

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

TARIQ ALMUTAIRI

THE ROLE OF ACTUAL AND IDEAL SELF- CONGRUENCE IN
BRAND HUMANISATION

SCHOOL OF WATER ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

PHD Thesis
Academic Year: 2015 - 2021

Supervisor: Professor. Paul Jeffrey
Associate Supervisor: Dr. Paul Hutchings
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ABSTRACT

The creation of emotional attachment among consumers is a key branding requirement in today's marketing world. One way to achieve this is to humanise the brand/product's personality to match consumers' self-congruence, so the aim of this research is to investigate whether a humanised brand will increase the consumer's emotional attachment by the consumer's actual self-congruence or by ideal self-congruence.

Previous studies have encouraged marketing practitioners and scholars to introduce brand humanisation strategies in marketing communication that will drive consumers to communicate with brands. This marketing communication technique consists of a set of humanlike features, indicating a mind and personality. It is designed to allow the consumer to perceive a brand as humanoid and to create a positive emotional response towards it. Most forms of humanisation allow consumers to perceive a brand as human under specific conditions. It is clear from the previous literature and the marketing perspective that consumers most frequently, but not always, consider a humanised brand as some sort of human-like being. This belief has encouraged scholars to formulate a new marketing communication technique and concept, known as 'humanising branding'. This thesis discusses the main conceptualizing models of brand humanization and practical models in the field. These models have affected the field, demonstrating the value of brand humanization and the unclear definitions of using brand humanization in academic research and in marketing communication. To the marketing literature and knowledge of academics and practitioners the study contributes by developing a model of brand humanisation.

This thesis confronts two research questions and thereby contributes to the marketing literature and knowledge for academics and practitioners. First, it contributes to the literature on consumer brand relationship by using an

experiment among participants from Cranfield University to examine the impact of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment. The results show that a humanised brand has a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment, whereas a non-humanised brand does not. Second, the research contributes to the literature on self-congruence by an experiment among participants from Cranfield University which examines the impact of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment through the use of actual and ideal self-congruence. The results show that both humanised and non-humanised brands make an impact on consumer actual self-congruence and that when the humanised brand matches the consumer's actual self-congruence, such an impact is likely to increase the consumer's emotional attachment. A humanised brand is likely to have an impact on consumer ideal self-congruence, but it is unlikely to increase consumer emotional attachment when it matches the consumer ideal self-congruence. The thesis discusses the main managerial and academic implications of this finding.

Keywords:

Brand humanisation - Consumer self-congruence – Emotional attachment.

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On my first day at Cranfield University Professor Fiona Charnley told me that a PhD is "not a project, it is a journey." It didn't take me long to understand that she was completely right. But, no matter how many hundreds of hours spent staring longingly at a monitor screen, reading the previous published work in my area of research, thinking, analysing, and writing to form words into paragraphs until the complete page, I was not alone in this journey. It is time to say thank you to everyone who joined me on it.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the boundaries of the thesis. It is divided into ten sections, beginning with the importance of the topic (section 1.1), followed by the research problem (section 1.2), research gap (section 1.3), research aim (section 1.4), research questions (section 1.5), research objectives (section 1.6), research method (section 1.7), research methodology (section 1.8), and contribution to knowledge (section 1.9). This chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure (section 1.10).

1.1 The importance of the topic

1.1.1 Personal perspective

Nearly fifteen years ago, I started to run a business in the fitness industry. I used advertising to communicate with my clients and maintain my brand awareness. It was the price I paid to make my business stand out among the famous brands in the market. It was an expensive alternative to cheap publicity, but it was one of the powerful ways to maintain relationships with my clients and seal my brand promise.

I began to connect in the social media with my clients, posting informational advertising about my business and achievements. At the time, I found my clients, when they chose my brand, relied on my personal character and achievement rather than information about my business. This inspired me to tell them stories about my personality, work ethic, and achievements to make them feel attached to my brand. To strengthen the emotional connection between my clients and myself, I started to post an image and video movie to set the human tone and help my brand come to life. Certainly, this sort of metaphor plays an important role in maintaining my brand image and building successful advertising campaigns. This showed me how and why top brands humanised brands/products to increase sales and maintain brand relationships.

From my work experience, I came to conclude that it would be difficult to create an emotional connection with my clients in advertisements without humanising my brand. This has inspired me to go to Cranfield University to pursue the answers to two marketing questions: (i) what metaphor could I use to humanise my brand? and (ii) what consumer self-concept should I target to increase consumer emotional attachment to my brand?

1.1.2 Market perspective

Consumers live in a world of desire, a world where consumers purchase a certain brand to fulfil their self-desire (e.g., actual or ideal self-congruence) (Aaker , 1999; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017; Huber & Eisele, 2018). Imagine a world without brands. It would be a world with no diversity of products, no market competition, and no marketing communication. In this case, consumers would purchase products to meet their self-needs rather than their self-desires.

In today's world, brands are everywhere; they are an unremarked part of our daily life. For example, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Apple have set themselves a place in every family home. This brings consumers many choices and ensures strong market competition between brands. Brand managers need to look for an effective marketing communication strategy to distinguish their brands from those of their competitors; they want to develop strong brand relationships with consumers to win their due share of the market and keep consumers loyal (Macinnis & Folkes, 2017; Taylor & Costello, 2017). Brand managers can create effective advertisements to make the brands more interesting, more feasible as purchases and more approachable to the consumer who wants to connect with them. One innovative way to achieve this is to humanise brands (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). According to Delbaere et al. (2011), "Products that can be humanised are often seen as stronger candidates for long-term business success. It is no wonder that marketing communications for a number of products over the years have portrayed them as having human characteristics" (p.470).

Humanising brands is a powerful tool because it provides a brand with human qualities and allows the consumer to view a humanised brand as something that could be seen as human. As noted by Turner “We are people. We know a lot about ourselves. And we often make sense of other things by viewing them as people too” (1987, p. 21). It appears that advertisers do well to recognise how in certain strategic contexts they might harness anthropomorphism where it may be an effective message strategy. This method was supported by Delbaere et al., (2011):

‘It may seem incredible that a public bombarded daily with images of real human beings facing famine, terrorism, and war would object to an advertisement that humorously depicts the removal of a defective piece of factory equipment. However, we can more readily understand the powerful response to this advertisement once we grasp the nature of the persuasive technique being used: personification. This rhetorical device is powerful because it taps into the deeply embedded human cognitive bias referred to as anthropomorphism—the tendency to attribute human qualities to things’ (p.121).

In media advertisements, many brands have used animation and computer graphic technologies to develop campaigns that promote brands as human (Puzakova et al., 2013; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). For example, M&M released a video under the title: ‘Bad Passengers’. This shows a woman driving home from the grocery store. The noise coming from the back seat sounds like children arguing, but the voices come from the red, yellow and orange M&M spokes-persons. This device allows the audience to see M&M as human (family members) by connecting them with the family relationships and emotions. One possible reason for the success of this video is that it allows the audience to remember the time with their own family when they had children and brings them closer to their self-reality (actual self-congruence) (M&M, 2019). Indeed, M&M is one of the few brands whose promotional campaigns have always successfully persuaded consumers to view brands as “completely human” and to form strong emotional attachment to them (Puzakova et al., 2009, p.413).

However, as Thomson et al. (2005, p.77) note, 'Consumers interact with thousands of products and brands in their lives, [but] they develop an intense emotional attachment (EA) to only a small subset of these objects'. Many studies show that creating emotional attachment to a brand can improve consumer trust and consumer loyalty to this brand (Park & John, 2010), consumer strong desire to purchase a branded product (Loureiro et al., 2012), consumer commitment to purchasing a brand (Hudson, et al., 2016), consumer love for a branded product (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006), and positive word of mouth about a brand (Hudson, et al., 2015). As noted by Malär et al., 2011, p.46, "marketers are increasingly interested in finding ways to develop strong emotional brand attachments among their consumers". Brand humanisation is a common marketing approach nowadays, and empirical research has shown that humanised products, ads, and brands have a favourable impact on consumers' brand attachment through evoking favourable feelings (Zhang et al., 2020).

1.1.3 Theoretical perspective

People relate to each other in many ways. Consumers also relate in many ways to the brands that they identify with (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Consumers would prefer to see brands as human in order to start building relationships with them, to make interesting stories about their own lives, and to locate themselves in relation to society, culture, and other individuals (Aaker, 1997; Freling & Forbes, 2005; Ramaseshan & Stein, 2014). This principle is explained by Ahuvia, 2005, p. 179, who states that 'Loved objects serve as indexical mementos of key events or relationships in the life narrative, help resolve identity conflicts, and tend to be tightly embedded in a rich symbolic network of associations'. In light of this insight, brand managers seek to develop a desirable brand attachment to the personality suggested by their own brands to encourage consumers to form a relationship with them (Fournier, 1998). Fournier (1998) recommends numerous approaches to develop brand personality, and notes, 'one way to legitimize the brand-as-partners is to

highlight ways in which brands are animated, humanized, or somehow personalized' (p.344).

Fournier encouraged brand managers to shape brand personality by humanizing the brand rather than only developing brand personality as a personality developed in the course of life. Humanisation shapes the brand personality from the moment of birth. Many scholars have defined brand humanization strategy as a branding tool that shapes brand personality and differentiates one brand from those of competitors (Fleck et al., 2014; Park & John, 2012). Moreover, Puzakova et al., (2009, p.314) refers to humanized brands 'as brands perceived by consumers as actual human beings with various emotional states, mind, soul, and conscious behaviours that can act as prominent members of social ties'.

Brand humanisation is created by photorealistic images that show a brand engaging in human behaviour to encourage consumers to view a brand as human and form a strong consumer emotional attachment to this brand. All forms of humanisation allow consumers to see a brand as human under certain conditions (Delbaere et al., 2011). This technique has been used over many years to influence consumers to like a certain product better (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Landwehr, et al., 2011; Delbaere et al., 2011), bring more pleasure and excitement to the consumer (Ang & Lim, 2006), reduce consumer desire to replace the product (Chandler and Schwarz, 2010), affect consumers' risk perception (Kim and McGill, 2011), increase consumer automatic behavior (Aggarwal and McGill, 2012), and reduce consumer negative reactions to the brand (Puzakova et al., 2013). However, Kim, et al., 2016, studied the issue of computer gamers and how they responded to a human face when requesting help. It was found that receiving instruction from a humanised helper made consumers experience less enjoyment with a computer game than receiving it from a non-humanised helper. It may not always be consumers who experience enjoyment from brands that use brand humanisation strategies. This is noted by MacInnis and Folkes (2017, p.370) 'Consumers often, but not always, form

positive attitudes and attachments toward brands that they humanize'. Previous academic consumer research has studied the effects of brand humanization on consumer attitude, but there is a lack of studies reporting the effects of brand humanization on consumer emotional attachment. The current research seeks to fill this gap.

1.2 Research problem

Marketers have humanised branding, such as M&M, Tony the Tiger, and the Michelin Man, in packaging, promotion and public relations to increase consumer emotional attachment to a brand (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). It may appear that marketers have a limited option in humanise brands and are uncertain which form could be used to increase consumer emotional attachment toward brands. As noted by MacInnis and Folkes (2017, p.370), this possibility needs further academic research:

‘The various perspectives on how consumers humanise brands are interrelated and may be mutually reinforcing. That is, consumers may feel greater congruity between the brand and the self and stronger brand attachment as they anthropomorphise the brand more’.

Therefore, from both practical and theoretical standpoints, it is desirable for marketers and researchers to understand: (i) what form(s) could be used to humanise a brand in order to influence consumers to view it as human? and (ii) what strategy could be used to influence consumers to form an emotional attachment to a humanised brand? (Hudson et al., 2015, 2016; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017)

1.3 Research gap

The humanising of a brand needs to be simple and direct in nature if it is to encourage consumers to see the brand as human (Hart and Royne, 2017). Additional research is needed, to find how marketers can develop new brand humanisation in many different ways to match consumer self-congruence and enhance consumer emotional attachment to a brand (Delbaere et al., 2011;

MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). According to Park et al., (2010), 'Given the uniquely strong effects of brand attachment, additional research is needed on how marketers can enhance brand attachment'. Essentially, branding needs to be made to look humanoid (it should move, smile and talk) to enhance consumer emotional attachment, but further academic research on these lines is required. This is noted by Huber & Eisele (2018, p.60): 'Future research could come to a more encompassing insight into the relationship between self-congruence and emotions'. Therefore, the research gap has been identified as follows:

- i) Lack of a model of brand humanisation
- ii) Lack of research on the impact of a humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment.
- iii) Limited publications about the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands.

1.4 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what roles actual and ideal self-congruence play in strengthening consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands.

1.5 Research questions

1. To what extent humanised brands have a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment?
2. What is the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands?

1.6 Objectives

1. To review the literature on consumer-brand relationships in order to identify the connection between the humanisation of a brand and consumer emotional attachment.

1.2 To review and critique existing concepts and models of the links between brand humanisation and consumer emotional attachment .

2. To develop a method of humanising in advertisements and to analyse brand advertising strategy.

2.1 To review the various ways in which a product or brand can be humanised.

2.2 To review previous and recent research related to the use of metaphor in marketing.

2.3 To develop a method for humanising a brand in advertisements.

2.4 To identify and humanise a suitable product for use in the research.

3. To establish whether a humanised brand has any significant impact on consumer emotional attachment.

3.1 To validate humanised products by pre-test.

3.2 To conduct experimental study to examine the impact of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment.

4. To establish whether a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment to the brand occurs when a humanised brand matches consumer self-congruence (actual or ideal).

4.1 To validate the humanised products by pre-test.

4.2 To conduct an experimental study to examine the impact of brand humanisation on consumer actual and ideal self-congruence and thereby on emotional attachment.

1.7 Research method

To achieve the objectives of the thesis, the three phases shown in Figure (1.1) were followed.

1.7.1 Phase One: The Importance of humanisation: Review the literature on consumer brand relationship

The aim of this phase was to identify the research gap and those factors that influence consumer emotional attachment to brands. With this knowledge and understanding, the rest of the research could proceed. The appropriate literature was, therefore, reviewed to understand the link (connection) between branding as human, and consumer emotional attachment. There are four outcomes of this phase, namely: (i) the knowledge that the link between brand humanisation and consumer emotional attachment is self-congruence; (ii) a model of brand humanisation by structuring various ways of humanising a brand through the use of different types of metaphor. As shown in Figure (1.3), this was a first step to developing a model to help the researcher to humanise a branded product; (iii) the establishment of the research gap which lies in the lack of understanding about the relationship between humanised branding and consumer emotional attachment, which can be pursued through the concepts of actual or ideal self-congruence; and (iv) the development of a conceptual model and hypotheses shown in Figure (1.2). Important studies accessed during this phase of the work included those of MacInnis and Folkes (2017); Malar et al., (2011) Kim et al., (2016);.

1.7.2 Phase Two: The practice of humanisation: To humanise, and analyse branding in advertisements and advertising strategy

The aim of this phase was to implement brand humanisation. Four outcomes emerged from this phase: (i) the designing of the research technique to undertake the study; (ii) the choice of brands to use in the study - Apple, Microsoft, Nike, and Zara; (iii) the creation of a template to analyse brand advertisement strategy. As shown in Figure (1.3), this was the second step in analysing a humanised branded product. To avoid complexity and support simplicity, in Figure (1.3) only the result of Nike advertising content characterisation was presented'; and (iv) the humanisation of branding. Important studies accessed during this phase of the work were those of MacInnis and Folkes (2017); Ang and Lim (2006); Kim et al. (2016); Puzakova

et al. (2013); Aggarwal and McGill (2007); Waytz et al. (2014); and Delbaere et al. (2011).

1.7.3 Phase Three: The validation of humanisation: answering the two main research questions

In this phase two pre-test and two experimental studies were performed, and the results analysed and discussed. The three outcomes of this phase are: (i) the confirmation of the five hypotheses; (ii) the use of academic and practitioner contributions; and (iii) the identification of the study's limitations with suggestions for future research.

Figure 1.1: Research method process

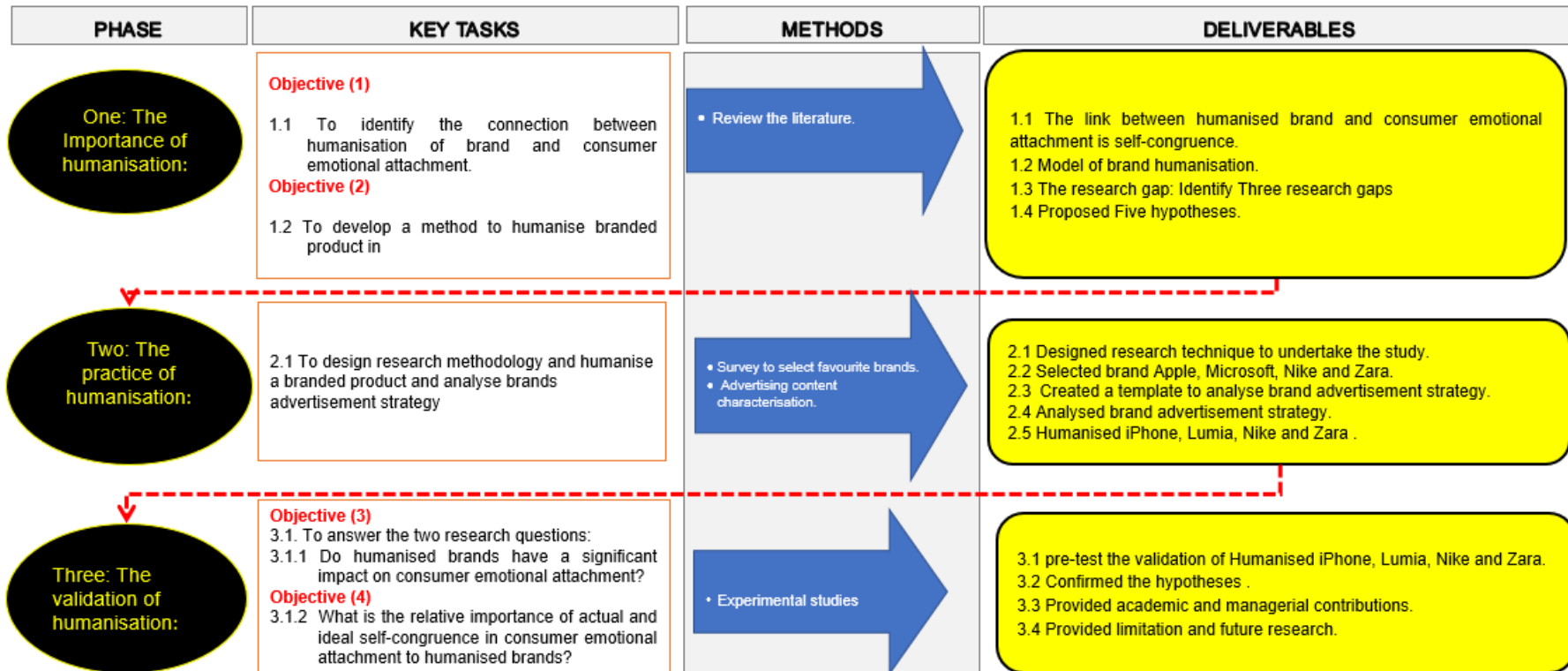


Figure 1.2: Research model and hypotheses

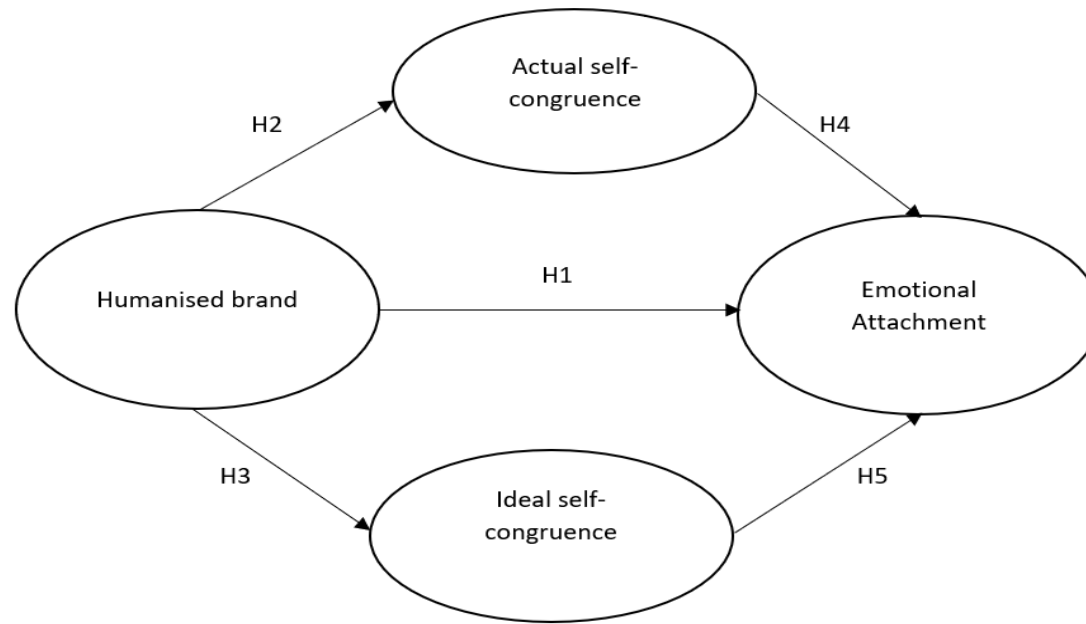
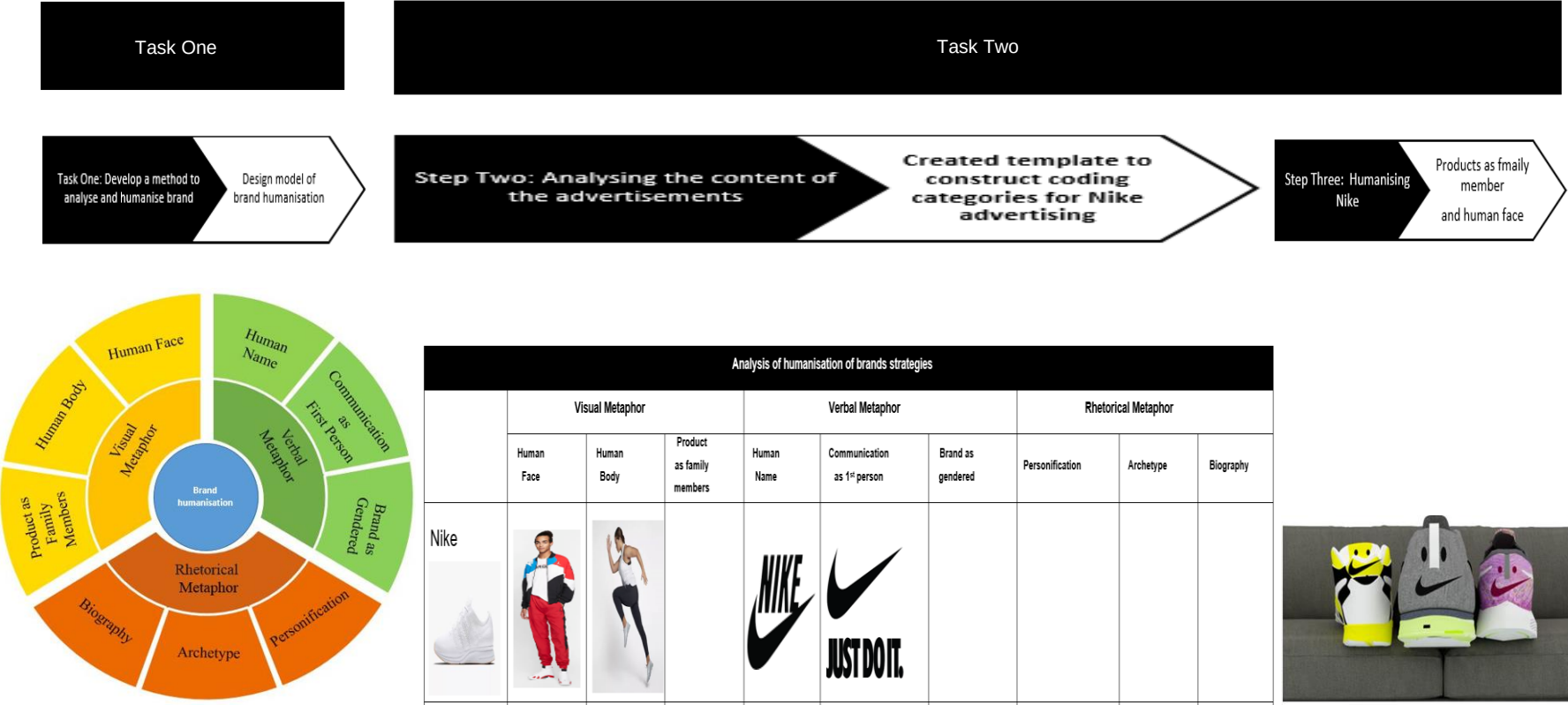


Figure 1.3: Method developed to analyse and humanise brand

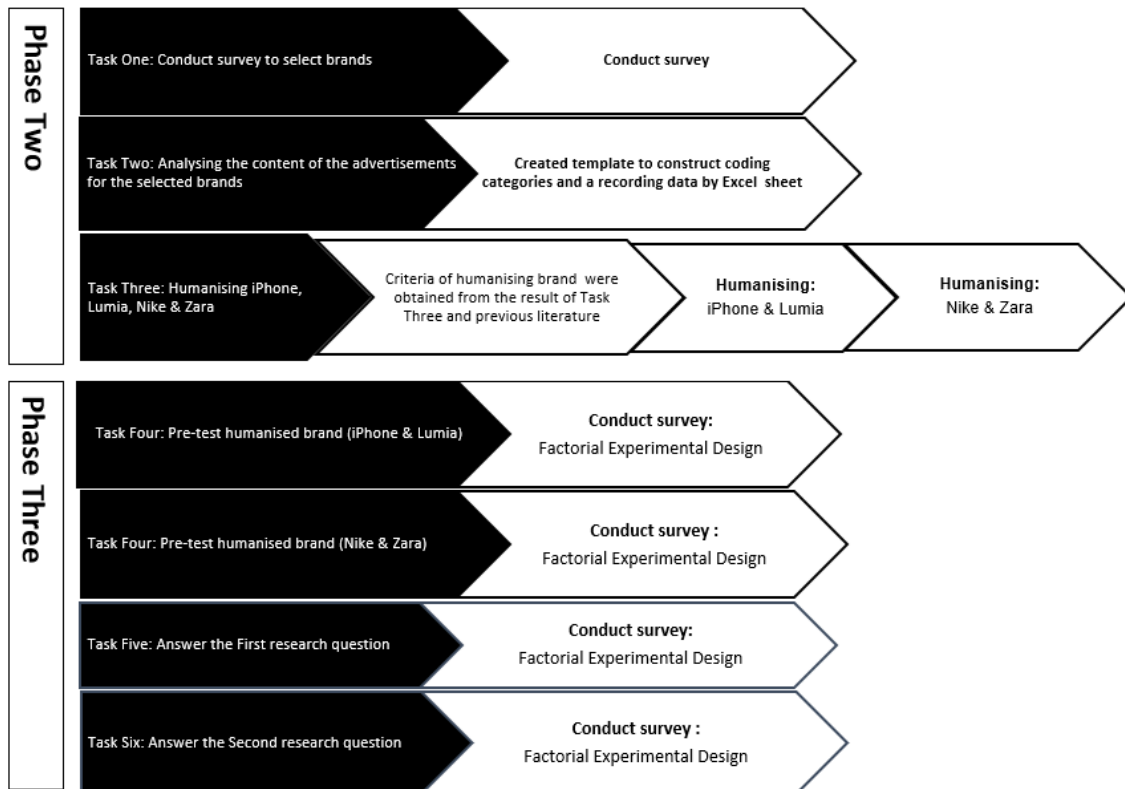


1.8 Research methodology

As shown in Figure (1.4), the answer to the research question was reached in two phases: The second phase consisted of analysing the content of brand advertising strategy for selected brands and humanising them. This phase entailed three tasks: Task One was to conduct a quantitative survey to select a brand for this study. Task Two focused on analysing the content of the advertisements for the selected brands because this type of research requires an initial content analysis approach (using the quantitative method). Task Three focused on humanising the selected brands.

The task of the third phase was to validate humanised branding. This phase also entailed three tasks: Task Four involved conducting two pre-test research experiments (with quantitative results) were conducted to check the validity of the humanisation of some selected brands. Task Five used experimental quantitative design to collect data for answering the first research question. Task Six was to design a quantitative experiment to collect data in response to the second research question.

Figure 1. 4: Research design process



1.9 Contributions to knowledge

1. The work in this thesis contributes to academic and practitioner knowledge by structuring the various ways of humanising a brand by using different types of metaphor (the model of brand humanisation) and by creating a template to analyse the content of humanised branding in advertisements.
2. The findings contribute to the literature on the consumer brand relationship by examining the impact of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment and revealing the significance of this impact, although it has no significant impact.

3. The study contributes to the literature on self-congruence by showing that whether a brand is humanised or non-humanised, it still has an impact on consumer actual self-congruence, but it is likely to weaken consumers' emotional attachment only when the humanised brand matches consumer actual self-congruence. Humanised brands have an impact on consumer ideal self-congruence, but it is unlikely that consumers' emotional attachment will be increased when a humanised brand matches consumer ideal self-congruence. The main managerial and academic implications of these findings are discussed.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1: This chapter discusses the importance of the topic from the author's personal perspective, that of the market and that of the previous academics. Moreover, the gap in the literature, the research problem and the research objectives are discussed in this chapter. It also mentions the research methodology and research method, and the contributions that the findings make.

