

	NWoM		Avoid Considering		Avoid Purchasing		Avoid Stores	
	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement	High-involvement	Low-involvement
Country Effects	0.184*	0.018	0.082	0.044	0.041	0.119	0.030	-0.159
	(0.110)	(0.127)	(0.087)	(0.107)	(0.123)	(0.150)	(0.102)	(0.155)
Anti-hegemony	0.075	-0.045	-0.145*	-0.116	-0.047	0.156	-0.033	0.238
	(0.100)	(0.119)	(0.079)	(0.101)	(0.112)	(0.141)	(0.092)	(0.145)
Corporate Irresponsibility	-0.189	0.142	0.039	0.216	0.123	0.275	0.006	0.148
	(0.162)	(0.180)	(0.128)	-0.152	(0.182)	(0.214)	(0.150)	(0.220)
Sustainability	0.408**	-0.003	0.145	-0.030	0.269	-0.138	0.190	0.007
	(0.170)	(0.177)	(0.134)	(0.150)	(0.191)	(0.210)	(0.157)	(0.216)
Constant	2.199***	3.233***	5.249***	5.113***	3.419***	3.037***	4.289***	2.189**
	(0.628)	(0.127)	(0.495)	(0.748)	(0.703)	(1.048)	(0.580)	(1.081)
Observations	149	90	149	90	149	90	149	90
Adjusted R ²	0.058	-0.027	0.024	0.019	0.048	-0.001	0.003	-0.001
F-test	3.296**	0.417	1.924	1.429	2.850**	0.975	1.108	0.975

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 7 – Regressions Experiential Avoidance and Avoidance Behaviors in 12 Months

	NWoM (a)	Avoid Considering (b)	Avoid Purchasing (c)	Avoid Stores (d)
Poor Performance	0.425*** (0.095)	0.429*** (0.083)	0.416*** (0.079)	0.174* (0.095)
Hassle Factors	0.098 (0.077)	-0.140** (0.067)	-0.158** (0.063)	-0.024 (0.077)
Store Environment	0.077 (0.069)	0.076 (0.060)	0.052 (0.057)	0.579*** (0.069)
Constant	1.263*** (0.423)	3.776*** (0.368)	4.214*** (0.351)	1.729*** (0.424)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.144	0.118	0.114	0.284
F-test	14.385***	11.633***	11.221***	32.498***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 8 – Regressions Identity Avoidance and Avoidance Behaviors in 12 Months

	NWoM (a)	Avoid Considering (b)	Avoid Purchasing (c)	Avoid Stores (d)
Undesired Selves	0.050 (0.086)	0.322*** (0.073)	0.295*** (0.069)	0.200** (0.095)
Negative Reference Groups	0.235*** (0.074)	0.042 (0.062)	0.011 (0.060)	0.098 (0.081)
Deindividuation	-0.065 (0.074)	-0.157** (0.063)	-0.110** (0.060)	-0.204** (0.082)
Inauthenticity	0.258*** (0.076)	0.161** (0.064)	0.187*** (0.061)	0.328*** (0.084)
Constant	1.891*** (0.454)	3.891*** (0.384)	4.098*** (0.366)	2.672*** (0.501)
Observations	238	238	238	238
Adjusted R ²	0.108	0.138	0.134	0.103
F-test	8.175***	10.524***	10.161***	7.803***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 9 – Regressions Deficit-value Avoidance and Avoidance Behaviors in 12 Months

	NWoM	Avoid Considering	Avoid Purchasing	Avoid Stores
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Perceived Quality	0.105 (0.073)	0.199*** (0.064)	0.164*** (0.061)	0.210** (0.081)
Perceived Price	0.215 (0.073)	0.067 (0.064)	0.017 (0.061)	0.100 (0.082)
Aesthetic Insufficiency	-0.010 (0.075)	0.044 (0.065)	0.043 (0.063)	0.077 (0.084)
Celebrity Endorser	0.294 (0.088)	0.060 (0.076)	0.014 (0.073)	0.141 (0.097)
Constant	2.003*** (0.428)	4.278*** (0.372)	4.969*** (0.359)	2.688*** (0.477)
Observations	239	239	239	239
	0.086	0.063	0.036	0.059
F-test	6.631***	4.968***	3.215	4.743***

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$

Appendix 10 – Regressions Moral Avoidance and Avoidance Behaviors in 12 Months

	NWoM	Avoid Considering	Avoid Purchasing	Avoid Stores
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Country Effects	0.154* (0.083)	0.137* (0.070)	0.089 (0.067)	-0.050 (0.092)
Anti-hegemony	0.091 (0.075)	-0.100 (0.063)	-0.083 (0.061)	-0.072 (0.084)
Corporate Irresponsibility	-0.049 (0.120)	-0.074 (0.100)	-0.014 (0.097)	-0.039 (0.133)
Sustainability	0.147 (0.122)	0.310*** (0.103)	0.190* (0.100)	0.064 (0.137)
Constant	2.668*** (0.506)	4.568*** (0.424)	5.167*** (0.411)	4.868*** (0.564)
Observations	239	239	239	239
Adjusted R ²	0.023	0.065	0.028	-0.010
F-test	2.383*	5.156***	2.740**	0.420

Standard errors in parentheses

* = $p < 0.10$, ** = $p < 0.05$, *** = $p < 0.01$