Chapter 2 reviews the early academic literature to gain an understanding of the existing research and arguments related to the humanisation of brands and consumer emotional attachment. In this chapter is also a discussion of the previous models related to brand humanisation. Moreover, it discusses the development of a model of brand humanisation. Some of the information obtained from reviewing the literature is used in Chapter 5, where the results are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the research philosophy and methodology to describe methods chosen for this thesis. In addition, the chapter addresses questionnaire design, and describes a survey devised to provide information about the measurement scales and the items and constructs in the study. Additionally, the validity of this research, sampling, ethical issues, pilot study and data analysis technique are discussed in this chapter. All the information obtained from this

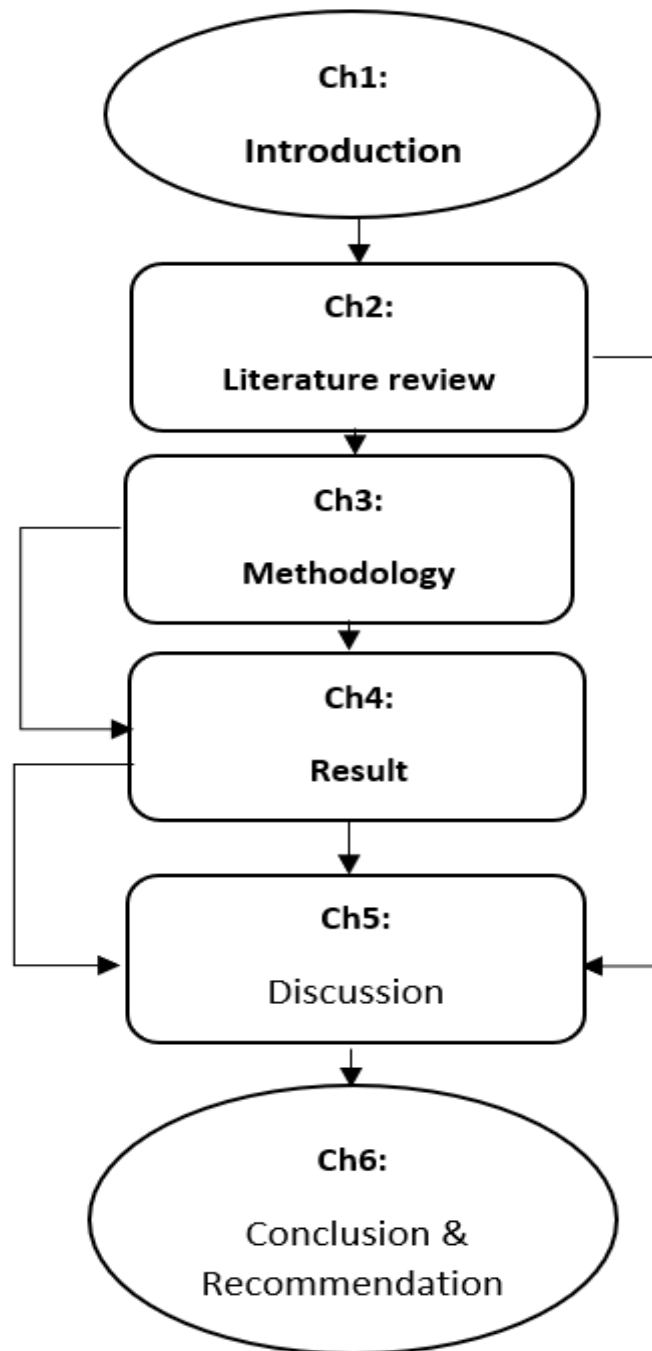
chapter was very useful for collecting and analysing the data required to construct Chapter Four.

Chapter 4 analyses the data gathered from the surveys and tests the hypotheses.

Chapter 5 discusses the results obtained in chapter Four and links these back to the literature to support and explain the findings.

Chapter 6 concludes and outlines the main managerial and academic implications. Having identified these, it highlights the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future work, as shown in Figure (1.5).

Figure 1.5: Structure of the Thesis



2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents three major strands in the literature which shape and inform the research question. The chapter begins by exploring the meaning and importance of branding to the consumer (in section 2.2). This is followed by a section that introduces branding as humanising and discusses the concept of anthropomorphism, showing how it is related to humanised branding (section 2.3). The next section discusses previous conceptual models of brand humanisation (section 2.4). The practical models of brand humanisation are discussed in section 2.5. The development of brand humanisation is discussed in (section 2.6). The importance of consumer and brand attachment is introduced in section 2.7, while at section (2.8) the research gaps are identified. In section (2.9) research model and hypotheses are developed. The final section (2.10) summarises and concludes the literature review.

2.2 Brand

The starting point in understanding the concept of brand humanisation and the importance of this concept in persuading the consumer to form an emotional connection is to discuss the current meaning of brand see section (2.2.1) The following section (2.2.2) discusses the capacity of advertising to encourage consumer desire to purchase a certain brand. section (2.1.3) discusses the idea of seeing brands as human, and of developing consumer relationships with them.

2.2.1 The meaning of brand

The past few decades have witnessed that both academics and practitioners have been paying more attention to understanding and developing the meaning of the term brand in marketing research and practice. The concept of 'brand' has become a buzzword used by company executives, managers, employees, academics and most consumers. Everybody seems to know what brand means in general and in practice. In this section, the concept of brand is defined more precisely, and a detailed look is taken into what brings meaning to a brand.

Over the years, many attempts have been made to identify and define exactly what brand means. According to Keller, brand is defined by the American Marketing Association as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (p. 8). Branding a product can help consumers to differentiate this product from an unbranded one, since consumers have a certain degree of knowledge about a brand (Keller, 2003). Ogilvy (1985) comments:

‘A brand is a complex symbol. It is the intangible sum of a product’s attributes, its name, packaging and price, its history, reputation, and the way it’s advertised. A brand is also defined by consumers’ impressions of people who use it, as well as their own experience’.

Consumers have a high desire to buy one brand or product over another. As noted by Godin (2009), this desire comes about because of beliefs they have about the product/brand, since the brand itself 'is a set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another’.

In considering this definition, the researcher’s own experience with Starbucks Café comes to mind. While writing this thesis on a laptop and sitting at a Starbucks café with a favourite drink - Caramel Macchiato – he is served by a

Starbucks barista who makes him feel welcome and at home. He feels that this café is the best place to bring his thoughts together and work more efficiently. Indeed, he feels it to be part of his successful journey. He belongs in Starbucks and has many good memories about being there. Indeed, whenever he wants coffee in any country, a Starbucks cafe is the only place he looks for and patronises because he trusts it. He can appreciate a positive connection, a favourable 'brand association' between Starbucks and him. The actual brand name of Starbucks café has no meaning for his mind or heart; rather, the brand gains its meaning through the associations that it creates between himself and the experience that is secured by entering a Starbucks café. As noted by Elliot and Percy (2007), these associations concern what the consumer believes about the product and service provided by the brand. Certainly, the Starbucks brand has a well-known name and personality that has provided it with a strong competitive advantage in the marketplace.

2.2.2 Brand and consumer desire

A hundred years ago, most advertisements were mostly designed to deliver information about a product and its quality so as to persuade consumers to purchase a certain product or brand (Kornberger, 2010). However, in the past century, marketers have gradually switched from a 'production-oriented' approach to a more 'market-oriented' one, and this has given marketers both the need and the opportunity to study consumer needs and wants rather than concentrating only on advertising product knowledge or product quality (Kornberger, 2010).

The issue of how women were persuaded to take up smoking provides an interesting episode story in the story of learning about the role of consumer desire in product purchase. In the 1920s, smoking was a habit reserved for men alone, and it certainly was not acceptable for women who smoked to do so in public. However, the cigarette industry assigned Edward Bernays the task of encouraging women to smoke cigarettes, and in 1929, he took the opportunity

to do so by writing in the New York press that women were no different from men and that smoking cigarettes in public places could serve to demonstrate their equality. The campaign was entitled 'Torches of Freedom', and Bernays used it to link the product (cigarettes) to women's emotions, thereby affecting their purchase behaviour in respect of cigarettes (Amos and Haglund, 2000). This kind of marketing communication technique created favourable consumer reactions and increased product likeability (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Thereafter, cigarettes began to be considered by women as something that would increase their self-confidence, pleasure, relaxation, enjoyment, equal opportunities, and freedom. Bernays managed to shift the focus (in marketing terms) from a focus on consumer needs to one on consumer desires.

2.2.3 Consumer brand relationship

The idea of seeing brands as human, and of developing consumer relationships with them brings up the concept of 'consumer-brand relationships' (Fournier, 1998; Aggarwal, 2004; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017).

This relationship has become an important focus in marketing (Fournier, 1998), because it allows a brand to obtain a strong competitive advantage in a competitive marketplace (Batra et al., 2012). Marketers need to understand what consumers need and want if their companies and products are to remain successful in a competitive market. Understanding consumers' needs and wants helps marketers to build strong consumer brand relationships. These relationships can develop into a positive relationship between a consumer and a brand (Malar et al., 2011). The consumer brand relationship results in greater willingness to pay a premium price, brand love (Hegner et al., 2017), emotional brand attachment (Malar et al., 2011) brand choice (Park et al., 2010), and self-brand connection (Thomson et al., 2005).

Marketers work towards securing better quality in their connections and the interactions between consumers and their brands. For example, cosmetics

companies have for many years been communicating with their consumers through TV and newspaper advertisements, using these media as platforms to try to convince the audience that using those companies' products will make them more beautiful and attractive. At the same time, adopting those products is also likely to bring customers closer to an ideal vision of themselves (the ideal self) (Malar et al., 2011). In 2015, Dove released a video titled: 'Dove changes one thing, how our girls see themselves'. Dove believes that when girls grow older, various pressures make them more beauty-conscious, and more motivated to achieve greater beauty. Implicitly, they are made to believe they are not beautiful enough already. The video shows how most girls actually see themselves (an actual self). Dove's campaigning goal is to increase girls' self-esteem and self-actualisation. This encourages them to understand that they just need to change one thing to be happy about the way they actually look, and the thing to change is to start using a Dove product. The campaign touched the hearts and minds of girls, causing them to form a strong emotional connection to the brand (Dove, 2015).

Research shows that there is a relationship between brand personality and consumer self-expression, demonstrating that consumers buy brands or products that they believe describe themselves (Phau and Lau, 2001). Consumers display a strong attachment to brands when the brand personality matches their self-concept (Escalas, 2004; Malar et al., 2011). Consequently, marketers should focus on consumer response to the brand image in order to build strong consumer brand relationships. It is essential to create an appropriate brand personality that matches the consumer self-concept (Blackston, 1993). In this respect, a brand may be viewed as a partner in a relationship with the consumer (Aaker, 1996; Blackston, 1993; Fournier, 1998). Consumers can develop active relationships with brands when they interact with them, and the level of such interaction will be approximately the same as that of people interacting with human partners (Aaker, 1996). However, a positive brand relationship cannot be always guaranteed even when consumers have

taken time to select their brand, because they may develop a negative association with the brand or product (White et al., 2012).

2.3. Brand as human

This section starts with an introduction to anthropomorphism (section 2.3.1) to clearly depict how and, why consumers view a brand as human, followed by a discussion about the three primary factors that may drive a consumer to view a brand as human (section 2.3.2). Next comes a discussion about anthropomorphism and human-like branding (section 2.3.3) and a final discussion about humanised brands (section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is the tendency of humans to give human characteristics, human behaviour, motivations, intentions, and emotions to non-human beings or artefacts (Epley et al., 2007). A recent study defines anthropomorphism in marketing research as ‘An anthropomorphism strategy emphasizes the humanlike attributes of the brand, presents an intimate and lovable figure, and induces consumers to treat the brand as a human being’ (Zhang et al., 2020, p.533). The word anthropomorphism is derived from two Greek words, anthropos, meaning ‘human’, and morphe, meaning ‘form’ (Epley et al., 2007). In theoretical terms, anthropomorphism can be understood, for example, as the process of transforming a male dog into a male man. In practical terms, it is the process of assigning human characteristics to a horse by giving him a human name, speaking to him as a human, and interacting with him as a family member.

Anthropomorphism plays a critical role in persuading consumers to communicate with brands (Hudson et al., 2016). It is a marketing communication technique that consists of bestowing a set of humanlike features, a mind and personality to something non-human. It is designed to create a positive

emotional response to a brand (Welsh, 2006), and to increase product likeability (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007), and significantly improves purchase intentions for unattractive products (Chen et al., 2021). Moreover, anthropomorphism increases consumer's perception of warmth (Zhang et al., 2020).

Brand managers are encouraged to introduce anthropomorphic strategies in managing brand marketing activities (Rauschnabel and Ahuvia, 2014; Puzakova et al., 2013; Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; Hudson et al., 2016). According to Hudson et al. (2016, p.38) 'anthropomorphism is an important catalyst facilitating an interpersonal lens to view social media interactions with a brand'. Marketers are advised to anthropomorphise a brand to some degree before embarking on social media engagement with the target consumers. For example, they might use first-person pronouns for a brand and/or an animated image as a representation, and might give it a nickname (Hudson et al., 2016). Hudson et al., (2016) have argued that social media engagement will be more successful for brands with high anthropomorphism (a humanised brand/product) such as M&M Chocolates, and Michelin, but may not be successful for brands/products that are low in anthropomorphic characteristics, such as Apple and Microsoft.

It is very important to understand why every individual has a tendency to anthropomorphise objects, albeit to a different degree. Guthrie (1993) has offered two reasons why this tendency is present in humans, the first being their need for social relationships, since every individual needs to feel close to someone and a sense of belonging. Maslow's hierarchy of human needs puts social needs near the top, showing that humans look for warm and satisfying relationships that promise love, affection, and a sense of belonging. Describing the basic level of human needs, Layder (2004, p.2) has stated that 'we are all emotionally needy but each of us has different patterns of need. We all require a certain amount of love, care, and attention. We need to feel we belong, that we are accepted, that we are valued, and that other people need us as we need

them'. From time to time, if these basic needs are not met, individuals tend to seek out other people to provide them with fulfilling relationships (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). This kind of relationship can be seen every day between humans and pets. For some people, pets fulfil many social needs. The second reason for the human tendency to anthropomorphise is the need to understand the world around them (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Moreover, anthropomorphism provides a sense of familiarity that makes it easier for humans to come to terms with non-human objects. People use their own knowledge and assign human-like characteristics to objects that they know little about, as a way of coping with them in everyday life.

2.3.2 Factors driving consumers to view brands as human

Outside the branding context, research has determined the most important factors that drive people to view non-human objects as human but possessed by different emotions. Epley et al. (2007) have identified three primary drivers for humans to anthropomorphise objects, namely: (i) Elicited agent knowledge (this means knowledge of the non-human object) (the degree of accessibility and applicability of anthropocentric knowledge); (ii) Effectance Motivation (the motivation to understand and explain other people's behaviour); and (iii) Sociality Motivation (the desire for social relationship and need to belong to other people). According to MacInnis and Folkes (2017), the tendency to perceive a non-human object as human is facilitated by an individual's knowledge of the non-human object. Therefore, consumers view brands as human when they have high 'accessibility' to knowledge about those brands, and when there is high 'applicability' of the brands, i.e., they seem to exhibit human personalities (look, movement, voice) (Epley et al., 2007). According to Hudson et al. (2016), the higher the degree of humanisation in the brand, the more likely it is that the consumer will come to view the brand as truly human. Moreover, they claim that the consumer self-concept and culture, together with

the brand personality, may affect the extent to which the brand is perceived as human.

A recent study by Zhang et al.,(2020) found that consumers interact with brands in an interpersonal way. They perceive those anthropomorphized brands as intimate ,close, and friendly objects that they can communicate and interact with. Moreover, the study also proved that the effect of anthropomorphism on brand attitude is mediated through the warmth dimension. This also consist with models that indicate that anthropomorphism is determined by effectance motivation and sociality motivation. (Epley et al., 2007; Puzakova et al., 2009), Because consumers need for belonging and closure would inspire them to communicate with the brand more, and this actaully strengthen brand anthropomorphism.

2.3.3 Anthropomorphism and Humanlike Brands

The first discussion about brands having human personalities dates from a study by Gardner and Levy, 1955; and one by Martineau (1958) who discusses store personality, as a novel metaphor for intangible brand personality (Avis, Aitken and Ferguson, 2012). The foundation of humanising brand theory began in practitioner work (Blackston, 1993; King, 1973), and was continued by Aaker (1997) and Fournier (1998), who were the first to clearly introduce animism and anthropomorphism theory in clarification of the process of humanlike branding. Moreover, Aaker and Fournier imported humanlike theory from human psychology, with the implication that the concept of anthropomorphic branding clarifies the relevance of the importation. Their two articles dominate in their fields of brand personality, brand anthropomorphism or brand humanisation, and brand relationships. Aaker's article 'Dimensions of brand personality' describes brand personality as 'the human characteristics associated with a brand' (1997, p.347), and develops a scale to measure brand personality. This scale has been widely used in brand research and is the

foundation of brand personality; it has also helped many scholars to develop new measures of brand personality (Bosnjak et al., 2007; Smit et al., 2003). Meanwhile, Fournier's article investigates the relationships between consumers, and brands and proposes that brand humanisation is 'valid at the level of lived experience of consumers' (Fournier, 1998, p.344). Although the theory of anthropomorphism was imported by Aaker (1997) and Fournier (1998), neither author specifically articulates the theory's logical conclusion: that brands are generally viewed as animate human-like entities. Guthrie (1993) describes animism as 'attributing life to the non-living' and anthropomorphism as 'attributing human characteristics to the non-human' (Guthrie, 1993, P.52). This argued as well that:

'Consumers see brands as animistic and anthropomorphic; the logical implication is that consumers at least perceive brands as something approximating to living and/or humanlike entities (hereafter the humanlike brand). However, the nature and explanation of the humanlike entities that have been introduced into branding theory are at best general and at worst vague and ambiguous' (Avis et al., 2012, p.11).

Some exceptions exist: Puzakova et al., (2009) reports specifically that the 'fact that consumers form strong relationships with brands suggests that individuals perceive these brands as complete humans' (2009, p.413). It is clear from the literature that the introduction of anthropomorphism means that brands are very often but not always perceived by consumers as some kind of animate human-like beings, whether the human-like brand is implicitly or specifically described. There also seems to be a conflicting viewpoint over the emergence of theories of branding as the creation of human-like beings, which sees the theory as rooted in metaphor/analogy (Avis, Aitken and Ferguson, 2012). Most previous research has focused on knowledge of the non-human object when speculating how humanised knowledge is transferred to the brand and product (Puzakova et al., 2013; Aggarwal and McGill, 2012). This has given marketing social science

a new marketing communication technique, known as 'humanising brand' (Puzakova et al., 2013).

2.3.4 Humanising brands in the marketing literature

Over the past 18 years, the study of humanised brands in the marketing literature has been growing (Puzakova et al., 2009; Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Evidence has shown that consumers have the ability to see brands as having human characteristics and furthermore that they accord them various personality traits (Aaker, 1997; Rauschnahel and Ahuvia, 2014).

Attributing human-like characteristics to brands – anthropomorphising them (Puzakova et al., 2009) – has entailed bringing them to life and providing them with human personalities. The concept of anthropomorphising brands is seen when brands are 'perceived by consumers as actual human beings with various emotional states, mind, soul, and conscious behaviours that can act as prominent members with social ties' (Puzakova et al., 2009). Therefore, consumers can view different degrees of human-like states in the same brand. Even though this concept has been studied among academics and non-academics for 100 years, the detailed methods of humanising a brand and managing it remain unclear in marketing (Hudson et al., 2016; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). According to Waytz et al. (2010, p.60) 'anthropomorphism has developed slowly because it has long focused on the accuracy of anthropomorphic inferences'.

Before the year 2006, the terms 'humanising brands' and 'human brands' were not in common use in marketing research. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, Thomson (2006) was the first to introduce 'human brands' in his article. For decades, researchers have published articles that relate to the field of humanising brands, such as articles on the area of brand personality (Aaker, 1997), the types of relationship that consumers establish with brands (Fournier,

1998), self-brand connection (Escalas and Bettman, 2009), and brand anthropomorphism (Aggarwal and McGill, 2011). But no academically agreed definition for humanising brand has so far appeared. The Oxford learners' dictionaries define it as 'to make something more pleasant or suitable for people; to make something more human'. However, the closest definition that has been found for the present study is 'to represent as human or attribute human qualities to something' (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary). to represent something as human: to attribute human qualities to something.

Nowadays, giving a brand human-like characteristics, such as visual cues (Kim et al., 2016), verbal features (Waytz et al., 2014), and human personality traits (Kervyn et al., 2012) is labelled 'Humanising brand' (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017; Puzakova et al., 2013). This phenomenon represents the tendency for consumers 'to attribute human-like capacities to other agents' (Waytz, et al., 2010: p.58), and efforts in this respect result in a brand or product being perceived as having human-like features, human-like minds, and human-like personalities (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Recent marketing strategies demonstrate that many brand managers have sought unique positioning strategies to achieve this, by humanising brands with humanlike features (Puzakova and Aggarwal, 2018). For example, the Swatch brand of watches introduced a collection of watches that activate diverse humanlike features, ranging from 'a Blue Wild Face to a hot-pink Lady Spy' (p.870). One possible reason for using this popular approach in marketing is that it may help the brand to strengthen the relationship between consumers and these unique new watches (Puzakova & Aggarwal, 2018). It should be noted that brand humanisation is not about whether a humanised brand (e.g., Ben & Jerrys), or a branded product (e.g., Mazda) should be treated as human, but rather whether the brand is sufficiently humanised to satisfy consumers' hearts and minds. Brands may be humanised because they are made for people and sold by people. Indeed, they sometimes are people (i.e., celebrity brands).

Puzakova et al. (2013) were the first researchers to use the term “humanising brands” in the literature. In their article entitled ‘When Humanising Brands Goes Wrong: The Detrimental Effect of Brand Anthropomorphisation Amid Product Wrongdoings’, they examine two different brands: Airborne (health supplements) and Orange Vie (an orange juice beverage). These two brands were chosen because of the negative publicity they have attracted. As shown in Figure (2.1), Puzakova et al. (2013) explored the brands through visual cues (human-like features) and verbal cues (the use of the first person), and consistently found no significant effects from the humanisation of these brands on consumer attitude and trust of the product. In both instances, the reason was the negative information already circulating in the minds of the consumers about these brands.

Delgado-Ballester et al., declared that ‘Consumers’ judgments of humanized brands lead to even stronger consumer–brand connections if these judgments are positive’ (2020, p.160). Moreover, it was noted that:

‘Consumers show higher feelings of heartbreak and distress when anticipating being distanced from a humanized brand. These impressions of a brand as a person can be based on the many observed behaviors of the people associated with the brand’.

Figure 2.1: Humanised (left) versus Non-humanised (right) Orange Vie (Source : Puzakova et al., 2013)



Aggarwal and McGill (2012) also conducted an experiment using two partner brands (Krispy Kreme and Kellogg's), but their research focused on why these provoked a contrasting brand image in the consumer's mind. Indeed, they promoted opposite perceptions. Aggarwal and McGill (2012, p.313) suggested moreover that 'assimilation to the Krispy Kreme brand would mean acting unhealthily, while assimilation to the Kellogg's brand would mean acting healthily'. In their research, each participant was presented with the following scenario. 'Imagine that you are going into a class and that there is a bit of a line up for the elevator. It has been a long day and you are feeling somewhat tired. The stairs to the third floor are close at hand'. For the experiment they used the Kellogg's brand (brand as human vs. brand as object) vs. the Krispy Kreme brand (brand as human vs. brand as object), and found that the participants were more likely to take the stairs rather than the elevator when the Kellogg's brand was seen as human-like, but when the Kellogg's brand was seen as an object there was no significant difference between the choice of stairs and the choice of elevator. They also found participants were more likely to take the elevator than the stairs when the Krispy Kreme brand was seen as human-like while there was no significant difference between stairs and elevator when the

Krispy Kreme brand was seen as an object. Their study concluded that the effects were only apparent when consumers viewed brands as human but agreed that this was more likely to occur when the humanised brand matched the consumer self-concept. This result is supported by Celsi and Olson (1988, p.211), who note that 'a consumer's level of involvement with an object, situation, or action is determined by the degree to which s/he perceives that concept to be personally relevant'.

2.4 Previous conceptual models of brand humanisation:

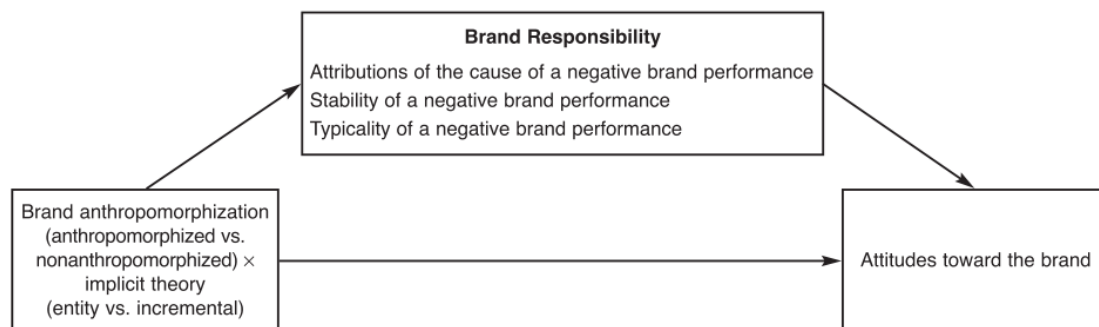
Three conceptualized models of brand humanisation have influenced the field and have shown the importance of brand humanisation and the unclear nature of brand humanisation when used in academic research (Puzakova, et al. 2013; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Hart & Royme, 2017). Puzakova et al. argue that the brand humanisation technique has been used over many years to influence consumers' attitude and mitigate consumers' negative reactions when a brand starts to have a negative reputation (Puzakova et al., 2013). Furthermore, Hart & Royme suggest that brand humanisation technique needs to be simple and direct in nature in order to persuade consumers to see a brand as human (Hart et al., 2017). Practitioners and scholars can use metaphorical tools in many ways to humanise a brand so as to increase consumer self-connection and self-congruence and strengthen the relationship with a brand (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). The following sections discuss previous perspectives and models of brand humanisation.

2.4.1 The conceptual model of brand humanisation

Puzakova et al. in their article entitled 'When Humanising Brands Goes Wrong: The Detrimental Effect of Brand Anthropomorphisation Amid Product Wrongdoings', reviewed extensive literature related to four areas. These were (i) Brand anthropomorphism (brand humanisation), (ii) implicit theory, (iii) brand responsibility, and (iv) the outcome of the relationship between consumer

attitude, and brand. As shown in Figure (2.2), the authors propose that brand humanization negatively affects consumers' brand evaluations when the brand suffers a negative reputation caused by product wrongdoing. Their research found that consumers with a stable personality (i.e., entity theorists) perceive a humanised brand that has borne a negative reputation less favourably than a non-humanised brand. Meanwhile, consumers with a malleable personality (i.e., incremental theorists) have a different reaction. They are less likely to devalue a humanised brand which experienced only negative reputation. The outcome of this research shows that brand humanisation creates more favourable consumer attitudes and accordingly improves brand performance (Puzakova et al., 2013)

Figure 2.2: The conceptual model of brand humansation (Source: Puzakova et al.,2013)

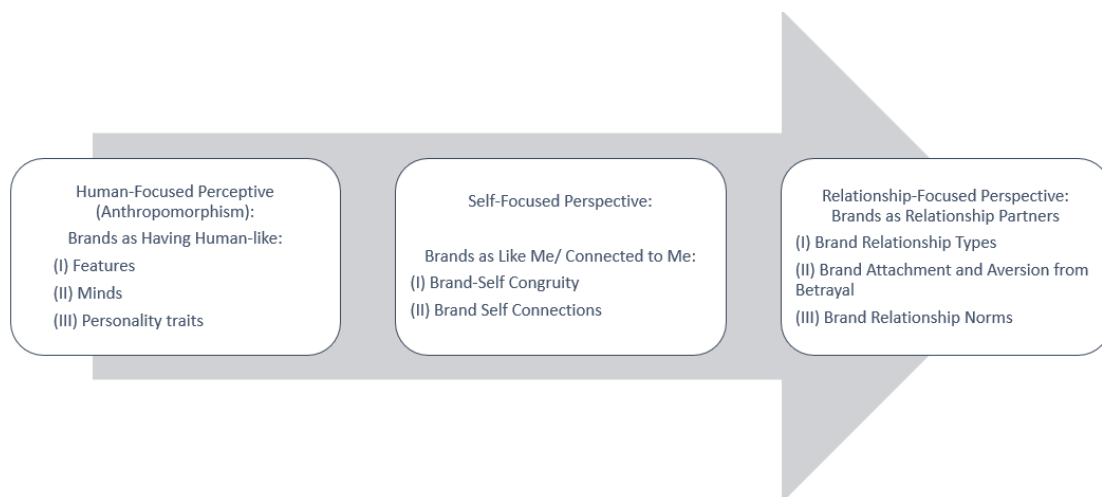


2.4.2 The model of domain and drivers of humanising brands

Macinnis & Folkes reviewed much literature related to three areas in their article entitled 'Humanizing brands: When brands seem to be like me, part of me, and in a relationship with me'. These areas were (i) brand humanisation, (ii) consumer self, and (iii) the outcome of the relationship between consumer and brand. As shown in Figure (2.3), the research by Macinnis & Folkes can be

divided into three sections. The first section shows that consumers always perceive brands as (i) having human-like features, (ii) having human-like minds, and (iii) having human-like personality traits. In the second section, these writers show that a consumer perceives a brand as human either (i) when the brand has features, minds, or personality traits match the consumer's self-congruence or (ii) when these matches her/his self-connection. The third section arises from the previous two: it concludes that consumers are able to form three types of relationship with a humanised brand. The models of Macinnis & Folkes are designed to explain the domain and drivers of humanising brands, and to provide recommendations for expanding our conceptual and empirical understanding of this domain (Macinnis and Folkes, 2017).

Figure 2.3: The domain and drivers of humanising brands (Source: the author adopted from MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

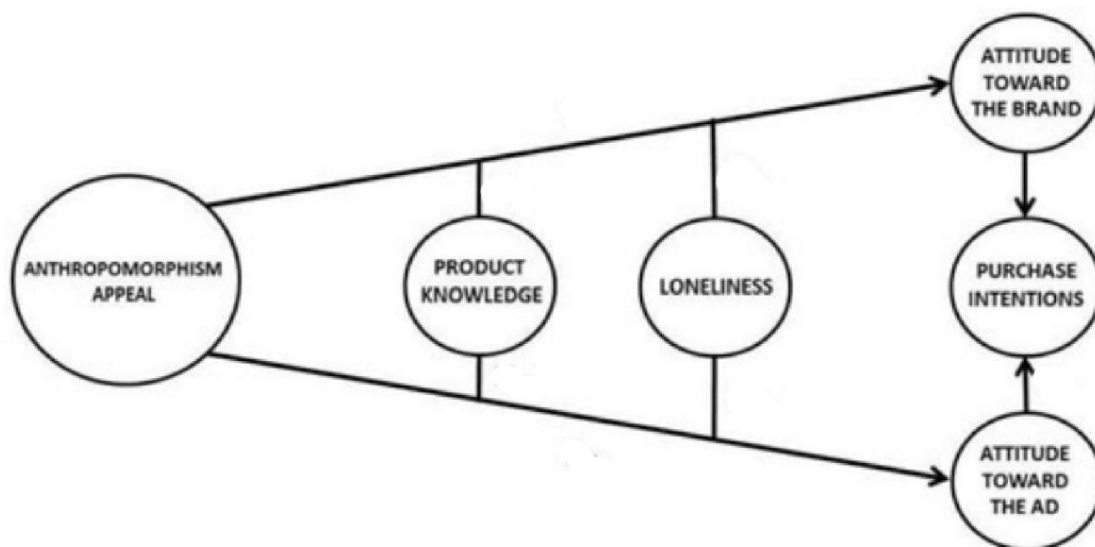


2.4.3 The appeal of the conceptual model of anthropomorphism

In their article entitled 'Being Human: how anthropomorphic presentations can enhance advertising effectiveness', Hart & Royme reviewed many papers related to six areas. These were (i) anthropomorphic appeals or advertising that

contained a product portrayed as humanlike, (ii) product knowledge, (iii) loneliness, (iv) attitude to a brand, (v) purchase intention, and (vi) attitude to the advertisement. Hart & Royne judge the effectiveness of brand humanisation or in their words 'anthropomorphism appeals', and the moderating influence of product knowledge, and loneliness. The outcome of this study demonstrates that brand humanisation enhances a consumer's favourable attitude to the brand and the advertising. Moreover, it is able to strengthen consumer purchase intentions. Furthermore, product knowledge and loneliness moderate the effects of brand humanisation on the attitude to the advertisement. Therefore, brand humanisation is an effective promotional tool to influence consumer attitudes to a brand and an advertisement, and consumer purchase intentions (Hart & Royne, 2017).

Figure 2.4: Model of anthropomorphic appeals (Source: Hart & Royne, 2017)



2.5 Practical models of brand humanisation:

Humanising a brand has been found to enhance the ability of consumers to recognize and spot the characteristic value of brands. Still, practitioners and

scholars know little about building a brand with humanlike characteristics that will allow consumer to perceive the brand as human (Hart & Royne, 2017; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). After reviewing publications on brand archetypes, brand personality, and brand humanisation (Mark and Pearson, 2001; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017; Portal et al., 2018) scholars agreed that most the previous models related to brand humanization managed to guide brand managers to understand brand personality and to design or humanise brand personality traits to allow consumers to perceive brands as humanoid. Moreover, these models helped the practitioners and scholars to create brand personality traits to match consumer self-concepts, and to increase consumer loyalty to the brand (Aaker, 1997; Aaker, 1999; Hart & Royne, 2017; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017; Portal et al., 2018). Most of the previous models were, however, unable to humanise brand features to the extent that consumers called them human (Portal et al., 2018).

The following sections discuss the three main models of brand as human. The objective of these sections is to explore theoretical dimensions of brand archetypes (section 2.5.1), brand personality traits (section 2.5.2), and human branding (section 2.5.3). A further section discusses how this research develops the model of brand humanisation by using many different types of metaphor (section 2.6).

2.5.1 Mark and Pearson's model of brand archetypes

Archetypal model exemplify the tools of personalised branding that have been increasingly used to construct a brand personality platform, particularly by advertising agencies (Heding, et al., 2008). Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist who formulated the theory of archetypes, based on extensive psychological research in the early 1900s. Jung built the theoretical concepts of archetypes on his view that human beings share a collective unconscious. At a psychological level, this collective unconscious defines us, just as DNA codes define us at a microscopic physical level. The collective unconscious is the

foundation of consumer communication and consists of very important psychological codes. Certainly, archetypes are known as basic devices and source codes that allow people to communicate, and connect at a simple subconscious level (Heding, et al., 2008). As described by Heding, Jung believed that 'the unconscious level of the human psyche is an active agent in people's lives and a significant factor that shapes everyday actions. Archetypes are expressions of the patterns of fundamental psychic content that we all share and are related to instinctively' (p.131). Archetypes cover a variety of basic elements in human attitudes and behaviour, such as our sense of happiness, evil, heroism and the range of maternal feelings.

As shown in Figure (2.5), Mark and Pearson (2001) in their book "The Hero and the Outlaw" identify four basic archetypes of consumer need, namely (i) stability and control, (ii) belonging and enjoyment, (iii) risk and mastery, and (iv) independence and fulfilment. Moreover, Mark and Pearson (2001) identified twelve archetypal brand personalities. These master brand archetypes embody the creator, ruler, caregiver, jester, regular girl/guy, lover, hero, outlaw, magician, innocent, explorer and sage. These brand personalities are focused on the practical application of building brand personality identity. Archetypes are the fundamental way in which consumers use images or symbols to understand brand personality by categorizing different types of brand personality/identity. Archetypes provide symbolic meaning to mediate the relationship between products and the consumer. Moreover, archetypes may bring brands to life and, may allow the consumer to perceive a brand as human, and interact emotionally with it.

Archetypal models have been used to provide symbolic meaning to a brand identity and to distinguish a brand from its competitors. However, practitioners and scholars may require an approach that increases consumer attention to the advertisement and brings the consumer more pleasure and excitement so that s/he forms an emotional connection with a brand. One way to achieve this is by

humanising the brand in a printed advertisement (Aaker, 1997; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). As noted by MacInnis & Folkes, (2017, p.359):

‘Current research on the role of brand archetypes is limited, making this area a fruitful one for understanding how consumers perceive, connect with and form relationships with a brand in human-like ways. This is particularly so given the emphasis that practicing marketers are placing on the importance of storytelling as a method for developing brand perceptions’.

Further research should find how marketers can build a modern paradigm of brand humanisation that would humanise a brand and product in several different ways to increase consumer self-congruence and increase consumer emotional connection to the brand (Delbaere et al., 2011, MacInnis and Folkes, 2017, Thomson et al., 2006).

Figure 2.5: Twelve-archetype model of brand personality (Source: the author)



2.5.2 Aakar's model of brand personality

Marketing research shows that consumers' perceptions of a branded product is not limited to its functional characteristics and their advantages. These functional characteristics very often include what is known as the 'brand image', 'brand personification' or 'brand anthropomorphism'. All these concepts very often include what is known as 'humanised branding, though the non-functional characteristics in this collection of human characteristics is referred to as "brand personality'. This explains why consumers in referring to the brands use adjective descriptors of personality characteristics, while marketers try to attract more clients by strengthening consumers' perceptions so as to position their brand better than its competitors (Batra et al., 2007).

As shown in Figure (2.6), Jennifer Aaker in 1997 published a paper, 'Dimensions of Brand Personality' which lists five dimensions in a model

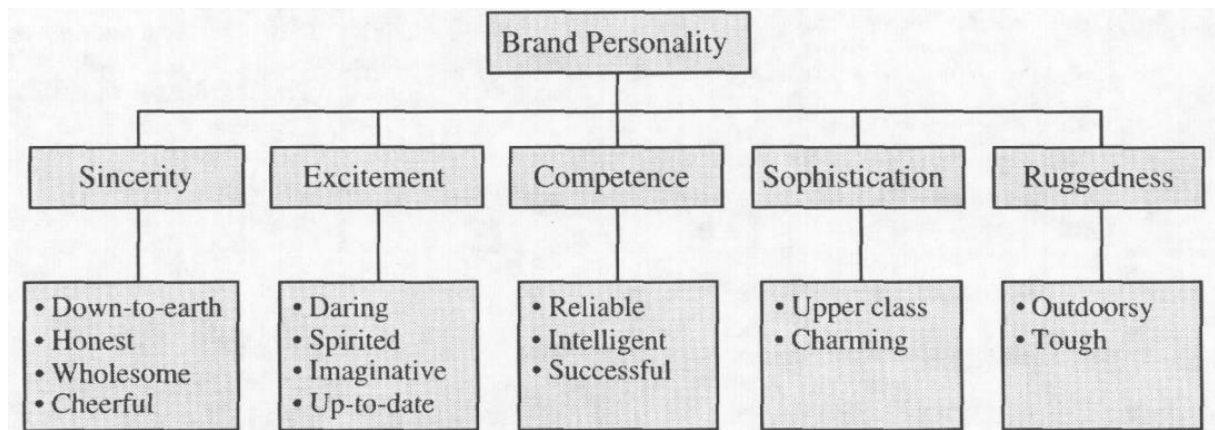
of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. The five-dimension model of brand personality was generated on the basis of the 'Big Five'. The dimensions are intended to work together to create a generalized set of traits that marketers can use to help assess brand personality. Aaker's model has triggered interest among marketers and scholars in exploring the concept of brand personality. This model has been a useful tool for measuring brand personality and adjusting brand marketing strategy. It shapes how consumers see a brand and how a brand is differentiated from its competitors.

Aaker argued that most of a brand's personality traits belong to one of these five personality dimensions. Under the umbrella of 'sincerity' Aaker first placed the personal traits of being down to earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful. Second, she placed the personal traits of being spirited, daring, imaginative, and up to date under the umbrella of excitement. Third, she placed personal traits of being reliable, intelligent, and successful under the umbrella of competence. Fourth, she placed the personal traits of being upper class and charming under the umbrella of sophistication. Lastly, she placed personal traits associated with being 'outdoorsy' and tough under the umbrella of ruggedness. This simple model has helped to distinguish brands from their rivals and strengthen the proposition of brand value.

Aaker's model has been used to measure brand personality and create value for the brand. However, marketers need to find a way to embody brand personality traits in practice and persuade consumers to form emotional connections with brands. One way to achieve this is by humanising the brand (Aaker, 1997; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Humanising branding is a marketing strategy technique that has been used for many years to distinguish one brand from another. Marketers have used the technique for this purpose and to create trademarks (Ralph Lauren, Mr. Proper, Starbucks, and M&M). This technique

persuades consumers to form an emotional connection with a brand whereby they think of a brand as a person with unique but familiar personality traits that match their own.

Figure 2.6: Five-Dimensional model of brand personality (Source: Adapted from Aaker, 1997, p.352)



2.5.3 Portal et al.'s model of humanised branding

Brands create value for company business. One way to acquire this value is through building a human brand (Portal et al., 2018). Consumers are particularly drawn to humanized brands. Moreover, consumers relate to brands in the same way as they relate to individuals (Fournier, 1998). However, many practitioners know little about creating a brand with human-like features.

As shown in Figure (2.7), Portal et al.,(2018) managed to build a model that may enable many practitioners to humanise a brand. The model of Human Brand is a visual design showing what is required to create a brand that is somehow viewed by consumers as human. This creation has four phases; the first three indicate the inputs of the brand and the fourth indicates the outcome

of the first three. The four critical phases in creating a human brand are represented in four concentric circles, as discussed in the following sections.

The first phase is built to represent brand traits see Figure (2.7). Indeed, brand traits are very important elements and requirements, without which the consumer would not perceive the brand as human. In this phase, Portal et al., (2018) guide managers in harnessing a number of brand traits. This phase is divided into four sections: (i) organizational values, (ii) employee behaviour, (iii) marketing mix, and (iv) value proposition. The first section of organizational values presents congruency, integrity, and benevolence as very important brand traits, which must be involved in the organizational values before the consumer can perceive the brand as human. The second section concerns employee behaviour. This section guides managers to bring out sincere, friendly, capable traits in relationships with employees. Traits of this kind can enhance the consumer's tendency to perceive a brand as human. Marketing mix is dealt with in the third section; it guides the marketing manager to apply three brand traits in the strategic marketing and communications of the organization, namely, creativity, consistency, and relevance. Such traits may enhance consumer proneness to perceive a brand as human. The last section of this phase guides marketers to implement three principles – quality, innovation, and reliability – to enhance the proposition of brand value (Portal et al., 2018).

The second phase is built to represent human brand attributes. The six human brand attributes are originality, competence, warmth, genuineness, ethical awareness and trust. These elements can differentiate a brand from its competitors. First, the marketing manager can create a human brand with better values. This will result from creating the perception of a brand as original and competent. Therefore, the brand manager is encouraged to build a number of brand traits such as congruence, integrity, and benevolence. Second, the marketing manager can create a human brand with a better marketing mix, achieved by creating the perception of a brand that is perceived to be competent

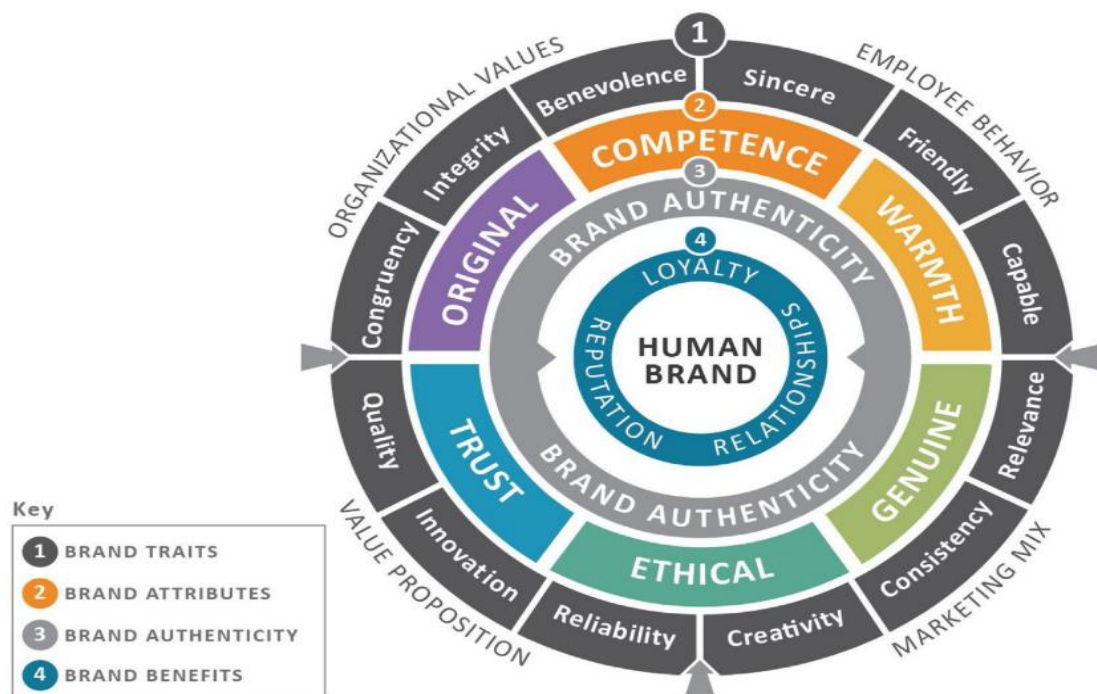
and warm. This encourages the brand manager to build a number of brand traits such as sincerity, friendliness, and capability with the employees. Third, the marketing manager can create a human brand with better employee behaviour by creating the perception of a brand that is perceived as genuine and ethical. This encourages the brand manager to build a number of brand traits such as creativity, consistency, and relevance. Lastly, the marketing manager can create a human brand with a better value proposition, by creating the perception of a brand that is perceived to be ethical and trustworthy. This encourages the brand manager to build a number of brand traits such as quality, innovation, and reliability. These brand traits and attributes are able to sway the consumer's mind and heart to perceive the brand as human (Portal et al., 2018).

The third phase represents the last step in building a human brand. The aim of this phase is to ensure that the brand is perceived as authentic (really human). Certainly, attaching brand traits and brand attributes to most brands may persuade a consumer to perceive the brand as authentic. However, it is important to remember that consumers co-create the sense of brand authenticity according to their own perceptions of what is genuine, sincere, real and true (Portal et al., 2018). As Portal observed, 'What is authentic to some may not be authentic to others. However, we suggest that they are likely to view the brand as authentic when all six brand attributes are present. Authenticity is an integral component of humanized brands and the management team must continuously ensure this for customers' (p.373).

The fourth phase represents the final step in presenting the benefits of building a human brand. The aim of this phase is to ensure that the brand achieves one out of three brand benefits, as a result of building brand traits and attributes along with achieving the authenticity in the brand. Certainly, achieving the three phases provides the brand with three valuable benefits that improve the relationship between the consumer and the brand. These three brand benefits are brand relationships, brand loyalty, and brand reputation.

The Human Brand Model (HBM) shows how human brands can be created at a realistic level. All departments of a company are interested in its development, which should be directed by the chief brand officer or the chief marketing officer at the corporate level. The best scenario is that the HBM's philosophies are so ingrained with time and experience that its application is second nature to the leadership and the entire company.

Figure 2.7: The Human Brand Model (HBM) (Source: Adapted from Portal et al., 2018, p.371)



2.6 Development of a brand humanisation model through metaphor

2.6.1 The importance of metaphor

Each theory of science is developed by scientists who are human beings and who necessarily use the methods of a human mind. When the scientific subject matter is metaphor itself, it should be no surprise that, since it is expressed in

the imagination, such an enterprise has to make use of metaphor to create a scientific understanding of the meaning of metaphor. It was important to find a more adequate metaphor for the concept to account for this imaginative aspect. Marketers need to find a way to think about metaphors in order not only to map them, but also to add elements to a domain. Accordingly, based on the visual image, marketers adopted the projection metaphor. This metaphor allows marketers to conceptualize an idea and build relations with the target consumer (Lakoff and Johnsen, 2003). In its definition, 'A metaphor compares two objects through analogy by suggesting that one object is figuratively like another even though on the surface they appear to be quite different' (Phillips & Mcquarrie, 2009, p.50). Metaphors are often used in advertisements such as 'exercise lays the foundation for lasting fitness', or 'exercise provides the building blocks for good health' (Mcquarrie and Mick, 1996).

Metaphor helps to shape consumer expectations about what a brand communicates. Beyond question, it is a good strategy for marketing communication. This is noted by Pateman: 'The relevant 'formal' properties of texts and images used in advertisements can only be specified on the basis of the recognition that they are being produced in advertisements' (1983, p.190). Metaphors boosted marketers' interest in advertising; promotional metaphors, which are typically detailed and memorable, shape and influence consumer expectations (Ward and Gaidis, 1990). One more benefit of metaphors is their importance in the process of imagination (Goldman 1986; Oliver, Robertson, and Mitchell 1993). This benefit is supported by Zaltman: 'Without metaphors, we cannot imagine. They are the engines of imagination'. (1995, p. 425). Previous research indicates that when metaphoric messaging is introduced, consumers are more closely connected to a brand and have a more favourable attitude to it. This offers ways to communicate several brand messages that without metaphor would be more complicated (Phillips and Mcquarrie, 2009).

2.6.2 The use of metaphor

The use of metaphors in advertising is interrelated with many benefits. Metaphors produce more cognitive elaboration than literal messages (Kardes1988; Toncar and Munch, 2001), possibly because people need to consider the nuanced message in order to draw conclusions (Mick, 1992). Marketers try to find an approach to designing a metaphor that shares the message in advertisements. The nature of this design requires one thing to be expressed and understood in terms of another unexpected object. In order to grasp the message, consumers are exposed to a metaphorical image in an advertisement and tap into their current awareness and interpretations of the metaphor's conventions and meaning to grasp the message. Consumers can therefore perceive brands as more sophisticated in advertisements that consist of such metaphorical advertising elements. In its promotional strategy, consumers can also perceive a brand to be more subtle, since they need to draw inferences about the metaphor (Mick, 1992) and shape their interpretations accordingly. In addition, the brand can be perceived to be worth thinking about since a metaphor has been used to decorate and disguise the message. These perceived features match the brand personality traits and make a contribution to the dimension of sophistication of the brand personality, which is associated with a charming and upper-class character (Aaker, 1997).

In the same way, it is suggested that marketers using metaphorical advertising elements allow consumers to view branded product as more interesting than those using literal advertising elements. Metaphors bring in imagery, being artful and figurative (Paivio and Clarke,1986), which leads consumers to view a brand as creative and imaginative. Metaphors, like all novel stimuli, produce elaboration that is more imaginative than analytical or theoretical (Oliver et al., 1993). The greater degree of arousal (Berlyne, 1971) and excitement, enjoyment, and pleasure that metaphors generate in print advertising (Barthes 1986) can also contribute to the feeling that the brand is fun and congenial. In

addition, when interpreting metaphors (Goldman, 1986), the exercise of more imagination can result in the perception that the brand is imaginative, creative, and innovative. These perceptions lead a consumer to perceive the brand personality traits of excitement, which is associated with brand traits that are daring, spirited, imaginative, and up to date (Aaker, 1997). However, it is suggested that consumers might perceive brands advertised with metaphors as less authentic than competing brands using literal advertising elements. It is posited that brands using non-metaphorical advertising elements may encourage consumers to perceive the message to be clear, truthful, and literal (Black,1979) and thus infer that the advertised brand is genuine and honest. In addition, unlike metaphors, non-metaphors do not differ significantly, and do not usually need as much elaboration (McQuarrie and Mick, 1999). Metaphors, in contrast, are clearly untrue (Ward and Gaidis,1990) and semantically deviant (Matthews, 1971).

Finally, consumers may perceive brands that use metaphorical advertising as less authentic than those that do not. Since metaphors rely on deviations to create incongruity, some may perceive non-metaphors as more reliable and trustworthy. Moreover, since non-metaphors are presented in a more objective manner, and more as matters of fact, requiring less elaboration and discussion of the findings, they may provide stronger arguments for consumers to view an brand advertised with them as more effective, more technical and more serious than one advertised with metaphors. As it happens, brands advertised without metaphors must dependable only on those brand personality traits that are linked to intelligence, and reliability (Aaker, 1997).

Metaphors are based on cross-domain comparisons and are categorized as a kind of rhetorical figure, an artful deviation from expectation (Mcquarrie and Mick, 1996). A considerable body of research has accumulated to demonstrate that metaphors are both popular in advertising (Leigh,1994) and effective in significantly altering consumer response (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996). The

positive power effect of metaphor has been confirmed across a range of dependent variables, including the effects of consumer attitude and memory, together with direct, and indirect exposure (McQuarrie and Mick, 2003).

The humanisation of products has been seen as a strong brand management strategy for long-term business success (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). Brown (2010) believed that the strategy is used to develop interpersonal relations with consumers. Indeed, with this understanding, it is little wonder that marketing communication experts have for a long-time portrayed brand as having human characteristics (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). The technique has been used by many companies to create registered trademarks, which, as noted by Rogers (1950), are defined as 'any device that enables a purchaser to choose the goods he prefers from among competing articles, and to discriminate against those he dislikes or knows nothing of'. Many companies have created trademarks (Ralph Lauren, Mr Proper) in humanlike form in order to build a consumer brand relationship. This has helped to create brand differentiation and positioning to allow the development of a competitive edge in the marketplace (e.g. M&M, Starbucks). According to Marchand (1985), 'people craved opportunities, through vicarious experience, to bring products within the compass of their own human scale'. These humanlike characters appear in different forms. Guthrie (1993) has suggested three ways in which to humanise an object, as shown in Table (2.1).

Table 2.1: Three ways to humanise an object (Source: Author)

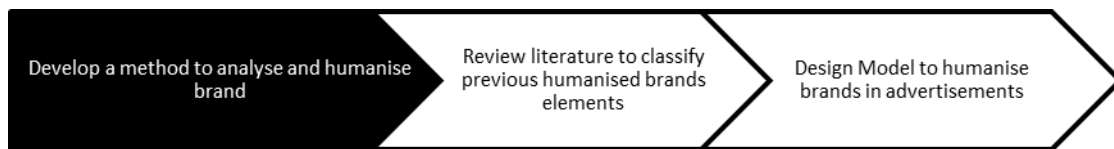
Typology	Description	Example	Sample
The partial	This occurs when consumers see a product as having humanlike characteristics without being completely human.	When consumers see a product as a family.	
The literal	This occurs when consumers see a product as having humanlike voice, body and face.	When consumers see a human motion (smiling, talking, and moving) in a branded product.	
The accidental	This occurs when consumers see a brand/product as having elements of human features but are surprised by this outcome.	When consumers see a human face on a rock or a cloud.	

2.6.3 Categorising a brand as humanlike

For decades, marketing managers have focused on humanised brand elements in order to improve brand relationships with consumers (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Many authors have written about the strategies of brand humanisation, but most of them essentially consider this to mean a brand having humanlike characteristics; and the purpose of adopting a branding humanisation strategy is simply to activate 'human' schema by applying humanlike features to a brand. This action creates a certain perception within the consumer that the brand is indeed human.

Several studies in consumer research have used visual metaphors, verbal metaphors, and rhetorical metaphors to humanise products. One of the most challenging and interesting tasks in this study is to humanise a branded product in an advertisement, and to focus on creativity and imagination in respect of every individual brand so as to stimulate interest among the target consumers. This requires deeper cognitive analysis (Phillips et al., 2004), so it is very important to categorise and analyse brand marketing advertisement activity. To this end, the literature of brand humanisation was reviewed to determine the various ways in which such a process takes place, and from there to develop a lens through which to analyse brand advertisement activities as shown in Figure (2.8).

Figure 2.8: The process of developing a method to analyse and humanise brand
(Source: Author)



MacInnis and Folkes (2017) divided the humanlike features within a brand into three categories, which are discussed in the following sub-sections.

2.6.3.1 Brand humanisation through the use of visual metaphors

Visual metaphors are very important in marketing, and for many years more emphasis has been placed on pictures than on words in print advertising (Kim et al., 2016; Phillips and McQuarrie, 2002; Puzakova et al., 2013; 2018). Ang and Lim (2006), in their article 'The influence of metaphors and product type on brand personality perceptions and attitudes', found that consumers pay more attention to the visual image than to the verbal headline when they see an advertisement. They suggest that visual metaphors can bring more pleasure and excitement to the consumer than can words, and that these visual stimuli

can be used as a marketing strategy to influence brand personality conferred on utilitarian products. Visual metaphors have been used in marketing research to promote the perception within consumers that the product they are looking at is human in some way.

Kim et al., (2016) studied the issue of computer gamers and how they responded to a human face when requesting help. Figure (2.9) shows the computerised helper with a human face. It was found by Kim et al. (2016) that consumers experienced less enjoyment with a computer game when they received instruction from a humanised helper with a human face than when they received it from a non-humanised source. Earlier, Puzakova et al., (2013) humanised a smoothie-maker to look like a human body by adding two buttons to resemble human eyes and a base to the product that would appear like human legs (Figure 2.10). Their study found that the humanised product led to less favourable consumer attitudes after being exposed to negative brand information and also reduced negative reactions to the brand. Figure (2.11), represents a set of soda bottles in different sizes as an overall product that resembles a family and not simply different product lines (Aggarwal and McGill, 2007). All these elements are designed to place consumers in a mindset that promotes the perception that the brand is human (Puzakova et al., 2013).

Figure 2.9: Humanised (Top) versus Non-humanised (Bottom) helper (Source: Kim et al, 2016)

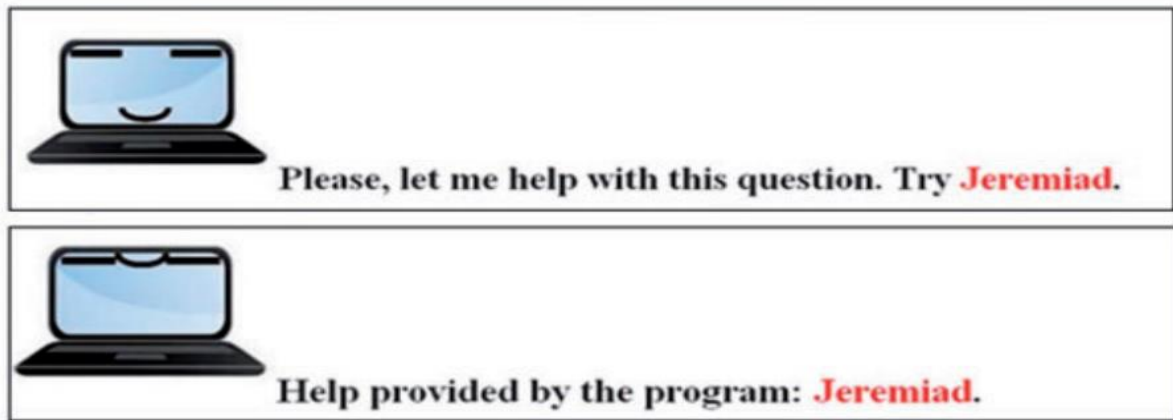


Figure 2.10: Humanised smoothie-maker (Left) versus Non-humanised smoothie-maker (Right) (Source: Puzakova et al., 2013)



Figure 2.11: Four different sized bottles resembling a family (Left) versus Four bottles of the same size (Right) (Source: Aggarwal and McGill, 2007)



2.6.3.2 Brand humanisation through the use of verbal metaphors

Verbal metaphors are used widely in marketing research and agencies but are mostly discussed as rhetorical features (combined visual and verbal metaphors) (Puzakova et al., 2013), and actually very few studies have focused on examples where verbal metaphors have been used without graphics. Waytz et al., (2014) studied people's willingness to accept and trust technology in the place of human agency, and applied three verbal elements – a human name, first-person voice, and gender – to humanise a vehicle. The vehicle was referred to as Iris, a human name, and given a first-person female voice. The study revealed that participants were willing to trust the humanised vehicle more than a non-humanised one. It seems that technology is able to 'stand in' for humanlike qualities if it is in a product designed for this purpose (Waytz et al., 2014).

2.6.3.3 Brand humanisation through the use of rhetorical metaphors

Rhetorical metaphors that use both visual and verbal metaphors to deliver a particular message about the brand are able to increase anthropomorphic tendencies by humanising a brand/product (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Delbaere et al., (2011), in their article 'Personification in advertising using a visual

metaphor to trigger anthropomorphism', found more positive emotions, more positive attributions of brand personality, and greater brand liking when personification pictures were incorporated in an advertisement. Rhetorical metaphors have been used successfully in marketing research to let consumers perceive products as human. For example, representing a brand as being capable of taking the role of a human character (or archetype) in stories or advertisements such as the roles of the 'hero' (rescuing the consumers) and the 'care-giver' (taking care of the consumer's mental and physical health). Indeed, consumers' stories about brands can help to represent brands in anthropomorphic roles (Woodside et al., 2008). Moreover, representing a brand in a 'biographical' form can increase consumers' tendencies to perceive the brand in human terms, for example, an 'underdog' (passionate, determined, rising from humble beginnings) (Paharia et al., 2011).

All the above information is depicted diagrammatically to design model of brand humanisation in Figure (2.12).

Figure 2.12: Model of brand humanisation (Source: Author)



2.6.4 Guidance for users to apply brand humanisation

As shown in Figure (2.12), the researcher built a model that may be used by practitioners and scholars to humanise brand in printed advertising. This model is a visual design of what is essential to create a brand that allows consumers to regard it as human. This model entails three phases; the first two indicate the inputs of the various metaphors needed to humanise a brand and the third indicates the outcome of the first two. All three phases are discussed below.

As shown in Figure (2.12), the first phase is built to represent various metaphors in the approach to humanising a brand. These are very important elements and requirements without which the brand will not be perceived as human. In this phase, the researcher provides practitioners and scholars with guidance to design several human features. The phase is divided into three sections: (i) visual metaphor, (ii) verbal metaphor, and (iii) rhetorical metaphor. Visual metaphor guides a product to appear in the form of a family with individual members: the human face, and human body are very important approach metaphors in humanising a brand. The use of visual metaphors in print advertising has proven effective in capturing consumers' attention and encouraging them to interact with the printed advertising (Sullivan and Boches, 2016). Visual metaphors occur through the audio-visual medium of TV commercials and in print advertisements through images. These traits are very essential parts of the print advertisement, allowing consumers to perceive a brand as human.

The second section involves verbal metaphor. This section guides practitioners and scholars to apply human name, to communicate in the first person, and to see branded products as gendered, all essential elements in marketing advertisements. The verbal metaphor itself is expressed in the form of two external and internal images (Aaker, 1997). Physical appearance (e.g., being good-looking, glamorous) are represented in the external brand personality image, and in thoughtful advertising expressions, while the attitude of the brand is defined by its internal brand personality image (e.g., being honest, or friendly). Such traits can enhance the consumer's tendency to perceive a brand as human (Chu, et al., 2017).

Rhetorical metaphor is the third section; it guides practitioners and scholars to apply three brand traits in marketing advertisements. These traits are biography, archetype, and personification. A rhetorical metaphor has been described as an artful deviation from expectation in the style of an

advertisement, which at the same time is not judged by consumers as a fault (Delbaere, 2011). Traits of this kind can enhance the consumer's proneness to perceive a brand as human.

The third phase represents the final step in the benefits of using the various approaches of metaphors to humanise a brand. The aim of this phase is to ensure that the brand achieves its one goal, to humanise a branded product. As the result of structuring the various metaphors. Admittedly, achieving one form of metaphor out of three may be enough to provide a brand with human features, and this may allow a consumer to perceive a brand as human. This may also improve the relationship between consumer and brand.

The model of brand humanisation reveals how it is possible to create human brands at a credible level. By now, most practitioners and scholars are able to apply one out of the three forms of metaphor to create a human brand.

2.7 Consumer and brand attachment

This section starts with an introduction to self-brand connection (section 2.7.1), followed by a discussion of the importance of consumer self-congruence to enhance consumer emotional attachment (section 2.7.2). It ends by discussing consumer emotional attachment to a brand (section 2.7.3).

2.7.1 Self-brand connection

Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254) define the connection of the self with the brand connection as 'the strength to which a consumer's self-concept is connected to the brand', and Sprott et al., (2009) report that in exploring connections between consumers and their brands, scholars have confirmed that self-brand connections can lead to positive brand attitudes (Escalas, 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Sprott et al., (2009). According to Escalas (2004, p.171):

'Brands can be used to construct and cultivate one's self-concept. They can be used to express one's self-concept, publicly and privately. Brands

can be used as tools for social integration or to connect one to the past. Brands act as symbols of personal accomplishment, provide self-esteem, allow one to differentiate oneself and express individuality, and help through life transitions’.

Therefore, the connection of the consumer’s self-concept with a brand will promote positive attitudes to the brand. Consumers with high self-brand connections will defend their favourite brand among groups who spread negative information about the brand (Ferraro et al., 2013). Explained by self-verification theory, consumers are seen to be motivated by the need to verify, maintain and confirm their positive or negative self-concepts (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). And to protect their self-concept, consumers may not accept the opinion of other consumers who criticise their favourite brand (Carver and Scheier, 1990). The level of self-brand connection is positively related to emotional attachment to a brand (Malar et al., 2011), as confirmed previously by several researchers who observe the consumer to purchase a brand or product that matches his/her self-congruence (Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Malar et al., 2011).

2.7.2 Self-congruence

Self-congruence refers to the fit of the brand’s personality with the consumer’s self (Liu et al., 2012). According to Malar et al. (2011), there are two types of self-congruence: (i) actual (who and what I believe I am now) and (ii) ideal (who and what I would like to be seen as). A few studies have indicated that consumers buy products as a way of describing themselves to others. They buy brands with a particular personality to express their self-concept (Aaker, 1999; Malar et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2014), showing who and what they believe themselves to be. Moreover, Malar et al. (2011) argue that consumers can achieve self-congruence by buying a brand with a personality that matches their actual or ideal selves, so the purchase of a particular brand serves two purposes – one of demonstrating to others what the purchaser believes s/he is,

and one of persuading the purchaser him/herself that s/he actually is that person. Either way, the self-concept becomes an all-important emotional need, as argued by Crosby and Darroch (2014), who note that consumers buy products to satisfy emotional needs. For example, they might buy Louis Vuitton luggage to give the impression that they are wealthy, to provide themselves with high self-esteem, or they might play golf at the prestigious Torrey Pines course to feel like a professional and achieve their ideal or actual self-congruence (Malar et al., 2011). The outcome is that the consumer believes that the chosen brand's personality reflects his/her own actual personality, while an ideal self-congruent brand (aspirational branding strategies) reflects the personality that the consumer would like others to associate with him/her. From the study by Malar et al. (2011), it is evident that the actual self-congruent self (under authentic branding strategies) has the greatest impact on emotional brand attachment.

2.7.3 Emotional attachment

Individuals form emotional attachments to a variety of objects, including celebrities (Thomson, 2006) and virtual objects such as avatars (Nagy and Koles, 2014). Emotional attachment is one of the dependent variables in this study. Malar et al. (2011) refer to emotional attachment as the bond that connects a consumer with a particular brand and involves feelings about the brand. These feelings include connection, affection, and passion (Thomson et al., 2005). A study by Vlachos et al., (2010) indicates that brand attachment will be stronger when it inspires (aspirational branding strategies) and satisfies the consumer's self.

A recent study by Japutra et al. (2014, p.612) finds that 'consumers become attached to a particular brand because that brand is able to give them a sense of identity'. Moreover, previous research suggests that consumer self-congruence with the brand personality predicts emotional brand attachment (Malar et al., 2011). Thomson et al. (2005) find that emotional brand attachment

strengthens the relationship between consumers and brand, leading to brand loyalty and willingness to pay a premium price. Park and MacInnis (2006), reproducing earlier studies, confirmed brand attachment to be one of the most effective concepts for describing and studying a wide range of consumer behaviour.

2.8 Identifying the research gaps

The aim of this section is to discuss the studies that are relevant to the central themes of this thesis, brand humanisation, consumer self-congruence and consumer emotional attachment. The major studies in these fields have been tabulated in Table (2.2) to show the limitations, findings, and gaps in previous studies as discussed in sections (2.8.1), (2.8.2), and (2.8.3). The object was to identify the research gaps, develop research hypotheses and position the present research in the current literature.

2.8.1 Lack of a model of brand humanisation

Branding a product creates value for it and the brand and one way of creating this value is by humanising the brand (Aaker, 1997; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Humanising a brand is a marketing strategy technique that has been used for many years to distinguish a brand from its competitors. Marketers have used this technique to create brand differentiation and trademarks (Ralph Lauren, Mr. Proper, Starbucks, and M&M). This technique persuades consumers to form emotional connections with brands as consumers and think about a brand as a person with unique personality traits that match their own.

This technique has been used over many years to influence consumers' attitude and reduce consumers' negative reactions when a brand starts to have a bad reputation (Puzakova et al., 2013), to increase consumer attention to the advertising and bring more pleasure and excitement to the consumer. It can also be used as a marketing strategy to influence brand personality (Ang and Lim,

2006). Thus, marketers may humanise brands or products to seem more authentic as a way of enhancing consumer feeling towards the brand personality and to create emotional attachment among consumers (Thomson et al., 2006; Malar et al., 2011). But a humanised product needs to work simply and directly to succeed (Hart et al., 2017). Marketers and researchers can use visual, verbal, or metaphorical tools to humanise a brand in many ways to match consumer self-congruence and increase consumer emotional attachment (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Delgado-Ballester, et al., (2020) supported the findings from MacInnis and Folkes, (2017) and suggested that brand managers can focus on personification strategies using visual, and verbal metaphors to humanise a brand.

2.8.2 Lack of research on the impact of humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment

Previous consumer behaviour research has shown that a humanised brand can be used to influence consumers' attitude by increasing product likeability (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Delbaere et al., 2011), increase consumer automatic behavior (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012), reduce consumer negative reactions to the brand (Puzakova et al., 2013), increase consumer enjoyment of the product (Hur et al., 2015), increase consumer brand quality (Hudson et al., 2016), and enhance consumers' attraction to a brand (Puzakova and Aggarwal, 2018). The study of Hart et al., (2017) demonstrated that humanising brand, so long as it is simple and direct in its action, enhances a consumer's tendency to welcome a brand and increases consumer purchase intentions. Moreover, Hart et al., (2017) support the findings from Delbaere et al., (2011) implying that brand humanisation is a powerfully influential tool for creating brand personality, influencing consumer attitudes, and strengthening consumer emotional connection to a brand. In addition, a recent study suggested that it would be useful to investigate whether humanising a brand is a more successful way to creating brand

attachment and influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2020).

As shown in Appendix (A), studies of brand humanisation have been limited to a focus on consumer attitude and behaviour. Consequently, there is a gap in our understanding of the detailed effects of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment.

2.8.3 Limited knowledge about the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence

Consumer behaviour research has shown that consumers purchase a certain brand to express their actual or ideal self-congruence (Aaker, 1999). Previous studies have found that brand personality could be used to strengthen consumer emotional attachment when brand personality matches consumer actual and ideal self-congruence. Moreover, these investigations have found that consumer actual and ideal self-congruence are affected by self-esteem, public self-consciousness and product involvement (Malär et al., 2011). A recent study by Japutra et al., (2014) has confirmed that actual and ideal self-congruence are an important factor to strengthen consumer emotional attachment to a brand, although a qualitative approach was used for data collection in this study, which may have limited the generalisability of the findings. In 2019, Japutra et al. took the study further and used a quantitative approach to examine the impact of actual and ideal self-congruence on brand attachment. Their findings show that actual and ideal self-congruence have significant effects on consumer emotional attachment to brand, but actual self-congruence was a stronger predictor of consumer emotional attachment to it (Japutra et al., 2019). Likewise, Delgado-Ballester study found that consumers will only respond positively to a humanised version of a brand if they find it attractive to their selves (2020).

As shown in Appendix (A), most previous studies of actual and ideal self-congruence and consumer emotional attachment have been limited to brand personality, so no tangible evidence (e.g. advertisements) was provided to let consumers judge their feelings about brand personality and brand characteristics. Hence nothing is known about the consumers' need to imagine brand personality traits, which may have biased the studies. It has helped to create a dearth of studies examining the effects of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment through the use of self-congruence theory (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017).

2.9 Research model & hypotheses development

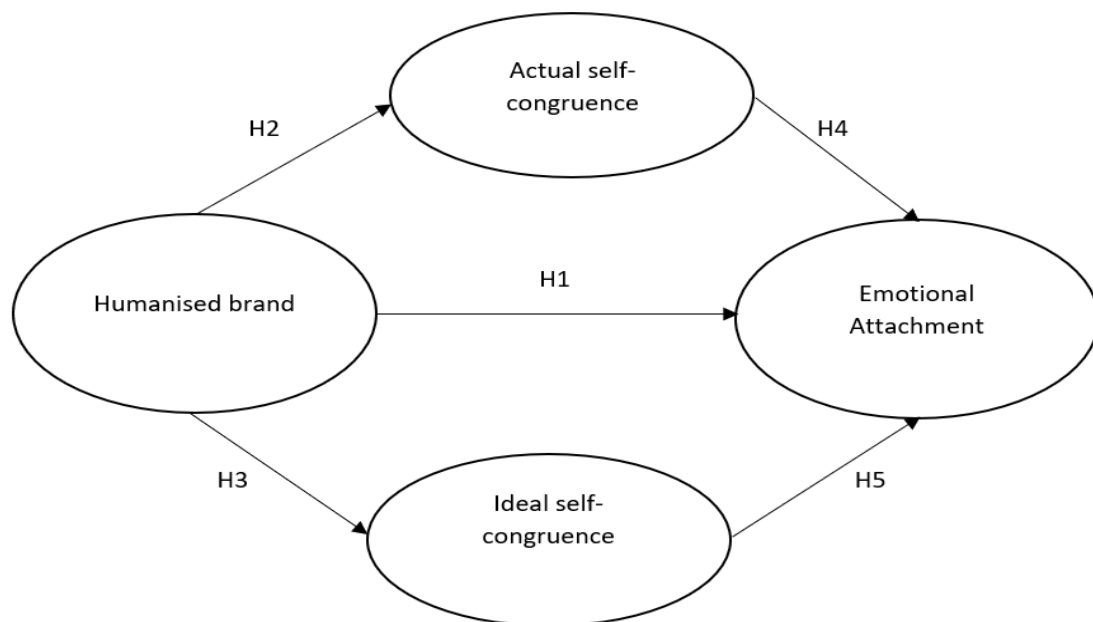
This section presents the research conceptual model that guides this research (Section 2.9.1) and justifies the hypotheses which were developed on the basis of prior research (Section 2.9.2).

2.9.1 Research conceptual model

The literature that informs the research conceptual model is built up from studies of brand humanisation (Hudson et al., 2016; MacInnis and Folkes, 2017; Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; Aggarwal and McGill, 2007; Hart et al., 2017; Puzakova et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021) and studies of self-congruence and emotional attachment (Malär et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2014; Koo et al 2014; Japutra et al., 2019; Rabbanee et al., 2020). As shown in Figure (2.13), the research conceptual model is built to test the direct and indirect impact of brand humanisation on consumer responses in terms of emotional attachment to brands. The first link between humanised brands and consumer emotional attachment is presented by H1, which investigates the impact of a humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. The second link between humanised brands and actual self-congruence is presented by H2 and investigates the impact of a humanised brand on consumer actual self-congruence. The third link is between a humanised brand and ideal self-

congruence; it is presented by H3 and investigates the impact of a humanised brand on consumer ideal self-congruence. The fourth link between actual self-congruence and emotional attachment is presented by H4; it investigates the impact of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment. The last link between ideal self-congruence, and emotional attachment is presented by H5 and investigates the impact of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment.

Figure 2.12: Proposed research conceptual model and hypotheses (Source: Author)



2.9.2 Hypotheses development

The text below explains the development of two hypotheses, which are based on prior literature. The main aim of this dissertation is to determine how marketers can increase consumer emotional attachment using the concept of brand humanisation and self-congruence theory, which raises two research questions.

The first of these is whether a humanised brand has a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment. Very few marketing studies in consumer behaviour research have examined the impact of a humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. Although he was limited to the scant literature on spokes-character advertising, Phillips (1996) found that humanisation can develop powerful brand personality and motivate consumers to form emotional connections to a brand. Some years later, this finding was supported by Delbaere et al., (2011) who recommended that (i) brand humanisation is a powerfully persuasive tool; (ii) consumers should be allowed to see a brand as human under specific conditions; (iii) brand personality should be created; and (iv) to form an emotional connection to a brand, consumer's feelings of empathy should be enhanced. These recommendations were supported by Thomson et al., 2006) who found that brand personality can enhance consumer's tendency to form strong emotional attachments when a brand personality enhances a consumer's feelings of empathy. In addition, certain consumer emotions are positively influenced by a humanised brand (Delgado-Ballester, et al., 2020). The first hypothesis to be tested is:

H1: A humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment.

The second research question to be addressed is the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in a consumer's emotional attachment to humanised brands. In this study the central assumption is that consumers may develop an emotional attachment to brands with a particular personality as a way to express their self-concept (Aaker, 1999;). According to Puzakova et al. (2009), the concept of a humanising brand is a combination of brand image (Aaker, 1999) and consumer self-concept (Waytz et al., 2010). Self-congruence should play the main role in creating consumer emotional attachment, since the consumer's self-concept is essential to forming an emotional attachment to a brand (Malar et al., 2011). Very often, but not always, brand personality helps

consumers to express their self-concept when the brand image matches consumer self-congruence (Aaker, 1999). Therefore, consumers are more likely to view brands as similar to their self-concept and engage with the brand when it is represented as having human-like features (e.g., a name, gender, physical characteristics) (MacInnis and Folkes, 2017). Actual and ideal self-congruence are important variables in strengthening the relationship between humanised brands and consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, two further hypotheses for testing are:

H2: A humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer actual self-congruence.

and

H3: A humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer ideal self-congruence.

Previous studies of consumer behaviour have found that consumers form an emotional attachment to a brand when the brand personality matches the consumer's actual and ideal self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011). Their findings show that actual and ideal self-congruence have significant effects on consumer emotional attachment to a brand, but that actual self-congruence was a stronger predictor of consumer emotional attachment to a brand. From this finding some recommendations may be derived: marketers need to use actual self-congruence to make the brand seem more authentic (actual person brand image) if consumer emotional attachment is to result.

A recent study by Japutra et al., (2014) has confirmed that actual and ideal self-congruence are an important factor in strengthening consumer emotional attachment to a brand and that actual self-congruence was a stronger predictor of this attachment. Moreover, consumer emotional attachment to a brand will increase when brand personality matches the consumer's actual or ideal self-congruence. A few years later, this group of writers examined the capacity of

actual and ideal self-congruence to enhance consumer emotional attachment to a brand. The results show that actual and ideal self-congruence both have significant effects on consumer emotional attachment to a brand, but actual self-congruence was a stronger predictor of it (Japutra, et al., 2014). Similarly, Rasool et al., his study found that actual, and ideal have a positive significant effect on brand attachment (2020). Thus, this research proposes to test two final hypotheses:

H4: Actual self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment.

and

H5: Ideal self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment.

2.10 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has introduced the concept of brand and highlighted numerous branding concepts, 'brand and consumer desire' & 'consumer brand relationship'. All these concepts are based on one idea, that brands can create a symbol or design a logo and give a name or combination of them to identify a product/brand/group of services and distinguish it from those of competitors therefore they create a strong competitive advantage in the marketplace. Marketers are advised to study consumer needs and wants instead of concentrating only on advertising product features knowledge or quality. This recommendation gives marketers the opportunity to concentrate on consumer response to the brand image in order to create an appropriate brand personality that matches consumer desires.

Marketers are encouraged to introduce anthropomorphic strategies in marketing communication, to make it easy for consumers to communicate with brands.

This marketing communication technique consists of a set of humanlike features, with a mind and personality. It is designed to allow the consumer to view a brand as human and to create a positive emotional response to it. The chapter discussed three primary factors that may persuade a consumer to view a brand as human, namely, (i) elicited agent knowledge, (ii) effectance motivation, and (iii) sociality motivation. In this thesis the focus is on elicited agent knowledge alone, which is used to bring brands to life and provide them with human characteristics.

Humanlike theory was imported from human psychology, with the suggestion that brand humanisation is important. Humanlike theory shows that brands are usually viewed by a consumer as animate human-like entities. Therefore, the idea that consumers perceive brands as something approximating living beings, and as akin to human has been accepted by many scholars. From the literature that consumers most frequently but not always consider a brand as some sort of a human-like being. This belief has encouraged scholars to devise a new marketing communication technique known as 'humanising brand'.

Today, bringing brands to life and giving them humanoid characteristics is labelled 'Humanising brand'. Three main brand humanization conceptualization models in the field were discussed. These models have affected the field and demonstrated the value of brand humanization and the unclear nature of using brand humanization among academic researchers. For several years, the brand humanization technique has been used to influence consumers' attitudes, and to reduce negative reactions from consumers when a brand begins to have a negative image.

Furthermore, this chapter discussed three practical models of brand humanisation, and explored the theoretical dimensions of brand archetypes, brand personality traits, and human branding. Brand humanisation has been significantly used to enhance the ability of consumers to perceive a characteristic value in a brand. However, too little is yet known among

practitioners and scholars about building a model to humanise a brand with humanlike characteristics that allow consumers to perceive the brand as human. The technique of brand humanization needs to be clear and direct to convince consumers that a brand can be perceived as a human. Previous brand humanisation models were discussed to understand brand humanisation, and to show the strengths and weaknesses of these models. In several ways, practitioners and scholars may use metaphorical tools to humanize a brand in order to increase consumer self-connection and self-congruence and improve the consumer/brand relationship. Finally, the chapter discussed how the author developed the model of humanising a brand by metaphor.

Consumer behaviour researchers have shown that a brand could be humanised to influence consumers' attitude and behaviour; this effect is more likely to occur when the humanised brand matches the consumer's self-concept. Therefore, the connection of the consumer's self-concept with a brand or "self-brand connection" is likely to influence the consumer's emotional attachment to a brand. Moreover, previous evidence suggests that consumer emotional attachment will increase when brand personality matches with consumer actual and ideal self-congruence.

Finally, this chapter identified three research gaps and developed a research model and proposed five hypotheses.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In its fourteen sections this chapter presents the research philosophy and methodology. It first identifies the philosophical positioning (section 3.2). Then, building on this, it describes the research philosophy (section 3.3) and addresses the research approach and methodology. Next, section (3.4) describes the research approach chosen for the thesis. The justification for using the quantitative method follows (in section 3.5). The description of the method including the practice of humanisation, the validation of brand humanisation and survey design and the data collection plan used in this research are discussed in section (3.6). In the ensuing three sections, section (3.7) addresses the questionnaire design, section (3.8) provides information about the measurement scales and the items and constructs in the study, and section 3.9 addresses the validity, section 3.10 addresses reliability of the present research. Two sections next are concerned with sampling (section 3.11) and ethical considerations (section, 3.12). The pilot study is dealt with in section (3.13) and the data analysis technique in section (3.14). Finally, a summary and conclusions are presented in section (3.15).

3.2 Philosophical positioning:

Identifying one's philosophical perspective is very important for understanding what type of data are required for a certain study and how it should be collected and interpreted (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, Partington, 2000, and Blaikie, 2010). Showing how the research was conducted and what philosophical assumptions support it offers guidance to the reader (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). This philosophical knowledge can show the limitations of a particular approach and helps to make the right research decisions (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). The following sections discuss the

research philosophy (section 3.3), the research approach (section 3.4) and the research methodology (section 3.5) together with their implications and limitations.

3.3. Research philosophy

The research philosophy adopted in this thesis entails major assumptions about the way in which the researcher views the world. These assumptions influence the research strategy and the methods chosen for data collection. The philosophy that is adopted in a thesis is influenced by researcher considerations. The present researcher is interested in consumer attitudes to humanised branding.

The term philosophy may be defined as ‘the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence’ (Soanes et al., 2004). In research, this term in practice is known as the research paradigm. The research paradigm includes ‘the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed’ (Kuhn, 1970). The research paradigm guides researchers and provides them with frameworks and tools to use (i.e. methodologies) for collecting data. Concentrating on three aspects of the research paradigm reduces the complexity of the assumptions underlying the research philosophy, namely, i) Ontology, ii) Epistemology, and iii) Axiology (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). These aspects help us to understand the nature of the world and reality ‘ontology’ (p.133), to address how we come to know that reality ‘epistemology’ (p.133), and to understand the role of values and ethics within the research process ‘axiology’ (p.134) (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

The adopted research paradigm was chosen from five philosophical options, discussed below: i) Positivism, ii) Critical realism, iii) Interpretivism, iv) Postmodernism and v) Pragmatism (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Table

(3.1) shows these options and the corresponding ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions entailed by each.

i) Positivism

The positivist philosophy is the one adopted generally by natural scientists. It is the preferable choice for 'working with an observable social reality and the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists' (Remenyi et al., 1998, p.32). Positivist researchers focus on purely objective analytical methods aimed at generating pure evidence and facts that are not distorted by human perception or bias (see Table 3.1). Positivist researchers are likely to use a very structured methodology, in order to simplify replication. This structured methodology specifically focuses on quantifiable observations that are prepared for the collection of data and the testing and confirming of developed hypotheses that were developed by previous theories (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

ii) Critical realism

The philosophy of critical realism focuses on explaining what we see and experience in terms of the underlying reality structures that shape observable events (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Critical realists see reality as external and independent, but not directly accessible through people's observation and knowledge of it (see Table 3.1). Moreover, critical realists believe that what people experience is not actual things, but 'the empirical', the manifestations of things in the real world, in other words, sensations (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019, p.147). Critical realists highlight how often human senses are deceived.

iii) Interpretivism

Interpretivism argues that human beings are different from physical phenomena because they create meanings, whose significance interpretivists study (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). The purpose of interpretivist research is to bring out new and deeper understandings and clearer pictures of social worlds and contexts. Interpretivist researchers try to take account of ontological complexities in their field by picking out what is meaningful to their participants. Crucial to the philosophy of interpretivism is that researchers must take an empathetic approach. The challenge of the philosophy of interpretivism is to understand the world from the research participants' point of view by entering their social world (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

iv) Postmodernism

The philosophy of postmodernism emphasises the role of language and relationships and seeks to challenge established ways of thinking and express alternative marginalised views (see Table 3.1). A postmodernist researcher would challenge organisational concepts and strategies and look for new business strategies and ideas (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, a postmodernist researcher would be open to deconstructing any types of data, texts, images, conversations, and voices. In research, the philosophy of postmodernism is similar to the interpretivist philosophy because it involves the researcher in in-depth investigations of phenomena (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

v) Pragmatism

The philosophy of pragmatism is appropriate only where it supports action (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). A pragmatist researcher begins with a problem and aims to provide practical solutions that inform future practice. Pragmatists acknowledge that there are several different ways in which the

world can be viewed, and research conducted, that no single point of view can ever provide the whole picture and that various perspectives can co-exist (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

Table 3.1 The five research philosophies (Source: Adapted from Saunders & Thornhill, 2019, p.145)

Item	Positivism	Critical realism	Interpretivism	Postmodernism	Pragmatism
Ontology	• Real, and external • Independent • One true reality (universalism) • Granular (things) • Ordered	• Stratified/layered (the empirical, the actual and the real) • External, independent • Intransient • Objective structures • Causal mechanisms	• Complex, rich • Socially constructed through culture and language • Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities. Flux of processes, experiences, practices	• Nominally complex, rich • Socially constructed through power relations. Some meanings, interpretations, realities are dominated and silenced by others • Flux of processes, experiences, practices	• Complex, rich; external 'Reality' as the practical consequences of ideas • Flux of processes, experiences and practices
Epistemology	• Scientific method • Observable and measurable facts • Law-like generalisations • Numbers • Contributes causal explanations and predictions	• Epistemological relativism • Knowledge historically situated and transient • Facts are social constructions • Contributes historical causal explanation	• Theories and concepts too simplistic • Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations • Contributes new understandings and worldviews	• What counts as 'truth' and 'knowledge' is decided by dominant ideologies • Focus on absences, silences and oppressed/ repressed meanings, interpretations and voices • Contributes exposure of power relations and challenge of dominant views	• Practical meaning of knowledge in specific contexts. 'True' theories and knowledge are those that make successful action possible • Focus on problems, practices and relevance • Contributes problem solving and informed future practice

Item	Positivism	Critical realism	Interpretivism	Postmodernism	Pragmatism
Axiology	- Value-free research - Researcher is detached, neutral and independent of what is researched. - Researcher maintains objective position	- Value-laden research - Researcher acknowledges bias from world views, cultural experience and upbringing. - Researcher tries to minimise bias and errors - Researcher is as objective as possible	- Value-bound research - Researchers are part of what is researched, subjective. - Researcher interpretations are key to contribution. Researcher is reflexive	- Value-constituted research - Researcher and research embedded in power relations. - Some research narratives are repressed and silenced at the expense of others. - Researcher is radically reflexive	- Value-driven research - Research initiated and sustained by researcher's doubts and beliefs. - Researcher is reflexive
Typical methods	- Typically, deductive, highly structured, large samples, measurement, - Typically, quantitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be analysed.	- Retrodictive, in depth historically situated analysis of pre-existing structures and emerging agency. - Range of methods and data types to fit subject matter.	Typically, inductive. Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted.	- Typically, deconstructive – reading texts and realities against themselves. - In-depth investigations of anomalies, silences and absences - Range of data types, typically qualitative methods of analysis	- Following research problem and research question - Range of methods: mixed, multiple, qualitative, quantitative, action research - Emphasis on practical solutions and outcomes

3.3.1 Justification for using positivist philosophy

The aim of the present study is to examine whether humanised brands have an impact on consumer emotional attachment. In general, the aim of this type of research is to examine whether a particular social phenomenon has a causal link to something else. It is believed that the philosophical concept of positivism can best explain the nature of the causality investigated by this research (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). In social science, positivism is adopted when organisations, physical objects and natural phenomena are taken as real. Epistemologically, this helps the researcher to focus on discovering observable and measurable facts. Thus, the researcher sees phenomena only to observe and measure them, certain that this will lead to the production of credible and meaningful data (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

The field of consumer research is dominated by positivism, along with a deductive approach and quantitative methodologies (e.g., Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; Puzakova et al., 2013). Accordingly, it has been chosen as the philosophical positioning for this thesis, which is considered to guide this research, must be capable of answering the research questions. However, the philosophical concept of positivism has some limitations which will be discussed, addressed and resolved in the following section.

Positivism offers a number of strengths such as helping the researcher to maintain an objective position (i.e. if the researcher is in an objective position, the judgements of cause and effect will be based on observations rather than personal feeling). Moreover, it helps to generalise the study by enabling a large number of samples to be considered together. This makes it preferable for providing justifications for business strategies (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). However, the positivist position has some

weaknesses. For example, the researcher cannot adopt a subjective position (i.e. he will not be able to make judgements on certain phenomena on the basis of personal understanding or feeling). Therefore, this method is not particularly adapted to the generation of meaning (i.e. understanding why a certain phenomenon occurs). However, so much is unknown about humanising brands in certain conditions by practitioners and scholars that some investigation is required before the phenomenon can be described properly. Once this is understood, research can explore and investigate the impact of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment. To this end, the present study applied content analysis of advertising to minimise the limitations of positivism. Table (3.2) summarises the strengths and weaknesses of this philosophy.

Table 3.2: Strengths and weaknesses of the positivist philosophy (Source: Adapted from Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

Philosophy	Strength	Weakness
Positivism	Researcher maintains objective position	Researcher cannot maintain a subjective position
	Provides wide coverage	Not suitable for generating theory
	Easily provides justifications for policies	Methods may be inflexible and artificial
	Enables generalisation to exceed the current sample	Requires large samples
	Supports the deductive approach	Does not support the inductive approach
	Support quantitative methods of analysis.	Does not support qualitative methods

3.4 Research approach

The research approach should be carefully chosen to support the concern of the research either to test theory or to build theory. This is often represented as three possible approaches: i) deductive, ii) inductive, and iii) abductive (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

As shown in Table (3.3), the deductive approach often develops from reading the academic literature; it starts with current theory and tests it by designing a research strategy. Basically, it moves from theory to data, and has a deep concern over generalisation. It involves the development of a hypothesis which is then rigorously tested through a series of propositions. The hypothesis may be rejected or approved or updated by analysing the data in order to explain the research inquiry. The deductive approach is most likely to be supported by positivism, and this approach owes a great deal to scientific research (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). In contrast, the inductive approach starts by collecting data to investigate a phenomenon and creates or constructs a theory, often developing a form of conceptual framework. Basically, it moves from data to theory. This approach allows social actors to engage in understanding reality and follows a flexible structure. It is conducted by interviewing a small sample of people working in the context in which the event under investigation took place and has less concern about generalisation. The inductive approach is most likely to be supported by pragmatism, postmodernism, interpretivism and critical realism (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Rather than moving from theory to data (as in deduction) or data to theory (as in induction), a flexible approach (as in abductive reasoning) has an effect of deduction and induction combined (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Due to the simplicity of the abductive approach, it may be used by researchers to test a variety of different research theories. The abductive approach is most likely to be

supported by pragmatism or postmodernism and can also be supported by critical realism (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019).

Table 3.3: Deduction, induction, and abduction: from reason to research (Source: Adapted from Saunders & Thornhill, 2019, p.153)

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	When the assumptions are true, the conclusion must also be true.	The assumptions are used to generate untested conclusions.	The assumptions are used to generate testable conclusions.
Generalisability	Generalised from the general to the specific.	Generalised from the specific to the general.	Generalised from the interactions between the specific and the general.
Use of data	Data collection is used to accept or reject hypotheses related to an existing theory.	Data collection is used to identify themes, create a conceptual framework and explore a phenomenon.	Data collection is used to identify themes, create a conceptual framework, and explore a phenomenon. It tests related hypotheses that existed from theory.
Theory	Supporting or disapproving theory.	Generating and building theory.	Supporting, generating and building theory.

3.4.1 Justification for using the deductive approach

The researcher applied the deductive approach because this approach has several important characteristics. First, the aim of this study is to explain causal relationships between concepts and variables. Following the academic literature and its treatment of emotional brand attachment patterns, it was possible to develop a theory that shows a relationship between humanised branding and consumer emotional attachment. This helped to develop five hypotheses to explain the causal relationships between humanised branding and consumer emotional attachment. To test the five hypotheses, quantitative data were collected. Second, the deductive approach, supported by positivism, is highly structured to collect

a range of data from large samples by quantitative methods (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). Moreover, deductive research is quicker to complete and most managers and researchers are more likely to accept the conclusions (Saunders & Thornhill, 2019). This may explain why the deductive approach has been used in the area of brand humanisation by most previous studies as well as the present one.

3.5 Methodological strategy

According to Blaikie (2007), 'the major task in designing a piece of social research is to work out how to answer the research question'. To do this, a researcher has to choose methods that will allow answers to be provided, and these must be used in a design that facilitates the provision of those answers (Creswell, 2013). The main strategies available to researchers are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2013), each of which has strengths and weaknesses.

The quantitative method, for example, is useful for testing objective theories since it allows for the relationship between variables to be thoroughly examined through the use of numbers and eventual statistics (Creswell, 2013). In particular, surveys are often used to measure consumer attitudes and behaviour. Hypotheses are often proposed, and the data from surveys are used to test these, resulting in the determination of whether or not the proposed arguments are valid. That is to say, once the data are analysed by means of recognised statistical procedures, it becomes possible to accept or reject the hypotheses. This leads to results that can confirm the theory or add new insights to show why the findings contradict it. The qualitative approach, however, is used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals assign to a social problem. It is seen in ethnographic designs that may include observation, and that are intended to measure consumer behaviours in order to understand an

issue. In qualitative designs, participants in their real-life contexts as they engage in their routine activities. These observations form the data from which inferences are then made. In making such inferences, the researcher regularly uses questions to narrow the scope of the meaning. The data analysis as the researcher tries to explain the meaning of the data is inductive. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is suitable when a topic is new and the researcher does not know which variables to examine (Morse, 1991).

Both qualitative and quantitative methods in one design make it a mixed methods design, which is useful when either a quantitative or qualitative approach is insufficient to answer a research question, in which case their combined use can provide the best understanding or answer (Creswell, 2013). The method is not new. Indeed Denzin (1970, p. 291) noted half a century ago, that it is 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon'. Consequently, it is a tried and tested approach known to be successful in social science research.

3.5.1 Justification for using the quantitative method

The present study is of a topic which is relatively new and needs some initial analysis to analyse the strategy of brand humanisation and consonant advertising/marketing activities for the chosen brands. This can be achieved simply by analysing the content of the advertising. Content analysis is used for descriptive purposes, best achieved through a quantitative method. In the context of communication research, Mayring (2000, p.2) defines content analysis as 'an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts [...], following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification'. Accordingly, the research begins by using content analysis as a method of analysing the advertising/marketing activities for the chosen brands, and then proceeds to adopt a survey to test the hypotheses related to the impact of

humanised brands on consumers. The quantitative approach seems well suited to this design, because it will allow much data to be collected that can be subjected to statistical analysis. The research questions also attempt to reveal the best predictors of outcomes and the effectiveness of an intervention, which requires the investigation of several variables. According to Creswell (2013), the quantitative approach is the best one for conducting research problems of this type. Additionally, this approach has been used frequently by other researchers (e.g., Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; Puzakova et al., 2013) to answer similar questions, so it is tried and tested. For these reasons, the quantitative approach has been chosen to answer the research questions posed in the current study.

3.6 Description of method

3.6.1 Research design, data collection and analytical technique

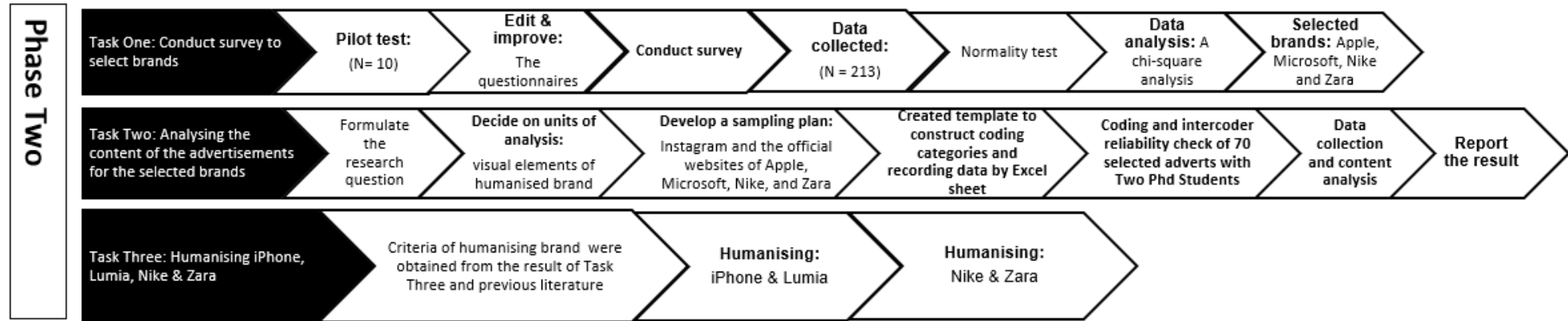
This section focuses on designing a study and developing a strategy to lead the process of collecting and analysing the data. The current study investigates the impact of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment and it has been shown that the strategy for designing and conducting this study must primarily be quantitative. In Chapter One presents the research design in three phases, each of which can contribute to answering the research questions. The first phase was to understand the importance of the brand humanisation strategy, identify the research gap, and propose five hypotheses. The second phase is discussed in section (3.6.2) below, and the third phase is discussed in section (3.6.3).

3.6.2 The second phase: The practice of humanisation

The second phase is putting the brand humanisation strategy into practice and analysing brands advertising strategy for selected brands in this

study. This phase starts with an exploratory approach to gain more insights about the human-like elements that have been shown to humanise brands in academic research and select brands for this study. This phase contains three tasks: Task One involves conducting a survey to select brands for this study (discussed in section 3.6.2.1). Task Two focuses on analysing a content of the advertisements relating to the selected brands (discussed in section 3.6.2.2). Task Three focuses on humanising the selected brands (discussed in section 3.6.2.3). The process of the second phase is shown in Figure (3.1).

Figure 3.1: Phase Two: Research design and data collection and analysis technique (Source: Author)



3.6.2.1 Task One: Brand selection

The aim of this task is to choose brands which can be humanised and become familiar to participants, and therefore suitable for the study. To this end, a survey was designed to select a favourite brand from the top 100 global brands (discussed in section 3.13). The survey strategy is usually linked with the deductive approach to collecting quantitative data which can be analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Therefore, it has a tendency to be used for exploratory and descriptive research. Moreover, it is a popular strategy in marketing and management research for answering quantitative questions (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007).

The type of survey must allow the researcher to collect a large amount of data from a sizeable population at low cost (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007). The survey data were obtained by using a self-administered questionnaire, which is usually completed by the respondents. It is administered electronically using the Internet (Internet-mediated questionnaire) (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007). The data obtained from a self-administered questionnaire or survey are standardised to make them easy to compare, explain and understand. Furthermore, it allows the result to be generalised (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007).

3.6.2.1.1 Survey design and data collection procedure

To collect the data, an email invitation was sent to 500 students at Cranfield University's Departments of Business Administration, Marketing, Economics, Finance, Airspace, and Manufacturing. This e-mail provided a direct link to an online survey (Qualtrics software) which the participants were asked to follow, complete the questions requesting demographic information, and then choose only one brand from a list of the top 100 global brands. The request was "Please think for a moment about your

favourite brand. Now, I would like to ask you to pick ONE brand from the list below” (Malar et al., 2011). The selection process in respect of the participants was random, and the researcher had no expectations as to which brand would be selected by the participants.

3.6.2.1.2 Data analysis procedure

A total of 213 participants completed the survey. As shown in Figure (1.3), before conducting a survey to collect data, a pilot test was conducted with ten PhD students. In this task, the purpose of the pilot test was to improve the questionnaire so that respondents would find it easy to answer the questions and the researcher would find it easy to record the data (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007). The outcome of the result of pilot test is discussed in section (3.8). A chi-square analysis was used to analyse the collected data, and the results of this analysis revealed the participants’ favourite brands. These turned out to be Apple, Microsoft, Nike and Zara. The result is discussed in the next chapter.

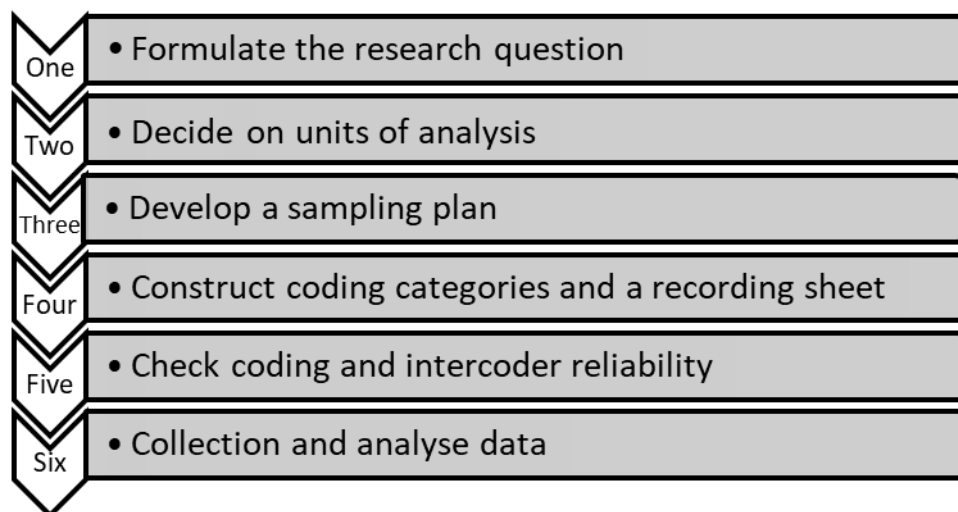
3.6.2.2 Task Two: Analysing the content of the advertisements

The aim of this task is to conduct a content analysis counting, recording and analysing the human-like attributes of a brand as they appear in its advertising. In this task, according to Neuman (2014, p.49), ‘content analysis is a technique for examining the content or information and symbols contained in written documents or other communication media (e.g., photographs, movies, song lyrics, advertisements)’. As a technique, content analysis is very useful for finding and documenting specific features in the content of a large amount of advertising material that might be hard to notice (Neuman, 2014). The result of this task is used to support the criteria of humanising the branded product in its advertisement, which are discussed in section (3.6.2.3).

3.6.2.2.1 Content analysis

In the context of communication research, Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1278) also discuss content analysis, defining it as ‘a research method for the subjective interpretation of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns’. Content analysis is used to descriptively analyse brand advertisement strategy for iPhone, Lumia, Nike, and Zara, in order to quantitatively identify human-like features in the advertising and report further attributes that the chosen brands might incorporate to further humanise them. As shown in Figure (3.2), the researcher followed the six steps outlined by Neuman (2014) in conducting the content analysis, in order to secure results that would be valid and reliable.

Figure 3.2: Neuman six steps in conducting a content analysis (Source: the author, adapted from Neuman, 2014)



As shown in Figure (3.2), the research began by formulating the research question, ‘what major visual human-like elements of the brand are used in its advertisements?’. The construct ‘human-like brand feature’ was used as the main reference point in reviewing the brand advertising in the social media. The second step required the researcher to decide on a unit

of analysis, which in this case was the visual elements of the humanised brand as shown on Instagram and the official advertising on the webpages of Apple, Microsoft, Nike, and Zara. The third step involved the development of a sampling plan, to analyse the marketing advertisements on Instagram and the official websites of Apple, Microsoft, Nike, and Zara within a timescale of six months. In the fourth step, the researcher used a template of brand humanisation strategy analysis to construct coding categories, and created a recording sheet to record the number of advertisements containing human-like features that had appeared on Instagram and on the brands' official websites during the previous six months. In the fifth step, the researcher checked the coding reliability by randomly selecting 70 advertisements from the sample and asking two PhD students to use the coding system (the template of the humanised brand strategy analysis). The two PhD students found the coding system clear and easy to use. As a final step, the researcher began the data collection and analysis is discussed in the following sections.

3.6.2.2.2 Data collection procedure

The data from Instagram and the brands' official websites were collected in the six-month period from July 2017 to January 2018. They consisted of advertisements with content that gave the brands human-like features. To demonstrate the rigour of the analysis, the template of humanised brand strategy was generated from the model of brand humanisation. This template required the advertisements to be classified into nine categories, three relating to each visual, verbal, and rhetorical metaphor. The visual metaphor categories were further classified into three sub-groups, these being the human face, human body, and presentation as a family. The verbal metaphor categorisation had a further two sub-classifications, these being communication in the first person, and brand as gender. The rhetorical metaphor categorisation was split into three sub-categories,

these being personification, archetype, and biography. The template was very helpful in reviewing the advertisements systematically and allowing the researcher to identify what types of human features were used by these brands. The advertisements were reviewed and collected in two stages - (i) Initial review, and (ii) Final review and data collection.

3.6.2.2.3 Data analysis procedure

To begin with the data analysis, the Initial review started immediately on 1 July 2017 and ended on 1 August 2017. The purpose of this activity was to increase the researcher's familiarity with the products and the advertisements for the selected brands. The analysis template was used as a guide when reviewing the brand advertisements. All the products and advertisements were reviewed. After obtaining these initial findings, the researcher decided to focus on iPhone8 plus, Lumia 950, Nike sport shoes, and Zara casual shoes.

The process of final review and data collection began on 2 August 2017 and lasted until 1 January 2018. This incorporated a review of the advertisements for iPhone8 plus, Lumia 950, Nike sport shoes, and Zara casual shoes. During this five-month period, a total of 2,583 advertisements were reviewed, of which 741 advertisements came from company websites and Instagram. These advertisements were classified using the template to record human-like brand features; the results are discussed in the next chapter.

3.6.2.3 Task Three: Humanising brand

The aim of this task is to humanise iPhone, Lumia, Nike and Zara. The criteria of humanising brands were obtained from the result of Task three and previous literature related to humanised brand.

One of the challenges in this study was to humanise branded products like iPhone and Lumia without creating any negative effects on their brand

personality. For example, Apple and Microsoft have always kept their advertisements simple, so applying a complete metaphor (representing the product as a complete human) or making a product look human by accident (giving it a human face, or a smile) may make their products look unrealistic. Indeed, the application of these forms may change the brand image, and the familiar perceptions among consumers, and thus have a negative effect on them.

Therefore, this study followed the method used by Aggarwal and McGill (2007) to humanise iPhone and Lumia. Aggarwal and McGill (2007) in their article entitled 'That Car Smiling at Me? Schema Congruity as a Basis for Evaluating Anthropomorphized Products' applied the partial form of brand humanisation to four bottles containing drinks to represent the idea of a family. The four differently sized bottles appeared to point towards this idea, whereas four same-sized bottles did not. Aggarwal and McGill (2007) coded the thoughts of their study participants, which were expressed in comments like 'They look like a family of father and mother on each side and the two children in the middle', 'look like mom, dad, child and younger child', and 'they reminded me of a family' (p. 474). The last comment is related to the perception by a consumer and shows the extent to which people's emotional attachment can increase when they see products that bring an image of their family to mind. The result of their finding shows that consumers perceive products as human when the bottles are linked but different in size. Moreover, they stated that 'consumers' perception of the product as human mediates the influence of feature type on product evaluation' (p.468). In this study it is seen that iPhone and Lumia represented their sets of mobile phones as a 'product family' rather than a 'product line'. According to Aggarwal and McGill (2007), this type of manipulation prompts consumers to recognise the products as parts of a family – their family (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Humanised iPhone 8 plus (Left) and Lumia 950 (Right)



As shown in Figure 3.4, it is possible to apply the accidental form of humanisation via the incorporation of some representation of a 'human face', and the partial form as 'family members', and these opportunities are useful for the Nike and Zara brand personalities.

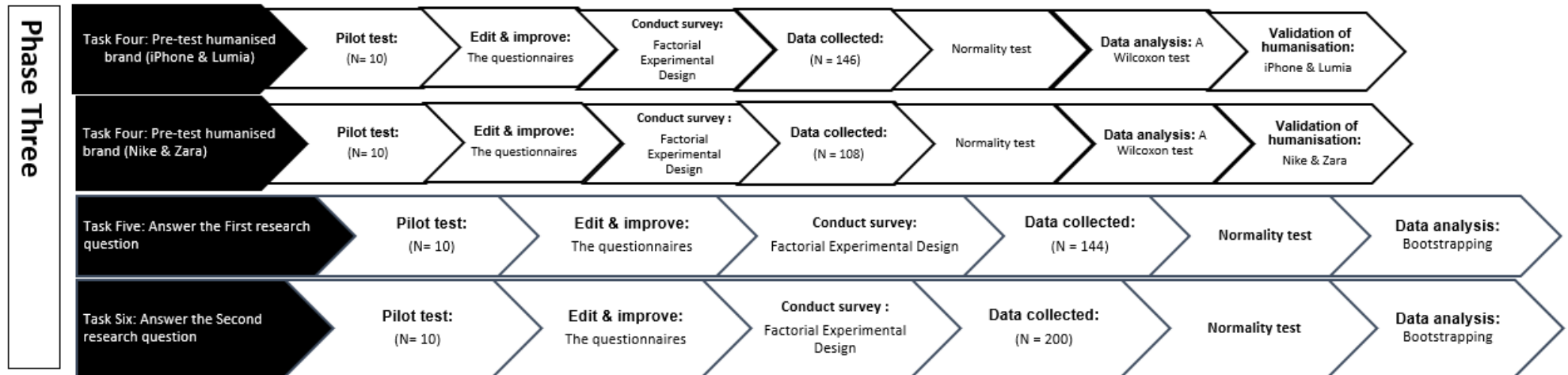
Figure 3.4: Humanised Nike (Top) and Zara (Bottom)



3.6.3 The Third Phase: The validation of humanisation

The third phase is designed to validate a humanised brand (discussed in section 3.6.3.1) and involves an experimental design to collect data for answering the two research questions (discussed in section 3.6.3.2 and section 3.6.3.3). The process of the third phase is shown in Figure (3.5), and discussed in the following section.

Figure 3.5: Phase Three: Research design and data collection and analysis technique



3.6.3.1 The validation of humanisation (iPhone, Lumia, Nike & Zara).

Once the print-advertising is defined, the second step of the research process is to pre-test the quantitative print-advertising. The aim of pre-testing the printed advertising is to validate and ensure its effectiveness via consumer insight before its first use. According to Brown et al. (2008), 'pretesting is an important demonstration of understanding consumers' wants and preferences. This evolving, data-driven process provides an opportunity for ensuring time, effort, and valuable resources are not wasted' (p.116). Pretesting enables the researcher to measure the audience's response to a printed advertisement and decide early on whether its design is consonant with the strategy (Brown et al., 2008, p.116). Certainly, learning how audiences react to an advertisement helps a researcher to improve the design of print advertising and to avoid wasting time. Pretesting is one of the best techniques for estimating how advertisements will be received in practice (Brown et al., 2008).

3.6.3.1.1 Manipulation checks

Two pre-tests were performed via the Qualtrics survey to check the validity of the advertisements designed for this study, and to identify which advertisement had the more human traits. As shown in Table (3.4), these two pre-tests were conducted separately to increase the response rate and to avoid complexity. The first pre-test was performed on 1 March 2018 to measure the validity of four advertisements that were designed for iPhone and Lumia, and the second was conducted on 1 November 2018 to measure the validity of four advertisements that were designed for Nike and Zara. The experimental design, data collection, and analysis for both of these pre-tests are reported in the following sections.

Table 3.4: A Two Pre-test 4x4 factorial experimental design to check the validity of the humanised products

Study	Participants	Experimental design	Time of the study
First Pre-test	N=146	Pre-test factorial experimental design Two presentations of iPhone and Lumia like a Family.	March 2018
Second Pre-test	N=108	Pre-test factorial experimental design. Two presentations of Nike and Zara like a Family and with a human face.	Nov 2018

3.6.3.1.2 Experimental design

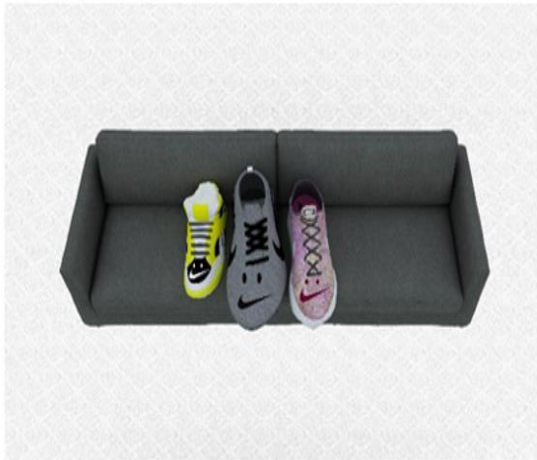
As Figure (3.6) shows, two pre-tests using a 4 x 4 factorial experimental design were performed. In the first, the experimental design took the form of four independent groups (iPhone 1 like a family, iPhone2 like a family, Lumia like a family, and Lumia2 like a family). This particular design was chosen because the procedure contained a random assignment of participants to two or more groups; and the assignment of participants was such as to balance any differences between them that resulted from their individual characteristics, an advantage that helped to avoid the selection threat to the experiment's internal validity. Likewise, the design of the second pre-test also took the form of four

independent groups (human features: Nike1 like a family, Nike2 like a family, Zara1 like a family, and Zara2 like a family). The reason for using two different mobile models and two different shoe models was to ensure that any differences across conditions were not driven by any specific brand of mobile phones or footwear.

Figure 3.6: Two pre-test factorial experimental design for iPhone and Lumia (Top) and for Nike (Middle) and Zara (Bottom)



Humanised Nike1

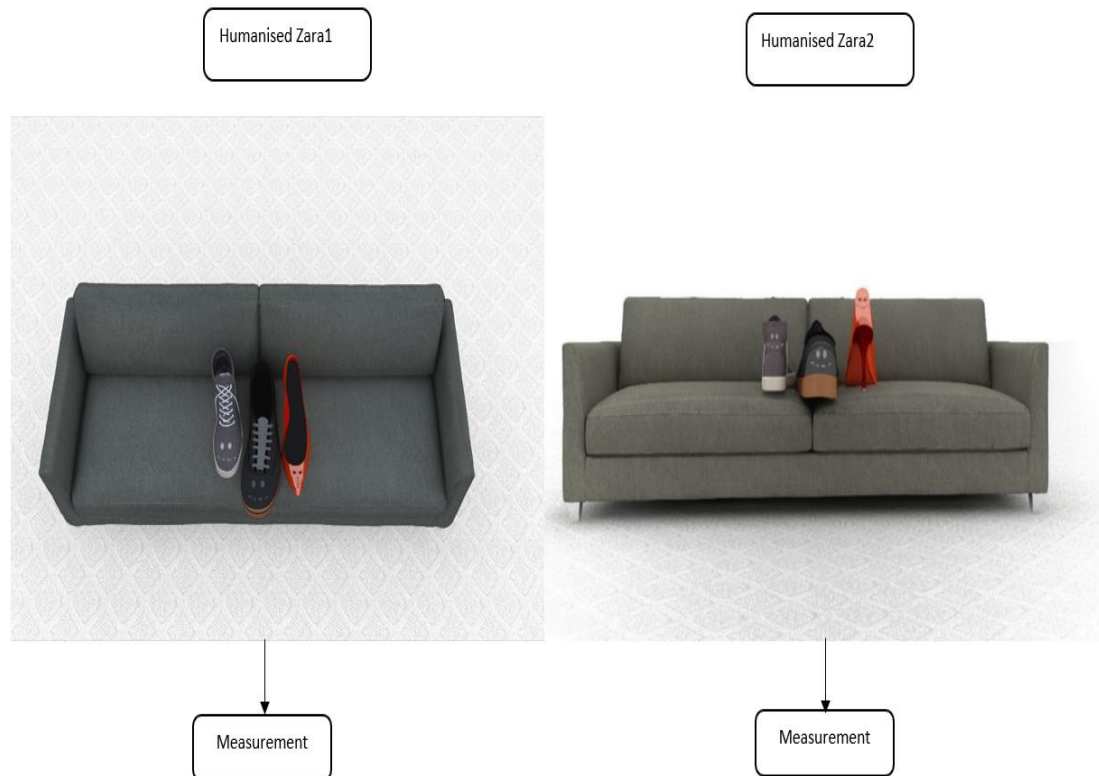


Measurement

Humanised Nike2



Measurement



3.6.3.1.3 Data collection procedure

As shown in Figure (3.5), a pilot test was conducted with ten PhD students before conducting a survey of pre-testing advertisements to collect data. As discussed in the previous section, a pilot test was conducted to improve the clarity of the questionnaire and test the experimental design before its first use (Saunders & Thornhill, 2007). The outcome of the pilot test is discussed in section (3.8.1.1) and section (3.8.1.2).

For each pre-test, an email invitation was sent separately to 300 participants for each survey. The email provided a direct link to an online questionnaire (Qualtrics software) which participants were asked to follow. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition in order to identify which advertisements for each branded product were perceived as human and as part of a family. The survey requested participants to answer a question on their demographics and

then answer two further questions. The aim of the first question was to measure participants' attitudes to the humanised brand (discussed in sections 3.8.1.1) and the aim of the second question was to measure participants' attitudes to the products presented like members of a family (discussed in sections 3.8.1.2).

3.6.3.1.4 Data analysis procedure

A total of 146 participants completed the first pre-test advertisements (iPhone & Lumia) and a total of 108 participants completed the second pre-test advertisements (Nike & Zara). Before analysing both sets of data, a normality test was conducted to check the normality of the data and choose an accurate technique for analysing the collected data. The normal distribution of data is shown in Appendix (F). The data were not normality distributed for this reason, but a Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to analyse the data from the two pre-tests. This particular test was chosen because it examines the differences between two conditions (Field, 2009). The result is discussed in the next chapter.

3.6.3.2 Task Five: Answer the first research question

Once the advertisements using brand humanisation are validated, the following step in the research process is to conduct an experimental study to test the impact of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment. The following sections discuss the importance of an experimental study (Section 3.6.3.2.1) and factorial experimental design (section 3.6.3.2.2), followed by experimental design procedure (section 3.6.3.2.3), data collection procedure (section 3.6.3.2.4) and analysis (section 3.6.3.2.5) for answering the first research question.

3.6.3.2.1 The importance of experimental studies

Experimental studies tend to take the positivist approach (Neuman, 2014). Natural scientists (e.g. chemists or biologists) and researchers in related specialized fields (e.g. agriculture, engineering, and medicine) use them. They

are often used also to discuss social problems and test hypotheses in education, criminal justice, journalism, marketing, nursing, political science, psychology, social work, and sociology (Neuman, 2014). Experiments can offer clear evidence of the way in which a dependent variable is influenced by one or two variables (Neuman, 2014). Experimenting means modifying one thing in a situation and then comparing the outcome of a situation which has not been modified (Neuman, 2014). Webster and Sell (2007, p.11) argue 'The greatest benefits of experiments reside in the fact that they are artificial. That is, experiments allow observation in a situation that has been designed and created by investigators rather than one that occurs in nature'.

Social scientists conduct two types of experiments: empirically based and directed by theory (Neuman, 2014). The practical process of conducting an experiment does not vary, but the types have different aims. Most research focuses on empirically based experiments. The purpose of empirically based experiments is to assess whether an independent variable has a significant effect on a particular dependent variable. Very often, empirically based experiments show the effect in a controlled setting (which can be generalized to 'real-life' conditions (i.e. conditions in practice). Neuman (2014) defines factorial experimental design as 'An experimental plan that considers the impact of several independent variables simultaneously' (p.296) and adds 'Sometimes we are curious about the simultaneous effects of two or more independent variables. A factorial design uses two or more independent variables in combination'.

3.6.3.2.2 Factorial experimental design

Factorial experimental design is used when the relationships between variables are to be investigated, specifically when one wants to know whether and how an independent variable (IV) causes some outcome on a dependent variable (DV) (Creswell, 2013). Such a design involves two or more groups. The experimental group(s) receive some sort of manipulation to test the impact of the IV on the DV while the control group receives no such treatment (no

manipulation) (Creswell, 2013). Factorial experiment design has frequently been used to study the effects of humanised branding on consumer attitude and behaviour (Aggarwal and McGill, 2012; Puzakova et al., 2013; Anaya, 2008; Phillips and McQuarrie; 2002).

Most of these studies follow a similar experimental design, whereby participants in an experimental group are shown an advertisement (e.g., a product with human-like features), and subsequently, their responses are compared with those from participants who were in a control group and shown an advertisement in which the product did not have human-like features. As shown in Table (3.5), factorial experimental design has both advantages and disadvantages. First, such experiments have been criticised for lacking external validity (Breakwell et al., 2000). Consequently, in this study, the researcher addressed this threat by meeting the populational generalisation, naturalistic generalisation, and theoretical generalisation (discussed in section 3.9). Secondly, the method has been criticised for lacking the depth to explain how individuals construct their reality. However, this is not of great concern, since the aim of this research is to investigate what happens rather than how it happens. This is an advantage of this type of design, as is the fact that the results apply to authentic conditions.

Table 3.5: Advantages and disadvantages of factorial experimental design (Source: Adapted from Creswell, 2013).

Factorial experimental design	
Advantage	Disadvantage
The results of a study can be applied to real-world conditions. Investigates what happens rather than how.	Lacks external validity. Lacks the depth to explain how individuals construct their reality.

3.6.3.2.3 Experimental design procedure (iPhone & Lumia)

The aim of this task is to determine whether a specific treatment (humanised branding) precipitates a particular outcome (consumer emotional attachment). Consequently, the impact of a humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment was tested, together with that of a non-humanised brand. The design of this experiment considers two conditions (humanised, non-humanised) x 2 phone products (iPhone, Lumia). The reason for using two mobile models is to ensure that any differences between conditions are not driven by any specific brand of mobile phone.

As shown in Figure 3.7, the experimental design took the form of four independent groups, to which participants were randomly assigned. These groups were: (A) iPhone - like members of a family (Experimental group), (B) iPhone - like a group of family members (Control group), (C) Lumia - like members of a family (Experimental group) and (D) Lumia - like a group of family members (Control group). The treatment for all four groups was different. Each group received only a post-test, conducted according to Creswell (2013), to avoid any risk of notifying participants about the research question(s) and hypotheses.

Figure 3.7: Post-test factorial experiment design iPhone (Left) and Lumia (Right)



3.6.3.2.4 Data collection procedure

To enhance the clarity of the questionnaire and evaluate the experimental design before using it, the experiment was pilot tested in advance by ten PhD students. The outcome of pilot test result is discussed in section (3.8.1.3) and section (3.8.1.5).

An email invitation was sent to 300 participants to contribute data. The email directly connected them to an online questionnaire (Qualtrics software). In this survey measuring attitudes and emotional attachment to humanised branding, the participants were randomly assigned to one condition out of the four to avoid the threat of selection bias to the experiment's internal validity. Additionally, this randomisation served to balance out any differences between subjects with regard to any of their own characteristics. The survey requested participants give demographic details and then to answer two questions. The

aim of the first was to measure participants' attitudes to the humanised branding (discussed in sections 3.8.1.3) and the aim of the second was to measure participants' emotional attachment to a humanised brand (discussed in section 3.8.1.5).

3.6.3.2.5 Data analysis procedure

A total of 144 participants completed the survey (iPhone & Lumia). Before analysing the two sets of collected data, a normality test checked the normality of the data and chose an accurate technique for analysing the sets. The normal distribution of data is shown in Appendix (F). The result of the normality test showed that the data were not normality distributed. For this reason, a bootstrapping test was then used to analyse the collected data. A certain test was chosen because it was believed to be the best approach for analysing the direct relationship between independent (Humanised brand) and dependent (Emotional attachment) variables (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). To analyse the data via the smart-pls software, the humanised brand was treated as the predictor and emotional attachment as the dependent variable. The result is discussed in following chapter.

3.6.3.3 Task Six: Answer the second research question

Once the answer to the first research question was obtained, the next step of the research process was to conduct the last experimental study, that of investigating the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to a humanised brand. The next sections will discuss in turn the experimental design procedure (section 3.6.3.3.1), the data collection procedure (section 3.6.3.3.2) and analysis (section 3.6.3.3.1), so as to answer the second research question.

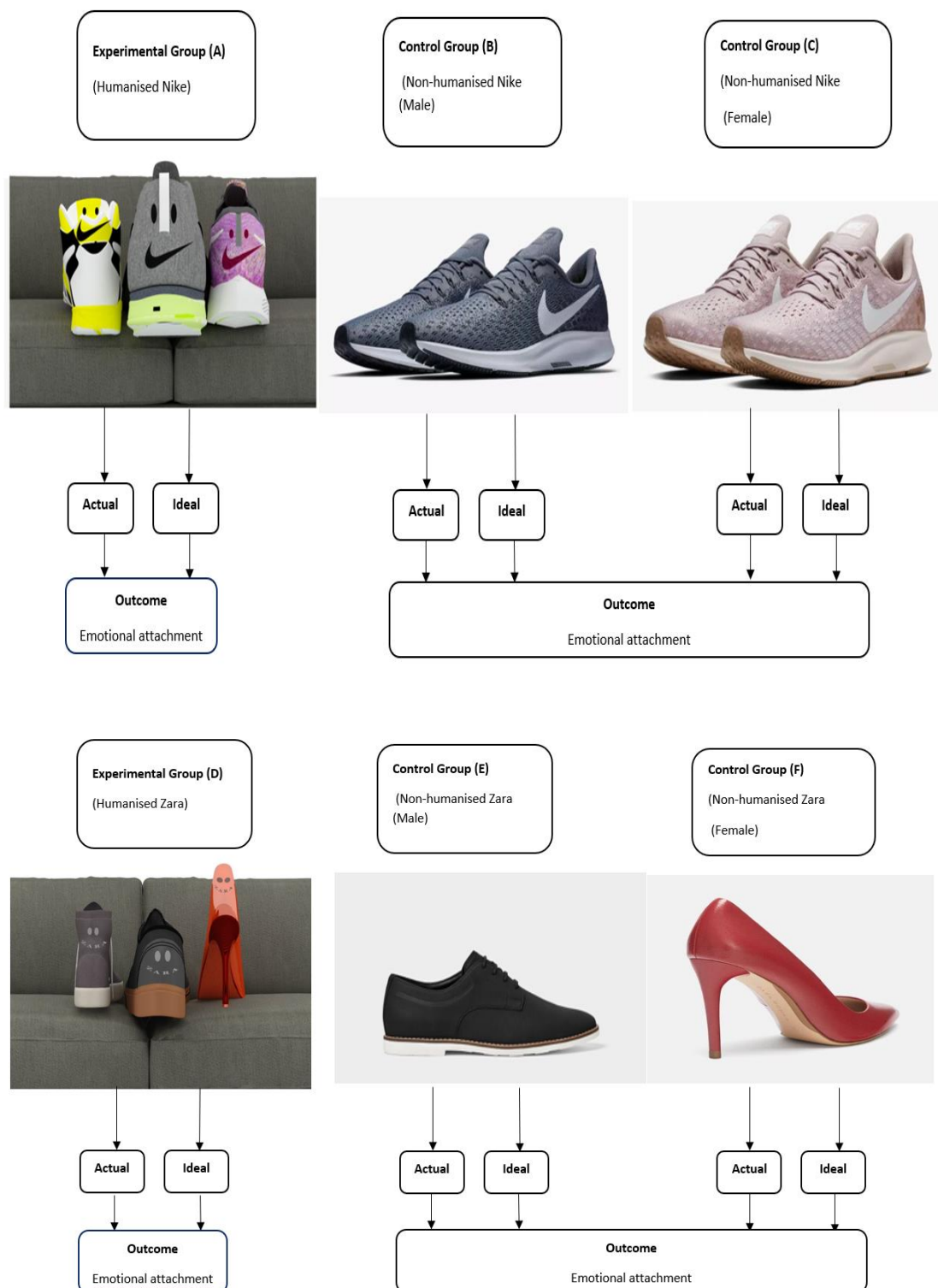
3.6.3.3.1 Factorial experimental design (Nike & Zara)

The same method was followed as shown in Figure (3.8) to design a post-test factorial experimental (6 x 4) survey that would answer the second question,

namely, 'what is the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands?' This required the impact of humanised and non-humanised branding (IV) on consumers' Actual and Ideal self-congruence (Mediators) and consumer emotional attachment (DV) to be tested. Thus, participants were assigned randomly to six groups, two experimental groups (A and D) receiving some advertisements of humanised products (Nike and Zara) and four control groups (B, C, E and F) receiving various advertisements of non-humanised products (Nike and Zara). Participants were assigned to the control groups according to their gender. Accordingly, all of the six groups received different treatment and a post-test only.

The design of this experiment was three conditions (humanised, non-humanised Male and non-humanised Female) x 2 (Shoes: Nike, Zara). This experimental design was chosen because it allows for the random assignment of participants to six independent groups. Each group was tested in one condition only out of the six.

Figure 3.8: Post-test factorial experimental design - Nike (top) and Zara (bottom)



3.6.3.3.2 Data collection procedure

The experiment was piloted by ten PhD students before the actual survey was conducted, to enhance the clarity of the questionnaire and evaluate the experimental design before its first use. The outcome of pilot test result is discussed in section (3.8.1.3), Section (3.8.1.4), and section (3.8.1.5).

An email invitation was sent to 300 participants to provide data. The email A connected them directly to an online questionnaire (Qualtrics software). In the experiment to identify the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands, the participants were randomly assigned to one condition, so as to avoid the threat of selection bias to the experiment's internal validity. Additionally, this randomisation served to balance out any differences between subjects with regard to any of their characteristics. The survey requested participants to supply demographic details and then answer three questions. The aim of the first question was to measure the participants' attitudes to the humanised branding (discussed in sections 3.8.1.3), The aim of the second question was to measure the participants' attitudes to actual and ideal self-congruence (discussed in sections 3.8.1.4)., and the aim of the third question was to measure participants' emotional attachment to humanised branding (discussed in sections 3.8.1.5).

3.6.3.2.3 Data analysis procedure

A total of 200 participants completed the survey (Nike & Zara). The normality test was performed to confirm the normality of the data and to choose an accurate analysis technique for analysing the collected data. The normal distribution of data is shown in Appendix (F). The outcome of the normality test indicated that the data were not normally distributed, so a bootstrapping test was used to analyse them. A certain test was chosen because it was believed to be the best approach for analysing the direct relationship between

independent and dependent variables (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). To analyse the data via the smart-pls software, the humanised brands were treated as the predictor, Actual and Ideal Self-congruence were presented as the mediator, and emotional attachment was presented as the dependent variable. The result is discussed in the next chapter.

3.7 The instrument

This section provides details about the surveys used to collect data in this thesis. It includes details of the design and layout of the questionnaires developed for each survey (section 3.7.1), and information about the order of items (section 3.7.2).

3.7.1 Questionnaire design and layout

When designing a self-completion questionnaire, it is extremely important to ensure that respondents find it as simple as possible (Bryman and Bell, 2007), and can therefore give an appropriate answer. Hence, the instruments were carefully designed using closed questions. Closed questions or statements offer respondents a fixed set of options, thereby providing a limited choice (e.g., 'Rate the following statement': The advertisement encourages me to think of the product as human'- strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree') (Neuman, 2014). This is a statement used to measure participants' attitudes. Bryman and Bell (2007) note that such an approach on a questionnaire is clear for the participant and makes for a faster response which is easy for the researcher to measure. To increase the clarity of the questionnaire, and hence the rate of response, each survey was divided into two three-part sections (Jankowicz, 2004).

3.7.2 The order of items

Careful consideration was given to the order of items, since this can affect the results (Schwartz and Oyserman, 2001). Accordingly, the items were positioned in the same order as other similar studies had adopted (e.g. Malar et al., 2011;

Puzakova et al., 2013). The questionnaires in the present study consequently began with an introduction to the brand and proceeded to some general questions about the respondent's background characteristics (i.e. age, gender, educational level). Thereafter, the respondent was asked questions relating to the humanised brand, and these are normally followed by questions about consumer self-congruence.

3.8 Measurement and coding of constructs

This section provides information about the measurement scales and the items that were used to measure different constructs in the study.

3.8.1 Measurement

The type of measurement scales normally used to measure attitudes are either semantic differential scales (i.e. bipolar adjective scales) or Likert scales. For several reasons, much consideration was given to Likert-type scales in this thesis. According to Neuman (2014, p.230), Likert scales are commonly used in social science 'to provide an ordinal-level measure of a person's attitude'. Indeed, in marketing research Likert scales are the most common, as Wilson noted (2003). Such scales provide a balance for the respondent by representing an equal number of positive and negative points, thereby avoiding the 'chance of respondents simply agreeing with all statements' (Wilson, 2003, p.161). The Likert scale also has the advantage over other scales in that it is easy to use (Neuman, 2014). A third benefit is that reliability and validity within a study can be improved by the use of Likert scales and indexes. Lastly, a combination of several ranked items can generate a comprehensive multiple indicator measurement (Neuman, 2014), which is advantageous to a study.

3.8.1.1 Measurement and coding of a brand as human

Hart and Royne (2017), in their article entitled 'How Anthropomorphic Presentations Can Enhance Advertising Effectiveness', used three items, and a 5-point Likert scale anchored from 'strongly agree/strongly disagree' to examine

whether the humanisation of a brand can affect consumer attitude to an advertisement. As shown in Table (3.6), two items were adopted from Hart and Royne (2017) to assess which advertisement generated a stronger human response.

Table 3.6: Items measuring consumer attitudes to the advertisement (Source: Author, adapted from Hart and Royne, 2017)

No	Items
Item 1	The advertisement presented the product as human-like.
Item 2	The advertisement intended me to think of the product as human.

3.8.1.2 Measurement and coding of products like family

Aggarwal and McGill (2007), in their article entitled ‘That Car Smiling at Me? Schema Congruity as a Basis for Evaluating Anthropomorphised Products’ used two items, and a 7-point Likert scale anchored from “strongly agree/strongly disagree’ to evaluate which illustrations of four bottles appeared related or unrelated to a representative typical family. As shown in Table (3.7), two items were adopted from Aggarwal and McGill (2007) to assess which advertisement was perceived more as a product for families. From the feedback of the pilot test, two items were changed, from ‘Representative of a typical family’, and ‘not a typical family’, to ‘Representative of a family’, and ‘Representative of a family’ and the 7-point Likert scale was changed to a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 3.7: Items measuring consumer attitudes to ‘Family’ products (Source: Author, adapted from Aggarwal and McGill, 2007)

No	Items
Item 1	Representative of a family.
Item 2	Not representative of a family.

3.8.1.3 Measurement and coding of humanised brand

Humanised branding was assessed using scales provided by Hudson et al. (2016). In their article entitled ‘The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors’, they examined the impact of social media on the relationship with a consumer brand through the use of brand anthropomorphism. They used a six-item instrument on a semantic differential anchored from 0-100 to assess how respondents (using social media) felt about a human-like brand. As shown in Table (3.8), all six items in the present study were adopted from theirs. After the pilot test findings, it was decided that instead of using a semantic differential anchored scoring from 0-100, a semantic differential 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, agree and strongly agree) should be used, to avoid complications and the potential for respondents to misunderstand. Neuman (2014, p.234) preferred a Likert scale to other scales, stating that “The real strength of the Likert scale is its simplicity and ease of use. When we combine several ranked items, we get a more comprehensive multiple indicator measurement”.

Table 3.8: Items measuring consumer attitudes to a humanised brand (Source: Author, adapted from Hudson et al., 2016)

No	Items
Item 1	Fake-real
Item 2	Conscious-unconscious
Item 3	Artificial-natural
Item 4	Human-like-machinelike
Item 5	Sincere-insincere
Item 6	Approachable-avoidable

3.8.1.4 Measurement and coding of actual and ideal self-congruence

Malar et al. (2011), in their article entitled ‘Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self’, used four items and a 5-point Likert scale anchored from strongly agree/strongly disagree to measure Actual and Ideal Self-congruence. As shown in Table (3.9), all the items regarding self-congruence were adopted from these researchers.

Table 3.9: Items measuring consumer attitudes to actual and ideal self-congruence (Source: Author, adapted from Malar et al., 2011)

No	Items
Item 1	The personality of this product is consistent with how I see myself.
Item 2	The personality of this product is a mirror image of me.
Item 3	The personality of this product is consistent with how I would like to be.

Item 4	The personality of product is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.
--------	--

3.8.1.5 Measurement and coding of emotional attachment

As seen in Table (3.10), ten items ranked on a 7-point Likert scale anchored from strongly agree/strongly disagree were used to measure emotional attachment; they were adopted from the article by Thomson et al. (2005) 'The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strength of Consumers' Emotional Attachments to Brands'. To avoid a complex presentation, and to increase the chances of completion by the respondents, the 7-point Likert scale was reduced to a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 3.10: Items measuring consumer attitudes to actual and ideal self-congruence (Source: Author, adapted from Thomson et al., 2005).

No	Items
Item 1	Affectionate
Item 2	Passionate
Item 3	Connected
Item 4	Friendly
Item 5	Delighted
Item 6	Bonded
Item 7	Loved
Item 8	Captivated

No	Items
Item 9	Attached
Item 10	Peaceful

3.9 Validity considerations

Because this study is concerned with investigating the causal relationship between a humanised brand and consumer emotional attachment, it is important to consider validity issues. Clark-Carter (2004) raises this as the main concept in establishing whether the findings of a study can bring meaningful answers to the research question(s) posed within it. Mitchell and Jolley (2013) comment that validity can be considered in terms of being internal and external to the study. In the following section, the threats to internal and external validity are discussed together with procedures to control these.

3.9.1 Internal validity

Internal validity is confirmed when the independent variable is seen to influence the dependent variable. In a scenario where something other than the independent variable is found to be influential on the dependent variable it is threatened. According to Neuman (2014, p.44), variables which do have this influence (and which are not the independent variable) 'are confounding variables; they confound the logic of an experiment to exclude everything except the relationship between the variables in your hypothesis'. Confounding variables threaten the researcher's ability to acknowledge that the manipulation of a humanised brand produces a change in consumer emotional attachment; for example, when participants are assigned to one of two groups (e.g., experimental condition and control condition) after comparison are found to differ in terms of socio-demographic attributes or do not form equivalent groups.

This problem occurs because an experiment is designed without due concern for random assignment. In this study the confounding variables were ruled out by controlling the experimental conditions and using experimental designs (Neuman, 2014). Table (3.11) shows the confounding variables that may threaten internal validity, and the procedure to control them if they appear.

Table 3.11: Threats to internal validity and procedure used to control them (Source: Author, adapted from Neuman, 2014).

Confounding variables		Controlled
Selection bias	Assigning participants to group experiment on aggressiveness.	Random assignment of all participants to groups.
Pre-testing	The pre-test measure itself affects an experiment since participants may be aware of the treatment.	Pre-test implemented separately to measure the independent variables. Different participants were assigned randomly to four groups for the pre-test. Different participants assigned randomly to four-groups factorial design) to detect testing effects by measuring the independent and dependent variables.
Diffusion of treatment	Research participants in different groups may communicate with each other and acquire information about the other's treatment.	The survey links are sent by email to every individual participant. Participants do not know each other. Four-group design (factorial design) used to so assign every participant randomly to different groups and treatments.

3.9.2 External validity

External validity relates to the capacity of a study to generate the same findings if it were reproduced in other contexts, that is to say, if the results can be generalised to a wider population. This does not necessarily flow from a study satisfying internal validity requirements but stands in its own right as something to be achieved. The ability to generalise findings to other participants and contexts is important, as Neuman argued (2014, p.306): ‘findings lacking external validity are nearly useless’. Hence, findings that are valid for only one specific experiment lack external validity. Neuman (2014, p.306) highlights three questions to ask in order to determine whether the findings of one particular study can be generalised to other studies: (i) ‘Can we generalise from the specific collection of participants in an experiment to an entire population?’, (ii) ‘Can we generalise from what occurs in a highly controlled and artificial experimental setting to most natural, ‘real-world situations?’ and (iii) ‘Can we generalise from the empirical evidence of a specific experiment to an abstract theoretical model about relationships among variables?’.

To achieve external validity, these questions were addressed, and procedures implemented in the study to ensure that it met demographic generalisation, naturalistic generalisation, and theoretical generalisation. Table (3.12) shows what was done to ensure external validity.

Table 3.12: Measures taken to ensure external validity (Source: Author, adapted from Neuman, 2014)

Controlled	
Demographic generalisation	The sample was conducted randomly with students at Cranfield University. The participants came from different schools within the University, and from different countries. Therefore, the findings can be generalised across different colleges, universities and countries.
Naturalistic generalisation	The respondents were aware that they were taking part in a study but were unaware of the purpose of the study (i.e. they were assigned to different groups

Controlled	
	to answer questions about different advertisements). All the participants were able to open the survey link through their PCs or mobile phones at any time. Consequently, the findings may be generalised across different brands, universities and countries.
Theoretical generalisation	The participants were excited about the experimental treatments and questions. This suggests that they were influenced by them. Moreover, the findings bring new contributions in the area of consumer brand relationship, and humanised brand effects on consumer emotional attachment. The theoretical finding is useful and can be generalised across different brands, organisations and countries.

3.10 Reliability considerations

According to Field (2009, p.673), 'reliability means that a measure ... should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring'. Furthermore, Woods et al. (1986, p.215) remark that a completely reliable test 'would be one in which an individual subject would always obtain exactly the same score if it were possible ... to repeat the test several times'. The most common measure of reliability is Cronbach's alpha (α) with a value of > 0.7 (Field, 2009). As shown in Table (3.13), tests for internal consistency revealed high reliability with a value of > 0.7 for all items.

Table 3.13: Reliability test

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Measurement Items of pre-		
Was the product presented as humanlike?	1	0.956
Could it be thought of as human?	1	

Was it representative of a family?	1	0.902
Was it not representative of a family?	1	
Measurement Items of main study		
Humanising brands	6	0.953
Actual self-congruence	2	0.901
Ideal self-congruence	2	0.908
Emotional attachment	10	0.910

3.11 Sampling considerations

In order to investigate the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands, it was necessary to use a random sample, and consequently, no particular characteristics, backgrounds, skills or ages were required from the research population. Therefore, a non-probability sample (section 3.11.1) was used of an appropriate sample size (section 3.11.2).

3.11.1 Non-probability

Choosing the right sample technique is a main component of all successful research (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Due to time limitations, issues of accessibility, and the need to monitor costs, a non-probability sampling technique was used in this study. Non-probability allows for convenience sampling, which Black (2009) observes to be an easy, quick and inexpensive method for collecting data. Since the researcher was based in a university with large numbers of IT-competent students from different backgrounds and specialisms, he decided to target his fellow-students.

3.11.2 Sample size

There are four variables of interest in this study (i.e. one independent variable, one dependent variable, and two mediator variables). According to Hair et al. (2006), when multivariate analysis is applied in a study, the sample size should be ten times larger than the number of variables. From Table (3.14), it is seen that the sample size is more than ten times larger than the number of variables for each study. Accordingly, all five studies had sample sizes which satisfied the requirements.

Table 3. 14: Sample sizes for the five studies (Source: Author)

	Survey	Pre-test	Main study
Study to select favourite brands	N=213	-	-
Study1 (iPhone and Lumia)	-	N=146	N=144
Study2 (Nike and Zara)	-	N=108	N=200
Total	N=213	N=254	N=344

3.12 Ethical considerations

The research question and the data collection technique depend on specific research considerations. According to Neuman, 2014 'human subject issues are most salient in survey research, experiments, and field research and least salient in existing documents, secondary data analysis, content analysis, or historical-comparative research' (p.125). Ideally, it is not advisable in a research study to start by designing the research question(s) and collecting data before understanding and learning about ethical issues. This section discusses three

things: (i) the ethics of the literature review, (ii) the ethics of the research design, and (iii) informed consent.

3.12.1 The literature review

Reviewing the literature is an important part of every research project (Neuman, 2014). The review rests on the principle that information builds up and teaches the researchers what other researchers have done and so they may build on it. Reviewing the literature is based on the idea that scientific research is a collective effort in which a big number of researchers contribute and share their findings (Neuman, 2014). This study is developed and built on previous works. For this purpose, the researcher read most of the previous studies to learn what they said, compare them, and also criticize them.

As noted by Neuman 'Doing an extensive professional summary review that covers all of the research literature on a broad question could take years by a skilled researcher. On the other hand, the same person could finish a narrowly focused review in a specialized area in a week' (2014, p.126). Before the researcher began to review the literature for this study, the researcher picked a topic area or research question to determine how much time and effort he could spend on attaining his goal, settling on an acceptable level of depth and using the best kind of analysis on his material. In light of that, he sought an appropriate approach to reviewing the literature systematically. He applied a systemic approach to find the research gap in his chosen area. A systemic literature review is defined as 'A process for reviewing the literature using a comprehensive pre-planned search strategy ... Clear assessment criteria are available for selecting articles to review, such as the quality of the research and findings. Individual studies are synthesised using a clear framework and findings presented in a balanced, impartial and comprehensive manner' (p.613).

3.12.1.1 Conducting a literature

In social science, a literature search can adopt a variety of approaches. In the current study the literature search used a systematic review. In an article about systematic reviews, Tranfield et al. (2003) mention the importance of reporting a search strategy in sufficient detail to ensure that the search could be replicated. The review in this thesis was based on the subset of the themes which were considered relevant to the area of the research topic. The systemic literature review approach outlined by Tranfield et al., (2003) was used. Their approach involved five stages, called (i) review the literature, (ii) select some items, (iii) screen for quality, (iv) extract data and (v) analysis and synthesise. Furthermore, it was suggested that the researcher should take every opportunity to discuss his research topic with supervisors, family, colleagues, and some of the relevant experts. All discussions were one-to-one and through email. During the research researcher was able to share his ideas, obtain some very good feedback, new ideas and approaches. This process helped the researcher to refine and clarify research topics.

3.12.2 Ethical research design

This section shows in more detail the ethical research design. Ethical research design has an important implication on the negotiation to have access to participants and data collection process. This section addresses only the ethical issues that the researcher faced when starting to design his ethical research. Certainly, the ideals of ethical research ruled the research topic. The study faced some interesting data collection challenges which were the participants for whom brand humanisation is designed, and the reason it is designed in the chosen way and how did the design of brand humanisation impact the consumer emotion). The research is based on collection of data from students (participants) at Cranfield University and, particularly on one student at a time leading to no objective affecting a student's choice.

It is a matter of judgment whether the technique of data collection provided by ethical considerations would generate valid data. The general ethical issue in this study was not to bring embarrassment to participants. This research design considered participants' awareness and so conditions of informed consent were applied. On this basis the researcher decided to request approval for research from Cranfield University.

3.12.2 Ethical research design

This section deals in more detail with ethical research design. Ethical research design has important implications for the negotiation of access to participants and data collection. This section addresses only the ethical issues that the researcher considered when he started designing his ethical research. Certainly, the ideals of ethical research ruled his research topic. This type of study provided some interesting data collection challenges (who are the participants, for whom is brand humanisation designed, and why it is designed in such a way and how does the design of brand humanisation manage to impact on consumer emotional attachment). The research was concentrating on data collection from students (participants) at Cranfield University and, possibly, on one student at a time so, no objective could affect a student's choice.

It is a matter of judgment whether the technique of data collection provided by ethical considerations would generate valid data. The general ethical issue in this study was that the research design should not bring embarrassment to participants. This research design considered participants' awareness and so conditions of informed consent were applied. On this basis the researcher decided to request approval for research from Cranfield University.

3.12.3 Ethical of research access

Certainly, the researcher wanted to start his fieldwork as soon as he identified his research topic. Before he could, the research had to wonder how he could gain access to the data. Moreover, how could he explain to the participants why

they needed them to supply data, and how he could persuade them to be involved in his study. In addition, he thought carefully of possible ethical issues that could arise in relation to the conduct of the fieldwork. It was not clear how long it would take to obtain ethical approval for the research, nor what data collection techniques to specify that would ease his access to the providers of data.

3.12.3.1 Accessing the data

The researcher was able to gather his secondary data while gaining access to a sample of participants at Cranfield University. However, it was necessary to obtain a series of approvals before entering the field and for this purpose he had to satisfy the ethical requirements of the Research Ethics Committee of the university. Each approval took a week to be granted. The approval references were (i) CURES/3370/2017, (ii) CURES/5271/2018, (iii) CURES/5453/2018, (iv) CURES/5454/2018, (v) CURES/6425/2018. All five ethical approvals are shown in Appendix (G).

After receiving the approval, he distributed the survey by email. Access to the data was not difficult to obtain because the nature of the topic was not concerned with any particular cultures and thus not likely to be sensitive. Moreover, the potential confidentiality of the information was not at issue. This made it easy to gain access to his fellow-students, and send them the survey. However, he found it hard to obtain respondents, and received some incomplete answers to his questionnaires. This obliged him to send further surveys to other participants.

Furthermore, participants in the study were informed that all the information they provided would be treated confidentially, and would remain anonymous, because no-one would be asked to give his/her name (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Participation was completely voluntary, and all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. The

purpose of this study was also briefly explained in the survey instrument, and individuals were asked to agree to take part in the research.

3.12.4 Informed consent

One of the foundations of ethical research is informed consent. In this study, participants were informed that any information that they supplied would be treated confidentially and that they would remain anonymous. Whilst the purpose of the study was explained, this explanation was brief and related to a general context because the participants had to remain unaware of the treatment. An example of the informed consent document is shown in Appendix (B).

3.13 Pilot Study

It is very important to conduct a pilot test for every questionnaire/survey before distributing it, since the instrument must be absolutely understandable for all participants (Collis and Hussey, 2009), and there must be no opportunity for confusion, and no need to ask questions. In this thesis, each of the five instruments was pilot-tested by 10 PhD students from Cranfield University who were all native English-speakers. All the feedback received was acted upon in order to improve and develop the clarity, structure and design of the questionnaire. The outcomes of the pilot test are reported in section (3.8.1).

3.14 Data analysis technique

The data obtained during the study were analysed using two statistical software packages, namely, IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V22, and Smart PLS (partial least squares). In addition to the research question, when making these choices, certain other considerations were taken into account: (i) the type of independent variables (e.g., two groups – experimental and control) to check the difference of score between them; (ii) the type of scale used to measure the dependent variable – this was an ordinal scale (e.g. a 5-

point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree); (iii) the normal distribution of data. As shown In Appendix (C), the data from the two pre-tests and two main questions were not normally distributed.

For this reason, the two pre-tests were analysed using the Wilcoxon test, a non-parametric statistical test that compares two paired groups and calculates the difference between them.

The first question of the study, relating to whether a humanised brand affects consumer emotional attachment, was analysed via bootstrap analysis to establish whether differences existed between the levels of emotional attachment associated with humanised and non-humanised brands. The bootstrap method is a non-parametric significance test for different sets of group-specific results. It shows whether set data groups have significant differences in their group-specific results. It builds on PLS-SEM bootstrapping results (Hair et al., 2018). Developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008), it brings the main advantages that: (i) it is fit for smaller samples, and (ii) it does not rely on the assumption of normality (Hair et al., 2018). There are two steps to follow when analysing the mediating effect by the bootstrap method (Preacher and Hayes, 2008): the first is to bootstrap the direct effect without mediators, and the second is to bootstrap the indirect effect with mediators. However, if the direct path is not significant it exerts no mediating effect (Hair et al., 2018).

The second question of the study, on the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands, was analysed through bootstrap analysis to see whether differences exist between the ability of humanised and non-humanised brands to generate emotional attachment that matched consumers' actual or ideal self-congruence.

3.15 Summary

This chapter started with a description of the research philosophy, approach, and methodology. This research applied a positivism as its research philosophy

because it is the best research philosophy for explaining causal relationship, which is what concerned this research above all. This research philosophy supports a deductive approach and quantitative methodology.

This chapter focused on how to plan a study and create a strategy to guide the researcher through the data collection and analysis process. The aim of this research has been to see how a humanised brand affects consumer emotional attachment. As a result, the study's design and execution strategy are based largely on quantitative data. Later in the chapter, research design, methods of data collection, and data analysis were discussed.

This chapter describes the surveys that were used to collect data for this study. It contains information about the design and layout of the questionnaires designed for each survey, as well as the order of the items. This chapter also provides details about an appropriate instrument, measurement scales and constructs, and discusses validity considerations, sampling considerations, and ethical considerations in the research.

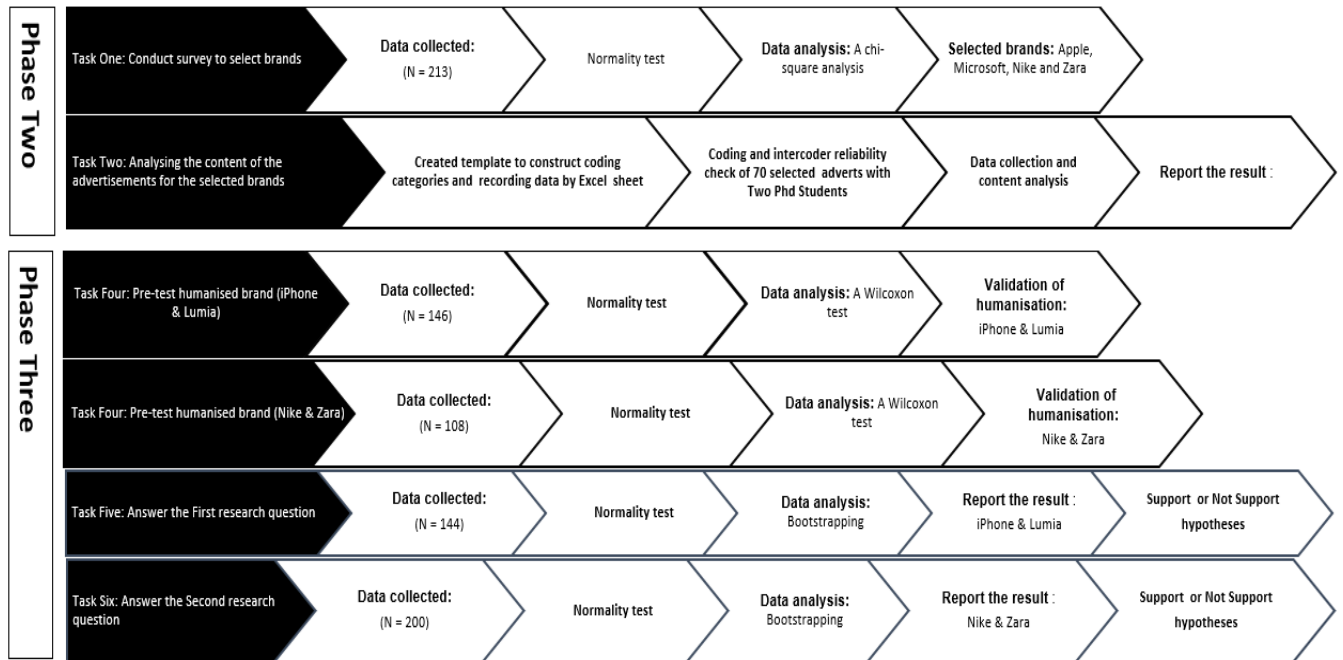
The following chapter addresses the research findings.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data in this thesis and its results. Figure (4.1) presents the approach to the data analysis, shown in five separate tasks. Task one was to conduct a survey to select a brand for this study (discussed in section 4.2). Task two was to conduct analysis a content of the advertisements relating to the selected brands (discussed in section 4.3). Task three, that of humanising a brand, was accomplished in Chapter 3 and is discussed in section (3.6.2.3). Task four focuses on the validation of humanised branded products (discussed in section 4.4). Task five involves experiments conducted to answer the first research question: 'Do humanised brands have a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment (discussed in section 4.5). Task six involves experiments conducted to answer the second research question: 'What is the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands?' (discussed in section 4.6). The final summary and some conclusions are presented in section (4.7).

Figure 4.1: The approach to data analysis and result (Source: the author)



4.2 Task One: Brand selection

4.2.1 Sample characteristics

A total of 213 participants completed the survey, all of whom were studying at Cranfield University, and the majority of whom were international students, some European. As shown in Table (4.1), females accounted for 17.8% of the sample, and males for 82.2%, revealing a heavy majority of male respondents. The age range was between 18 and 60+ years.

Table 4.1: Participants' demographic information

Variable	Value	Frequency	Frequency %
Age	18-20	1	1.4
	21-25	32	14.1
	26-30	49	23.0
	31-35	62	29.1
	36-40	39	18.3
	41-45	14	6.6
	46-50	9	4.2
	51-55	3	1.4
	60 and over	4	1.9
	Total	213	100.0
Gender	Male	175	82.2
	Female	38	17.8
	Total	213	100.0
Level of education	High school or below	7	3.3
	College degree	15	7.0
	Bachelor's degree	39	18.3
	Master's degree	95	44.6
	MPhil degree	2	.9
	PhD degree	55	25.8

4.2.2 Results

As shown in Table (4.2), a chi-square analysis of the results obtained from the survey revealed that the top favourite brands, in order, were Apple, Google, Amazon, Nike, Marlboro, etc., In this study, Apple and Microsoft were selected because they belong to one industry (communication and technology) and Nike and Zara were chosen because they also belong to one industry (fashion and footwear). All the chosen brands were very familiar to the participants and all have exciting brand personalities and were susceptible to brand humanisation.

Table 4.2: Participants' selection of favourite brand

Brand	Frequency	Frequency %
Apple	36	16.9
Google	30	14.1
Amazon	21	9.9
Nike	14	6.6
Marlboro	10	4.7
Alibaba	9	4.2
Microsoft	7	3.3
UPS	7	3.3
YouTube	7	3.3
Zara	6	2.8
Facebook	6	2.8
Toyota	6	2.8
Verizon	6	2.8
BMW	5	2.3

Brand	Frequency	Frequency %
Mercedes-Benz	4	1.9
Tencent	4	1.9
Starbucks	3	1.4
L'Oréal Paris	3	1.4
Subway	3	1.4
Ikea	3	1.4
Honda	3	1.4
Red Bull	3	1.4
IBM	3	1.4
Disney	2	.9
Walmart	2	.9
Bank of America	2	.9
McDonald's	2	.9
Coca-Cola	1	.5
Wells Fargo	1	.5
Samsung	1	.5
Intel	1	.5
PayPal	1	.5
Gillette	1	.5
Gucci	1	.5
KFC	1	.5
Bank of China	1	.5
Adobe	1	.5

Brand	Frequency	Frequency %
GE	1	.5
	213.0	100.0

4.3 Task Two: Analysing brand advertisement strategy

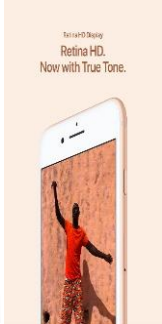
4.3.1 Analysing the content of the advertisements

From Table (4.3), it can be seen that iPhone and Lumia have not applied certain elements of humanlike branding in their advertising strategies. In particular, the elements not applied were presenting the product as a family with members, or completing the brand with gender, archetype and biography. Additionally, the iPhone has not applied a human name in its advertising. The findings also show that neither Nike nor Zara has applied the strategy of presenting the product as a family with members, or completing the process with gender, archetype and biography in its advertising strategies. Nor has Zara applied the element of communication in the first person in its advertisement activities. These findings were interesting, since none of these brands had applied the partial form, literal form or even accidental form to humanise their products. To avoid complexity and duplication only 18 images are presented in Table (4.4).

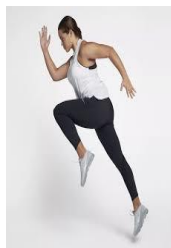
Table 4.3: Data collection and analysis for the selected brands (Source: the author)

Products	iPhone8 Plus		Lumia 950		Nike		Zara	
Classification	Instagram	Official Website	Instagram	Official Website	Instagram	Official Website	Instagram	Official Website
Human face	0	2	0	3	23	27	16	23
Human body	0	3	0	5	93	137	264	125
Products as family members	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Human Name	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Communication in 1 st person	0	1	2	1	7	3	0	0
Brand as gendered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Archetype	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Biography	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.4: Analysing the content of the advertisements for the selected brands (Source: the author)

Analysis of strategies for the humanisation of brands									
	Visual Metaphor			Verbal Metaphor			Rhetorical Metaphor		
	Human Face	Human Body	Product as family with members	Human Name	Communication as 1 st person	Brand as gendered	Personification	Archetype	Biography
Apple (iPhone8 plus) 					Siri 				
Microsoft (Lumia 950) 				Lumia	Cortana 				

Nike



ZARA



ZARA

4.4 Task Four: Validation of humanised branded product

4.4.1 Sample Characteristics

A total of 157 students participated in the first pre-test study, where the gender distribution was 26.1% female, and 73.9 % male, with an age range from 18 to 60+ years. The results from 11 participants were deleted because the respondents did not answer all the questions. The responses from 146 participants were analysed through SPSS. Likewise, the second pre-test study was also conducted with students at Cranfield University. This time 108 students participated, of whom 26.3% were female, and 73.8% male, and the age range was from 10 to 60+ years.

4.4.2 Results and Discussion

A Wilcoxon signed rank test (results shown in Table 4.5) was used to analyse the data from the two pre-tests. This particular test was chosen because it examines the differences between two conditions (Field, 2009). In the following section, to avoid complexity the results obtained after each pre-test are reported individually.

The results from the first pre-test conducted with four different groups revealed significant differences between iPhone1 like a family and iPhone2 like a family. These differences indicate that both groups perceived the iPhone to be human and like a family. Additionally, the results indicate that the iPhone2 like a family generated higher human traits (i.e., products that resembled humans and family members) when compared to the iPhone1 like a family [Mean.iphone1 = 4.55, SD = 1.71; Mean.iphone2 = 4.98, SD = 1.047; $Z = -1.09$, $p = 0.001$]. Consequently, the advertisement for the iPhone2 like a family was chosen as the experimental condition for testing the impact of the humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. In the case of Lumia, there were significant

differences between the Lumia1 like family and Lumia2 like a family, thereby indicating that both groups perceived the Lumia to be human and like a family. Furthermore, the result demonstrates that the Lumia2 like a family generated higher human traits (i.e., products like humans and members of a family) when compared to Lumia1 like a family [Mean. Lumia 1 = 4.32, SD = 1.382; Mean.Lumia2 = 4.95, SD = 0.969; $Z = -0.75$, $p = 0.029$]. The advertisement for Lumia2 like a family was therefore chosen as the experimental condition for finding the answer to the first research question.

The results of the second pre-test conducted with four different groups showed significant differences between the Nike1 like a family and the Nike2 like a family, thereby indicating that both groups perceived the Nike to be human and like a family. Moreover, these results indicate that the Nike2 like a family generated higher human traits (i.e., products like humans and like members of a family) when compared to the Nike1 like a family [not sure if this is what you meant] [Mean.Nike1 = 4.12, SD = 0.730; Mean. Nike2 = 4.56, SD = 0.852; $Z = -0.54$, $p = 0.034$]. Consequently, the advertisement for Nike like a family2 was chosen as the experimental condition for testing the impact of the humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. In the case of Zara, there were significant differences between the Zara1 like a family and Zara2 like a family. The result indicates that both groups perceived the Zara shoes to be human and to be like a family. Furthermore, the result indicates that the Zara like a family2 generated higher human traits (e.g., products like humans and like members of a family) when compared to Zara1 like a family [Mean.Zara1 = 4.21, SD = 0.705; Mean.Zara2 = 4.43, SD = 0.782; $Z = -0.55$, $p = 0.032$]. Hence, the advertisement for Zara2 like a family was chosen as the experimental condition for addressing the second research question.

Table 4.5: A Wilcoxon signed rank test iPhone, Lumia, Nike and Zara

iPhone					Lumia				
	Mean	SD	Z value	P<0.05		Mean	SD	Z value	P<0.05
iPhone1 Vs iPhone2	4.55	1.171	-1.09	0.001	Lumia1	4.32	1.382	-0.75	0.029
	4.98	1.047				4.95	0.969		
Nike					Zara				
	Mean	SD	Z value	P<0.05		Mean	SD	Z value	P<0.05
Nike1 Vs Nike2	4.12	0.730	-0.54	0.034	Zara1	4.21	0.705	-0.55	0.032
	4.56	0.852				4.43	0.782		

4.5 Task Five: Bringing the result to answer the first research question.

4.5.1 Sample Characteristics

In this study, 144 postgraduate students at Cranfield University formed the sample. As shown in Table (4.6), the participants came from a variety of backgrounds (100% students, 22.2% female, 77.8% male, most being around 30 years old, and at the educational level of MSc). The assignment of participants to the four conditions was random to avoid the threat of selection bias to the experiment's internal validity. Additionally, this randomisation served to balance out any differences between subjects with regard to any of their characteristics.

Table 4.6: Participants - iPhone and Lumia study

Variable	Value	Frequency	Frequency %
Age	18-20	2	1.4
	21-25	46	31.9
	26-30	38	26.4
	31-35	31	21.5
	36-40	14	9.7
	41-45	5	3.5
	46-50	6	4.2
	51-55	1	.7
	60 and over	1	.7
	Total	144	100.0
Gender	Male	112	77.8
	Female	32	22.2
	Total	144	100.0
Level of education	High school or below	1	.7
	College degree	2	1.4
	Bachelor's degree	45	31.3
	Master's degree	73	50.7
	MPhil degree	1	.7
	PhD degree	22	15.3

4.5.2 Do humanised brands have any significant effect on consumer emotional attachment?

4.5.2.1 The effects of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment

To answer the first research question, the relationship between the independent (humanised brands) and the dependent (emotional attachment) variables was obtained through the use of Smart-pls software. The first hypothesis, proposing that the humanised brand has a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment, can be described as an independent variable (humanised brands) that can produce changes to a dependent variable (emotional attachment). According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), bootstrapping is the best approach for analysing the direct relationship between independent and dependent variables. To analyse the data via the Smart-pls software, the humanised brand is considered the predictor and emotional attachment is considered the dependent variable. This approach is recommended by previous and recent research in brand humanisation, and emotional attachment (Chu et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020; Li and Sung, 2021).

As shown in Table 4.7, there is a close significant relationship between the humanised brand iPhone (Beta = -633, SE = 0.110, $t = 5.742$, $p < 0.000$) and the humanised brand Lumia (Beta = -640, SE = 0.151, $t = 4.251$, $p < 0.001$), and consumer emotional attachment. However, the relationship was negative and therefore, when consumers perceived the brand as human, consumer emotional attachment tended to decline. There was no significant relationship between the non-humanised brand (iPhone and Lumia) (Beta = -0.440, SE = 0.242, $t = 1.814$, $p > 0.073$ and Beta = -0.237, SE = 0.444, $t = 0.533$, $p > 0.594$) and consumer emotional attachment. Consequently, there is sufficient support for H1 to be supported.

Table 4.7: Results – The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
H1: Humanised brands will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment.	Humanised brands (iPhone)-> Emotional	-0.633	0.110	5.742	0.000	Supported
	Non-humanised brands (iPhone)-> Emotional	-0.440	0.242	1.814	0.073	Not supported
	Humanised brands (Lumia)-> Emotional	-0.640	0.151	4.251	0.001	Supported
	Non-humanised brands (Lumia)-> Emotional	-0.237	0.444	0.533	0.594	Not supported

4.6. Task Six: Bring the result to answer the second research question.

4.6.1 Sample characteristics

This part of the study involved 200 postgraduate students at Cranfield University. As shown in Table (4.8), the gender distribution was 39.5% female, 60.5% male. The participants' age was between 18 and 55 years. The method used the branding favoured by Nike and Zara, since students at the University had selected these as among their favourite brands. The 200 participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions.

Table 4.8: Participants – Nike and Zara

Variable	Value	Frequency	Frequency %
Age	18-20	9	4.5
	21-25	37	18.5
	26-30	62	31.0
	31-35	58	29.0
	36-40	12	6.0
	41-45	17	8.5
	46-50	3	1.5
	51-55	2	1.0
	Total	200	100.0
Gender	Male	121	60.5
	Female	79	39.5
	Total	200	100.0
Level of education	High school or below	3	1.5
	College degree	7	3.5
	Bachelor's degree	33	16.5
	Master's degree	136	68.0
	MPhil degree	9	4.5
	PhD degree	12	6.0

4.6.2 What is the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands?

To answer the above research question, the relationship between humanised branding, actual and ideal self-congruence, and consumer emotional attachment needs to be outlined by the use of the Smart-pls software. This software is used by the previous, and recent research in the area of brand humanisation, self-congruence theory, and emotional attachment (Puzakova, et al., 2013; Puzakova and Aggarwal, 2018; Aw et al., 2021).

Based on the hypothesis drawn from the literature, actual and ideal self-congruence are likely to be potential mechanisms by which an independent variable (humanised brands) can produce changes in a dependent variable (emotional attachment). From the proposed research model presented in Chapter two and Figure (2.12), the first link between humanised brands and actual self-congruence was presented by H2, which was then tested to investigate the impact of humanised branding on consumer actual self-congruence. Next, the second link between humanised branding and ideal self-congruence was presented by H3, which was then tested to investigate the impact of humanised branding on consumer ideal self-congruence. Following this, the link between actual self-congruence and emotional attachment was presented by H4 to investigate the impact of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment. The last link, that between ideal self-congruence and emotional attachment, was presented by H5 and then tested to investigate the impact of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment.

4.6.2.1 The effects of humanised branding on consumer actual self-congruence

As shown in Table (4.9), humanised branding (Nike and Zara) and non-humanised brands (Nike and Zara) overall have a close significant relationship with consumer Actual self-congruence. However, humanised brand (Nike) (Beta = -0.430, SE = 0.179, t = 0.108, p < 0.017), and non-humanised brand (Zara) (Beta = -0.432, SE = 0.122, t = 3.552, p < 0.000) have significant negative relationship with consumer actual self-congruence. Therefore, consumer actual self-congruence will decrease when consumer perceived brand as said as human. While, humanised brand (Zara) (Beta = 0.480, SE = 0.153, t = 3.133, p < 0.002), and non-humanised brand (Nike) (Beta = 0.387, SE = 0.107, t = 3.620, p < 0.000) have close significant positive relationship with consumer actual self-congruence. Therefore, consumer actual self-congruence would increase when consumers perceived brand as said as human.

Both humanised brand and non-humanised brand have significant relationship with consumer actual self-congruence and are able to cause change on consumer actual self-congruence. Therefore, this result supports H2, which proposed that humanised brands have significant effects on consumer actual self-congruence.

Table 4.9: Results – The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer actual self-congruence

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
H2: Humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer actual self-congruence.	Humanised brands (Nike)-> Actual self	- 0.430	0.179	0.180	0.017	Supported
	Non-Humanised brands (Nike)-> Actual self	0.387	0.107	3.620	0.000	Supported
	Humanised brands (Zara)-> Actual self	0.480	0.153	3.133	0.002	Supported
	Non- Humanised brands (Zara)-> Actual self	-0.432	0.122	3.552	0.000	Supported

4.6.2.2 The effects of humanised brand on consumer ideal self-congruence

As shown in Table (4.10), humanised branding (Nike) (Beta = 0.403, SE = 0.148, $t = 2.728$, $p < 0.007$) has a significant relationship with consumer ideal self-congruence; this relationship is positive. Therefore, consumer ideal self-congruence will increase when consumers perceive a brand as human. Meanwhile, humanised branding (Zara) (Beta = 0.273, SE = 0.351, $t = 0.779$, $p < 0.436$), and non-humanised branding (Nike) (Beta = 0.268, SE = 0.147, $t = 1.826$, $p < 0.068$) and non-humanised branding (Zara) (Beta = 0.075, SE = 0.228, $t = 0.329$, $p < 0.742$) have no significant relationship with consumer ideal self-congruence. Therefore, consumer Ideal self-congruence has no effect, whether or not consumers perceive the brand as human.

The result clearly shows that humanised branding (Nike) has a significant relationship only with consumer ideal self-congruence and can change consumer ideal self-congruence only. This result partially supports H3, which proposed that humanised branding has significant effects on consumer ideal self-congruence.

Table 4.10: Results – The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer ideal self-congruence

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
H3: Humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer ideal self-congruence	Humanised brands (Nike)-> Ideal self	0.403	0.148	2.728	0.007	Supported
	Non- Humanised brands (Nike)-> Ideal self	0.268	0.147	1.826	0.068	Not supported
	Humanised brands (Zara)-> Ideal self	0.273	0.351	.0.779	0.436	Not supported
	Non- Humanised brands (Zara)-> Ideal self	0.075	0.228	0.329	0.742	Not supported

4.6.2.3 The effects of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

As shown in Table (4.11), overall consumer Actual self-congruence (humanised Nike) (Beta = 0.836, SE = 0.104, $t = 8.078$, $p < 0.000$) and consumer Actual self-congruence (non-humanised Nike) (Beta = 0.558, SE = 0.094, $t = 5.904$, $p < 0.000$), and consumer Actual self-congruence (non-humanised Zara) (Beta = 0.471, SE = 0.127, $t = 3.716$, $p < 0.000$) have a significant relationship with consumer Emotional attachment; these relationships are positive. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment tends to increase when consumer Actual self-congruence increases, while consumer Actual self-congruence (humanised Zara) (Beta = -0.147, SE = 0.178, $t = 0.826$, $p < 0.409$) has no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment would ensue, whether consumer actual self-congruence increased or decreased.

The result clearly shows that Actual self-congruence (humanised Nike) has significant relationship only with consumer emotional attachment, but actual self-congruence (humanised Zara) has no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. This result partially supports H4, which proposed that actual self-congruence has significant effects on consumer emotional attachment.

Table 4.11: Results – The direct effects of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
H4: Actual self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment	Actual self (Nike)-> Emotional	0.836	0.104	8.078	0.000	Supported
	Actual self (Non-humanised Nike)-> Emotional	0.558	0.094	5.904	0.000	Supported
	Actual self (Zara)-> Emotional	-0.147	0.178	0.826	0.409	Not supported
	Actual self (Non- humanised Zara)-> Emotional	0.471	0.127	3.716	0.000	Supported

4.6.2.4 The effects of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

As shown in Table (4.12), Ideal self-congruence (humanised Nike) (Beta = -0.168, SE = 0.116, $t = 1.448$, $p < 0.148$), and consumer ideal self-congruence (non-humanised Nike) (Beta = 0.219, SE = 0.115, $t = 1.090$, $p < 0.057$), and consumer ideal self-congruence (humanised Zara) (Beta = 0.379, SE = 0.284, $t = 1.333$, $p < 0.183$) have no significant relationship with consumer Emotional attachment. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment will not be affected whether consumer ideal self-congruence increases or declines, while consumer Ideal self-congruence (non-humanised Zara) (Beta = 0.343, SE = 0.129, $t = 2.662$, $p < 0.008$) has a positive significant relationship with consumer Emotional attachment. Hence, consumer emotional attachment increases when consumer ideal self-congruence increases.

The result clearly shows that neither ideal self-congruence (humanised Nike) nor Ideal self-congruence (humanised Zara) has a significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. This result fails to support H5, which proposed that ideal self-congruence has significant effects on consumer emotional attachment.

Table 4.12: Results – The direct effects of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

Hypotheses	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
H5: Ideal self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment	Ideal self (Nike)-> Emotional	-0.168	0.116	1.448	0.148	Not supported
	Ideal self (Non- humanised Nike)-> Emotional	0.219	0.115	1.909	0.057	Not supported
	Ideal self (Zara)-> Emotional	0.379	0.284	1.333	0.183	Not supported
	Ideal self (Non- humanised Zara)-> Emotional	0.343	0.129	2.662	0.008	Supported

The above tables, Table (4.9), Table (4.10), and Table (4.11), shows the following very interesting result: whether the brand is humanised or non-humanised, a significant relationship with consumer actual self-congruence remains. At the same time, a humanised brand has a significant relationship with ideal self-congruence, but a non-humanised brand does not. Moreover, actual self-congruence has a very close relationship with consumer emotional attachment. The result shows that there are mediating relationships between humanised and non-humanised brands, on the one hand, and consumer emotional attachment, on the other. In this relationship the mediator is actual self-congruence. In order to confirm the outcome of this mediator, humanised brands are displayed as the predictor, actual and ideal self-congruence are displayed as a mediator, and emotional attachment is displayed as the dependent variable.

Analysing this kind of mediating relationship in using the bootstrap method requires two steps (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The first is to bootstrap the direct effect without mediators. There is no mediation if the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., humanised brands) and the dependent (i.e., emotional attachment) variable is not significant (Hair et al., 2018). The second step is followed if the direct path is significant and involves bootstrapping the indirect effect with mediators. However, there is no mediation if the indirect path is not significant. This method is recommended by Japutra et al. (2019), and Zogaj et al., (2021).

4.6.3 Bootstrapping the direct effect

As shown in Table (4.13), there is a direct significant relationship only between the humanised brand (Nike) and consumer emotional attachment (Beta = -260, SE = 0.125, $t = 2.086$, $p < 0.038$). However, this is a negative relationship, so if the brand humanisation is increased, consumer emotional attachment tends to decline. This finding supports H1. Meanwhile, there is no direct significant relationship between humanised branding (Zara) (Beta = 0.101, SE = 0.221, $t =$

0.822, $p > 0.462$) and non-humanised branding (Nike and Zara) (Beta =0.182, SE = 0.137, $t = 0.737$, $p > 0.462$ and Beta =0.153, SE = 0.172, $t = 0.885$, $p > 0.376$) on consumer emotional attachment. There is no mediation if the direct path is not significant (Hair et al., 2018), but if the direct path is significant, the second step is followed. Consequently, only the result of the humanised branding (Nike) is interpreted in the second step.

Table 4.13: Direct effect (Total effect)

Path	Relationship			Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
Humanised brands > emotional attachment (direct).	Humanised	brands	(Nike)->	-0.260	0.125	2.086	0.038	Supported
	Emotional							
	Non-humanised	brands	(Nike)->	0.101	0.137	0.737	0.462	Not supported
	Emotional							
	Humanised	brands	(Zara)->	0.182	0.221	0.822	0.412	Not supported
	Emotional							
	Non-humanised	brands	(Zara)->	0.153	0.172	0.885	0.376	Not supported
	Emotional							

4.6.3 Indirect effects

As shown in Table (4.14), the humanised brand (Nike) has a significant indirect relationship with Actual self-congruence (Beta = -0.430, SE = 0.179, $t = 0.180$, $p < 0.017$); this relationship has a negative effect. Moreover, actual self-congruence (Nike) has a significant indirect relationship with consumer emotional attachment (Beta = 0.836, SE = 0.104, $t = 8.07.8$, $p < 0.000$) and this relationship has a negative effect.

The results reveal that the effect of the humanised brand (Nike) on consumer emotional attachment is only mediated by actual self-congruence. However, it is a negative relationship so consumer emotional attachment will decline or will

decline if the humanised brands matched consumer actual self-congruence. This finding supports both H2 and H4.

Table 4.14: Indirect effects

Path	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T- Value	P- Value	Decision
Humanised brands > Actual self- congruence (Indirect).	Humanised brands (Nike)-> Actual self	- 0.430	0.179	0.180	0.017	Supported
Actual self- > emotional attachment (Indirect).	Actual self (Nike)-> Emotional	0.836	0.104	8.078	0.000	Supported

4.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings regarding the sample characteristics of five tasks. Task One was conducted to analyse the data obtained from a survey to select brands for this research; task two was conducted to analyse the content of brand advertising, tasks three and four were two pre-tests to validate brand humanisation (iPhone and Lumia; Nike and Zara), task five was conducted to analyse the data obtained from the survey to find the effects of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment (Study 1), and task six was conducted to analyse the data obtained from the survey, to find the relative importance of consumer actual and consumer ideal self-congruence in the effect of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment (Study 2). The results of the reliability checks were also presented.

This chapter looked at a few different sets of findings. The finding from task one shows that iPhone, Lumia, Nike and Zara were among the favourite brands for the target participants. The finding from task two shows that iPhone and Lumia have not applied certain elements of humanlike branding in their advertising strategies. These elements were presenting the product as a family with members and presenting the gender, archetype and biography of the brand in its advertisements. Similarly, according to the findings, neither Nike nor Zara have presented their products as a family with members, or gender, archetype, or biography of the brand as in their advertisement strategies. The finding from task four shows the validation of brand humanisation and confirmed that the participants perceived the brands as human. The finding from task five (Study 1) shows that brand humanisation has significant effects on consumer emotional attachment, which supported H1.

As shown in Table (4.15), the finding from task six (Study 2) shows a few further sets of findings: (i) brand humanisation has a significant effect on consumer actual self-congruence which supports H2; (ii) brand humanisation has a significant effect on consumer ideal self-congruence, which partially supports H3; (iii) actual self-congruence has a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment, which partially supports H4; and (iv) ideal self-congruence has a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment, which does not support H5. Moreover, the finding shows that actual self-congruence mediates the relationship between humanised brand and consumer emotional attachment.

Table 4.15: Hypotheses result

N	Hypotheses	Decision
H1	Humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment.	Supported
H2	Humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer actual self-congruence	Supported
H3	Humanised brand will have a significant effect on consumer ideal self-congruence	Partially Supported
H4	Actual self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment	Partially Supported
H5	Ideal self-congruence will have a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment	Not Supported

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to consider answers to the two research questions. To find out whether marketers are able to make a significant change in consumer emotional attachment by following two strategies, these being: (i) brand humanisation which relates to the first question in this research and (ii) brand humanisation such that the brand matches the consumer's actual or ideal self-congruence which relates to the second question in this research.

To answer the first research question (section 5.2) this chapter starts by discussing the direct effects of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment to answer the first research question. This is followed by a discussion which addresses the second research question about the indirect effects of brand humanisation, including the mediating roles of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment (section 5.3). This section is divided into five sub-sections as follows: (i) the direct effects of humanised branding on consumer actual self-congruence (section 5.3.1); (ii) the direct effects of humanised branding on consumer ideal self-congruence (section 5.3.2); (iii) the direct effects of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment (section 5.3.3); (iv) the direct effects of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment (section 5.3.4); and (v) the mediating role of actual self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment (section 5.3.5), and conclusion (section 5.4).

5.2 The Direct effects of brand humanisation

5.2.1 The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment

The result found that humanised brands (iPhone and Lumia) have a close significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment, while non-humanised brand (iPhone and Lumia) have no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. This result supports H1.

Furthermore, humanised brand was able to cause direct change in consumer emotional attachment. However, this change was negative, so when consumers perceived a brand as human, consumer emotional attachment tended to decline. This finding is consistent with Kim's (2016), whose study concluded that brand humanisation has a significant relationship with consumer attitude and behaviour but causes a negative relationship. The evidence shows that consumers experienced less enjoyment from a computer game when they received instruction from a humanised helper with a human face instead of a non-humanised helper. This finding was quite consistent with that of Phillips (1996) who reported that humanisation can build a decent brand personality and persuade consumers to create emotional connections with a brand. Only a few years later this finding was confirmed by Delbaere et al., (2011), who advised that brand humanisation is a powerful persuasion tool, and a powerful device to encourage consumers to perceive a brand as human under certain conditions. And recently this finding was affirmed by Delgado-Ballester, et al., (2020) who approved that brand humanisation has an impact on certain consumer emotions. In addition, the empirical research has shown that humanised products, ads, and brands have a favourable impact on consumers' brand attachment through evoking favourable feelings (Zhang et al., 2020). Brand humanisation is a good method of building a brand's personality and developing an emotional connection to the brand by enhancing the consumer's feelings of

empathy. These suggestions were supported by Thomson et al., (2006), who found that brand personality can encourage consumers to develop close emotional attachments when a brand personality enhances their feelings of empathy.

This demonstrated that humanised brands had a direct effect on consumer emotional attachment whereas non-humanised brands did not. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies which show no significant effects of the humanisation of branding on consumer attitude to and trust of a brand (Puzakova et al., 2013), and on consumer belongingness and preferences for distinctive brands (Puzakova & Aggarwal, 2018). However, according to Puzakova et al., 2013, this outcome occurred because the participants had negative information about both brands. Yet it was consistent with Aggarwal and McGill (2012)'s finding that participants were more likely to take the stairs rather than the elevator when the Kellogg's brand was seen as human-like, but when the Kellogg's brand was seen as an object there was no significant difference between stairs or elevator as the choice. They concluded that the effects happened only when consumers view brands as human but conceded that this was more likely to occur when the humanised brand matched the consumer self-concept.

5.3 The relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands

5.3.1 The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer actual self-congruence

The result found that Humanised brand (Nike and Zara) and non-humanised brand (Nike and Zara) have a close significant relationship overall with consumer actual self-congruence. However, humanised brand (Nike), and non-humanised brand (Zara) both have a significant negative relationship with consumer actual self-congruence. Therefore, consumer actual self-congruence could decline when consumers perceived a brand as human, while humanised

brand (Zara), and non-humanised brand (Nike) both have a close significant positive relationship with consumer actual self-congruence. Therefore, consumers' actual self-congruence could increase when consumers perceived a brand as human. This result supports H2.

Furthermore, brand humanisation was able to cause direct change in consumer actual self-congruence. This finding is consistent with other studies of consumer behaviour, which had shown that consumers most often purchase a certain brand to express actual self-congruence and brand humanization often but not always enables consumers to express their self-concept when the brand image matches consumer actual self-congruence. (Aaker, 1999). Some years later this finding was supported by Ballester, et al., (2020), whose studies confirmed that brand humanisation has positive effects on brand love and, it is only desirable for consumers when the humanized version of the brand is attractive to consumers. The Ballester findings are consistent with Malar et al., (2011), whose studies have found that brand personality traits could be used to strengthen consumer emotional attachment when brand personality matches consumer actual self-congruence. The finding was confirmed by Puzakova et al., (2009), who worked out that the concept of brand humanisation is a combination of brand image (Aaker, 1999) and consumer self-concept (Waytz et al., 2010). Aggarwal and McGill (2012) later confirmed that brand humanisation can also affect consumers but only when the humanised brand matches consumer self-concept. Actual self-congruence is an important variable for enhancing consumers' perception of a humanised brand.

5.3.2 The direct effects of humanised brand on consumer ideal self-congruence

This result suggested that a humanised brand (Nike) has a significant relationship with consumer ideal self-congruence and that this relationship is positive. Therefore, consumer ideal self-congruence could increase when

consumers perceived a brand as human, whereas a humanised brand (Nike), a non-humanised brand (Zara), and a non-humanised brand (Zara) have no significant relationship with consumer ideal self-congruence. Therefore, consumer ideal self-congruence has no effect, whether or not consumers perceived the brand as human. Therefore, a humanised brand (Nike) has a significant relationship only with consumer Ideal self-congruence, but a humanised brand (Zara) has none. This result partially supports H3.

It was found that a humanised brand (Nike) was able to cause a direct change, in consumer ideal self-congruence. Therefore, there was a close positive significant relationship between the humanised brand and consumer ideal self-congruence. Hence, consumer-held ideal self-congruence could increase when consumers perceived a brand as human. This finding is partially consistent with previous studies on consumer behaviour. The study shows that there is a significant relationship between brand personality and consumer self-expression, thus demonstrating that consumers buy brands or products that they believe describe themselves (Phau and Lau, 2001). This finding was also supported by Malar et al., (2011), whose studies have found that brand personality traits could be used to strengthen consumer emotional attachment when brand personality matches consumer actual self-congruence. One year after their paper was published, Aggarwal and McGill (2012) confirmed that consumers were more likely to take the stairs rather than the elevator when the Kellogg's brand was seen as human-like, but when the Kellogg's brand was seen as an object there was no significant difference between stairs or elevator as their choice. They concluded that the effect only appeared when consumers viewed brands as human but conceded that this was more likely to occur when the humanised brand matched the consumer self-concept.

This finding is consistent with previous studies that show no significant effects of humanising a brand on consumer attitude and trust in a brand. However, this

outcome occurred because the participants had negative information about both brands (Puzakova et al., 2013).

5.3.3 The direct effects of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

The result found that consumer actual self-congruence (humanised Nike), consumer actual self-congruence (non-humanised Nike), and consumer actual self-congruence (non-humanised Zara) have a significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment and that these relationships are positive. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment would tend to increase when consumer actual self-congruence increased, whereas consumer actual self-congruence (humanised Zara) has no significant relationship with consumer Emotional attachment. The result clearly shows that actual self-congruence (humanised Nike) has a significant relationship only with consumer emotional attachment, but actual self-congruence (humanised Zara) has no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. This result partially supports H4.

Consumer actual self-congruence was able to cause direct change in consumer emotional attachment. There was a close significant relationship between consumer actual self-congruence and consumer emotional attachment. Because this change was positive consumer-held actual self-congruence would increase consumer emotional attachment. This finding is partially consistent with previous studies of consumer behaviour which found that consumers develop an emotional attachment to a brand when its personality traits match consumer actual self-congruence (Malär et al., 2011). In addition, Rabbanee study proves that brand attachment was influenced by consumer actual congruence (Rabbanee et al., 2020). Moreover, their findings confirmed that actual self-congruence causes a significant effect on consumer emotional attachment to a brand. The recommendation which can be derived from these findings is that, in order to create consumer emotional attachment, marketers

may need to make a brand more authentic to match consumer actual self-congruence. Consumers were able to form an emotional attachment to a brand on condition that the brand was authentic and able to match their actual self-congruence.

5.3.4 The direct effects of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment

The result makes it clear that ideal self-congruence (humanised Nike), consumer ideal self-congruence (non-humanised Nike), and consumer ideal self-congruence (humanised Zara) have no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment is not affected whether consumer ideal self-congruence is increased or lessened, whereas consumer ideal self-congruence (non-humanised Zara) has a positive significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. Thus, consumer emotional attachment increases when consumer ideal self-congruence increases. The result clearly shows that neither ideal self-congruence (humanised Nike) nor ideal self-congruence (humanised Zara) has a significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. This result does not support H5.

Consumer ideal self-congruence was not found able to cause direct change in consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, no significant relationship between consumer ideal self-congruence and consumer emotional attachment can be reported. Hence, consumer-held Ideal self-congruence would not form emotional attachment to a brand. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies in consumer behaviour which found that consumer ideal self-congruence is an important factor for strengthening consumer emotional attachment to a brand (Rasool et al., 2020). However, the study was conducted from a single country (Pakistan), and more data from other countries is needed to generalise the result. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies in

consumer behaviour which found that consumer ideal self-congruence is an important factor for strengthening consumer emotional attachment to a brand.

Consumer emotional attachment to a brand tends to increase when brand personality traits match consumer ideal self-congruence (Japutra et al., 2019). This finding shows that the consumer ideal self did not cause or developed a consumer's emotional attachment to a humanised brand because the brand was not able to provide her/him with a sense of identity. It seems from this study that brand humanising customisation is not capable of inspiring consumers to perceive a brand as human if they are motivated by an ideal self. This finding is consistent with the result obtained by Malar et al. (2011): that when the brand image matches the consumer's ideal self-congruence branding has no effect on consumer emotional attachment. However, this finding is inconsistent with the result obtained by Rasool et al. (2020): ideal self congruence has a positive relationship with brand attachment. This is also supported by previous scholars who show that ideal self-congruence would be the best concept to describe the positive outcomes, but not to bring better results (Ekinici and Riley, 2003).

5.3.5 The mediating role of consumer actual self-congruence between humanised brand and emotional attachment

The result found that there is a direct significant relationship only between a humanised brand (Nike) and consumer emotional attachment. However, because it is a negative relationship consumer emotional attachment might decline if brand humanisation increased. This finding again supports H1. However, there is no direct significant relationship between a humanised brand (Zara), and a non-humanised brand (Nike and Zara) on consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, no mediation took place because the direct path between the humanised brand (Zara), and the non-humanised brand (Nike and Zara) was not significant for consumer emotional attachment. This may be explained by the fact that the brand image of the humanised brand (Zara) does not match consumer actual self-congruence, and therefore there is no impetus

to strengthen consumer emotional attachment. This is not, however, consistent with finding of Chen et al., (2021) that humanised brand enhances purchase intentions for unattractive products by creating empathy in consumers.

Humanising one brand (e.g., Zara) has no effect on consumer emotional attachment to it. This may be explained by the fact that the brand image of the humanised brand (Zara) does not match consumer actual self-congruence, and therefore there is no impetus to strengthen consumer emotional attachment. This is not consistent with the findings of Malar et al. (2011) to the effect that when brand personality matches consumer actual self-congruence, consumer emotional attachment is strengthened. However, as previous research documents, consumers interact with many different products and brands, but develop close emotional attachment to only a very small group of brands (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). This is consistent with the results obtained in previous studies: brand personality helps consumers to express their self-concept when the brand image matches consumer actual self-congruence. This happens very often but not always (Aaker, 1999; Sirgy, 1982). This result is supported by Celsi and Olson (1988, p.211), who note that ‘a consumer’s level of involvement with an object, situation, or action is determined by the degree to which s/he perceives that concept to be personally relevant’.

Consequently, only the result of the humanised brand (Nike) was interpreted. The results reveal that the effect of the humanised brand (Nike) on consumer emotional attachment was mediated only by actual self-congruence. However, because humanised branding has negative effects on consumer actual self-congruence, it seems that humanised branding does not match consumer actual self-congruence. Surprisingly, this negative relationship between a humanised brand and consumer actual self-congruence has no negative effect on consumer emotional attachment so consumer emotional attachment tends to increase even if consumer actual self-congruence lessens through the use of humanised brands. This finding supports both H2 and H4.

5.4 Conclusion

According to the findings, humanised branding has a significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment, but non-humanised branding has no such relationship. Therefore, brand humanisation strategy is able to influence consumer emotional attachment in a direct way. However, consumer emotional attachment tended to drop when brands were perceived as human, hence brand humanisation strategy weakened consumer emotional attachment.

Moreover, the findings revealed that humanised and non-humanised brands have a significant relationship with consumer actual self-congruence. However, humanised brands caused a negative relationship with consumer actual self-congruence, thus brand humanisation strategy weakened consumer actual self-congruence. While the findings revealed that as well humanised brands have a significant relationship with consumer ideal self-congruence and that this relationship is positive. Therefore, brand humanisation strategy strengthens consumer ideal self-congruence.

The result found that consumer actual self-congruence has a significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment and that this relationship is positive. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment would tend to increase when marketing managers applied consumer actual self-congruence (authentic strategy). While consumer ideal self-congruence has no significant relationship with consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, consumer emotional attachment would not affect when marketing managers applied consumer ideal self-congruence (inspirational strategy).

Finally, the findings show that only actual self-congruence mediated the effect of the humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. However, humanised branding has a negative impact on consumer actual self-congruence. Thus, brand humanisation strategy tends to weaken consumer

emotional attachment even if consumer actual self-congruence lessens through the use of this strategy.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into six main sections, namely, (i) aim, and two research questions (section 6.2); (ii) development of the conceptual model from the literature, previous and new data (section 6.3); (iii) application of the conceptual model within the research methods (section 6.4); (iv) contribution to knowledge (section 6.5); (v) limitations and opportunities for future research (section 6.6) and (vi) personal reflections (section 6.7).

6.2 Aim and two research question:

This section links the research findings to the research aim (section 6.2.1) and lists two research questions. Section (6.2.2) discusses the first research question and section (6.2.3) discusses the second.

6.2.1 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to investigate what roles actual and ideal self-congruence play in strengthening consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands. The findings show that actual self-congruence mediated the effect of humanised branding on consumer emotional attachment, but ideal self-congruence did not. However, actual self-congruence was found to play a significant role in weakening consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands. This finding is consistent with the study by Rasool et al., (2020). However, two other studies by Rabbanee et al., (2020) investigated the effect of actual, ideal, and social self congruence on consumer emotional attachment. The first work concluded that the actual and social self affect consumer

emotional attachment, but the ideal self does not. This supports the findings of the present research. However, the second study by Rabbanee concluded that both actual and ideal self did affect consumer emotional attachment, considerations, which is not consistent with the findings in this research.

6.2.2 The first research question

The findings and conclusions with regard to the first research question are consistent with those of previous studies of consumer behaviour, which found that brand humanisation has significant positive effects on consumer emotional attachment, but causes a negative change in consumer emotional attachment. Thus, this research shows that brand humanisation may reduce consumer emotional attachment. Aaker (1997), who noted that consumers may view brands whose advertising used a humanisation strategy as less authentic than other brands. Since humanisation in advertisements relies on deviations to create incongruity with the consumer, non-humanisation in advertisements can be viewed as more accurate and trustworthy. Furthermore, non-humanised brands are advertised in a more objective and realistic manner. This certainly gives the brands a personality – but it is perceived as a more ‘adult’ personality. Moreover, because such brands require less elaboration and discussion, they may provide stronger reasons for consumers to consider them more reliable, technically advanced, and serious than humanised ones (Aaker, 1997). Aaker’s conclusions are supported by Delgado-Ballester et al., (2020) which found that humanised branding has effects on consumer emotional attachment. In addition, a recent study by Puzakova and Aggarwal (2018) supports this view, concluding that brand humanisation is not an effective strategy for affecting consumers’ attitudes. However, the findings of the present research challenge Puzakova and Aggarwal (2018), suggesting that brand humanisation has a positive effect on human attachment and can be used by companies to attract more consumers by using the strategies of humanisation. The other variables of product and service that affect customers’ behaviour when a brand

humanisation strategy is used still need to be investigated. For instance, the present study, unlike the papers by such writers as Aaker or Delgado-Ballester, concluded that brand humanisation has a positive effect on consumer behaviour. Nonetheless, the way in which self-congruence and other variables correlate with each other still needs to be elucidated.

6.2.3 The second research question

That brand humanisation has significant effects on consumers' actual and ideal self-congruence is the finding from the second question of this research. However, the impact of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment was mediated only by actual self-congruence and created a negative relationship. Still, surprisingly, the negative relationship between a humanised brand and consumer actual self-congruence does not have the effect of weakening the consumer's emotional attachment. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Malar et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2014; 2019, Rasool et al., 2020) that confirm that actual self-congruence has significant effects on consumers' emotional attachment to a brand, and actual self-congruence was a stronger predictor of consumer emotional attachment to a brand.

Humanising a brand to achieve ideal self-congruence (an aspirational branding strategy) would be the best method of securing favourable consumer attitudes, though it does not strengthen attachment. This view is supported by Malar et al. (2011), who found that a consumer is more likely to become emotionally attached to a brand when the brand personality matches the consumer's actual self, rather than the ideal self. Their result shows that actual self-congruence has the greatest impact on consumer emotional attachment, whether the brand is humanised or not. When marketers are looking for increased emotional attachment, consumers' actual self-congruence is more important. Therefore, the most effective strategy for marketers in trying to build brand personality is to

focus on actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategies) and not on ideal self-congruence (aspirational branding strategies).

6.3 Development of the conceptual model

Developing a conceptual model is, beyond doubt, the most important aspect of any research project and one of the most important purposes of the literature review. The primary purpose in writing a literature review is not to provide a description of everything published on the research topic, but to review the most important and interesting research on this topic (Saunders et al., 2007). Reading and reviewing the literature helped the researcher to understand many concepts of brand (such as brand personality, brand anthropomorphism, brand personification, brand humanisation, etc.), to identify theories of consumer self-congruence and emotional attachment, and to combine these concepts with identified theories as the basis of a conceptual model and hypotheses to test. Yin (2003) confirms in this regard that it is helpful to use existing theory from the literature to design research questions and to build a conceptual model and propose hypotheses. This approach proved fruitful for organising and directing a data analysis. This is acknowledged as part of any explanatory research and supports a deductive approach (Neuman, 2014).

Reviewing the literature, then, helped the researcher to identify the key variables and the relationships between them, redesign the research question, build a conceptual model and propose hypotheses. In Chapter two (section, 2.9), some theories were presented with a series of hypotheses in a visual conceptual model. It was certainly found advantageous to combine theories, variables and hypotheses in a visual model. Visualising the proposed conceptual model with the hypotheses was useful for simplifying and showing the connection between the variables. In the conceptual model that was eventually proposed, the independent variable was brand humanisation, and the dependent variable was consumer emotional attachment. This model also

proposed two mediating variables, namely consumer ideal self-congruence and consumer actual self-congruence. Subsequently a conceptual model was built, the connections between the variables were explained, and hypotheses were proposed. The conceptual model that emerged was designed to introduce possibilities for connecting the independent (brand humanisation) and dependent (consumer emotional attachment) variables that might support the proposed hypotheses.

6.4 Application of the conceptual model within the research methods

The purpose in reading the literature depends on the approach that the researcher intends to take in answering the research question. The present researcher chose the approach dictated by a positivist philosophy. This research adopted the positivist philosophy in order to present brands, consumers and other drivers (brand humanisation, self-congruence, emotional attachment, etc.) as distinct objects and natural phenomena as real. This research adopted positivism so as to encourage a very structured methodology that would simplify descriptions and avoid replication. This structured methodology inclines towards a deductive approach and uses quantitative data wherever possible; it collects data from experiments and develops a conceptual model to construct a series of hypotheses from previous studies and from theory.

A conceptual model and hypotheses were proposed in response to the nature of the research subject, which has attracted many scholars. They clearly lent themselves to the deductive approach, which was taken because it embodies many essential characteristics. First and foremost, the aim of this research was to explain causal relationships between concepts and variables. After reading about emotional brand attachment patterns in the academic literature, it became

possible to identify theories and variables that suggested a connection between humanised brands and consumer emotional attachment. As a result, a conceptual model and five hypotheses were proposed to explain the causal relationships between them. Second, a deductive approach offers a highly organised way of using quantitative methods to gather varied data from large samples, which is commonly associated with positivism. The hypotheses in this research were tested against quantitative data.

The overall findings from both research questions were consistent with those from previous studies in consumer behaviour, which found that brand humanisation has significant positive effects on consumer emotional attachment. However, as noted above, this effect causes negative change in consumer emotional attachment. Therefore, this research went on to show that brand humanisation could reduce consumer emotional attachment.

6.5 Contributions to knowledge

Many concepts discussed in social theory have contributed to the history of social science, improved methods of communication to consumers and generated innovative ideas (Neuman, 2014). The next two sections cover (i) theoretical contributions (Section 6.5.1), and (ii) practical contributions (Section 6.5.2). It is hoped that marketing practitioners and scholars may gain some creative ideas and find the recommendations fruitful.

6.5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study provides three theoretical contributions and several recommendations about (i) the value of developing a conceptual model to generate consumer emotional attachment by means of actual and ideal self-congruence (section 6.5.1.1); (ii) the importance of brand humanisation in the literature of the consumer/brand relationship (section 6.5.1.2); and (iii) the importance of a consumer's actual and ideal self in the literature on consumer self-congruence (section 6.5.1.3).

6.5.1.1 The importance of developing a conceptual model of brand humanisation in the literature on consumer and brand relationship

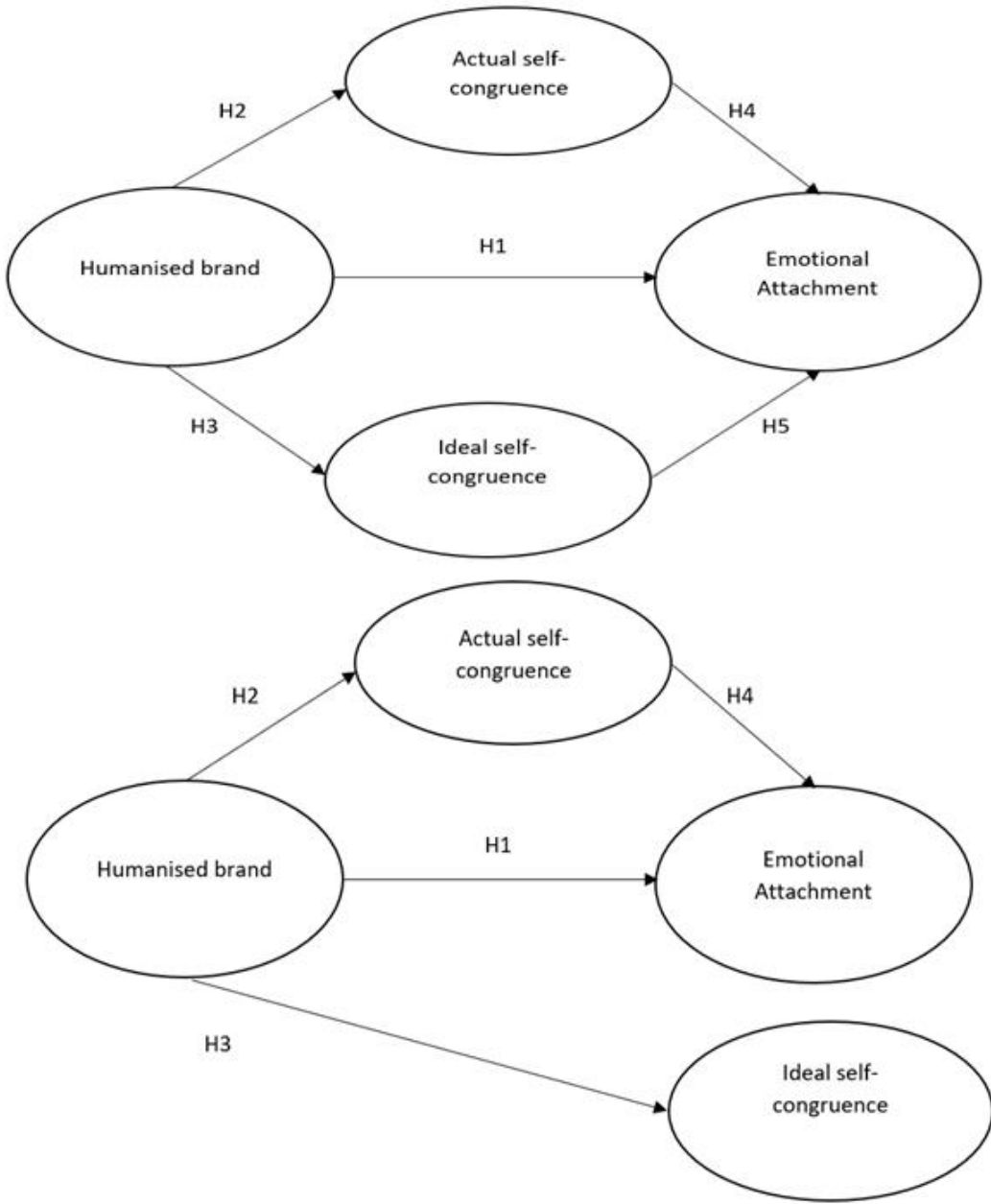
The proposed conceptual model was able to bring an interesting variant of the dominant model which improves scholars' understanding of consumer attitude and behaviour in society by introducing highly original broad theories that may lay a foundation for future studies. To build the current conceptual model, three areas most closely related to the present study were chosen from the extensive literature related to brand humanisation, brand anthropomorphism and brand personality, self-concept, self-congruence, emotional attachment, etc. These areas were (i) brand anthropomorphism (brand humanisation), (ii) consumer self-congruence, and (iii) consumer emotional attachment. Moreover, previous conceptual models of brand humanisation (Puzakova, et al., 2013; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Hart & Royme, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021), self-congruence (Japutra et al., 2014; 2019; Rabbane et al., 2020), and emotional attachment (Malar, et al., 2011; Rasool et al., 2020), together with previous research findings were reviewed to develop a new conceptual model. This conceptual model was designed for two purposes: first, to introduce the possibilities and show the importance of connecting the independent (brand humanisation) and dependent (consumer emotional attachment) variables; and second, to show the importance of connecting independent (brand humanisation) and dependent (consumer emotional attachment) variables via two mediating variables (actual and ideal self-congruence).

As shown in Figure (6.1) below, the proposed conceptual model (at the top) suggested five hypotheses. The first of these investigated the impact of a humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment. The findings of this investigation may encourage scholars to apply brand humanisation strategy to strengthen consumer emotional attachment to a brand. The second hypothesis investigated the impact of humanised branding on consumer actual self-congruence. The findings of this investigation may lead scholars to ask whether

brand humanisation strategies can be applied to strengthen consumer actual self-congruence. Next, the third hypothesis investigated the impact of humanised branding on consumer ideal self-congruence. The findings of this investigation may persuade scholars to ask whether consumer ideal self-congruence strategy can be applied to strengthen consumer emotional attachment. Following this, the fourth hypothesis investigated the impact of actual self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment. The findings of this investigation may make scholars wonder whether applying actual self-congruence strategy (authentic branding strategies) can strengthen consumer actual self-congruence. The last hypothesis (H5) brings in the impact of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment. The findings of this investigation may cause scholars to check whether the application of ideal self-congruence strategies (inspiration branding strategies) strengthens consumer emotional attachment to a brand. However, as shown in Figure (6.1), the modified conceptual model (at the bottom) reveals five contributions: (i) brand humanisation can affect consumers, inducing an emotional attachment to a brand, as presented by H1; (ii) brand humanisation can affect consumer actual self-congruence, as presented by H2; (iii) brand humanisation can affect consumer ideal self-congruence, as presented by H3; (iv) consumer actual self-congruence can affect consumers, persuading them to form an emotional attachment to a brand, presented by H4'; and (v) consumer ideal self-congruence causes no effect on consumers and cannot persuade them to form an emotional attachment to a brand. For this reason, H5 is removed from the modified model.

The findings suggest that the current modified conceptual model is capable of helping scholars to generate many new ideas and theories related to brand humanisation and consumer attitude and behaviour.

Figure 6.1: The proposed conceptual model (top) proposed hypotheses, vs. the modified conceptual model (below) with the validated hypotheses



6.5.1.2 The importance of brand humanisation in the literature on the consumer and brand relationship

The second significant academic contribution is the provision of knowledge about the humanisation of a brand, and specifically whether a humanised brand can encourage a consumer to generate more emotional attachment than a non-humanised brand may. The observation across two studies suggests that consumers are more likely to form a close emotional attachment to a humanised rather than a non-humanised brand. The findings of this research are consistent with previous research studies in consumer behaviour that show support for brand humanisation. This view is supported by previous studies of brand humanisation which confirm that most forms of humanisation allow consumers to perceive a brand as human under specific conditions (Delbaere et al., 2011). Brand humanisation technique has been used over many years to influence consumers' attitude and increase their liking of a product (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Landwehr, et al., 2011; Delbaere et al., 2011). Moreover, brand humanisation is able to bring more pleasure and excitement to the consumer (Ang & Lim, 2006), to reduce consumer desire to replace the product (Chandler and Schwarz, 2010), to affect consumers' perception of risk (Kim and McGill, 2011), to increase consumer automatic behavior (Aggarwal and McGill, 2012), and to reduce consumer negative reactions to the brand (Puzakova et al., 2013). From such findings, this study is able to recommend that brand humanisation is a very sound technique for influencing consumer emotional attachment. However, to encourage consumers to perceive a brand as human, brand humanisation needs to be simple in nature, authentic and direct.

6.5.1.3 The importance of the consumer's actual and ideal self in the literature of self-congruence

The third important academic contribution is the provision of knowledge regarding the issue of whether marketing practitioners and scholars focus on a consumer's actual or ideal self-congruence when generating consumer emotional attachment by means of brand humanisation. One finding of this

study is that consumers are more likely to form a close emotional attachment to a humanised brand when the marketer has humanised it in such a way as to achieve actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategies). Therefore, the study recommends the use of authentic branding strategies that respect actual self-congruence because they form a more effective strategy for building brand personality and strengthening consumer emotional attachment than does the use of aspirational branding strategies that play to the notion of ideal self-congruence. This finding was partially supported by previous studies which found that both actual and ideal self-congruence had significant effects on consumer emotional attachment to a brand (Japutra et al., 2014; 2019; Malar, et al., 2011). However, whilst the use of aspirational branding strategies to appeal to consumers' ideal self-congruence is not effective in causing change in consumer emotional attachment, it may be succeeded in promoting favourable consumer attitudes (Malar, et al., 2011).

6.5.2 Practical contributions

This study provides four practical contributions and several recommendations about (i) the importance of the model of brand humanisation for marketing managers (section 6.5.2.1); (ii) the importance of the actual self (authentic branding strategy) (section 6.5.2.2); and (iii) the importance of the consumer ideal self in the literature of consumer self-congruence (aspirational branding strategies) (section 6.5.2.3).

6.5.2.1 The importance of the model of brand humanisation

The strategies associated with brand humanisation have been implemented differently, as reported by many different authors, but essentially, all are aimed at giving human-like characteristics to a brand, such that 'human' schema can be activated. Consumers are more likely to perceive a brand as human when marketers introduce a brand with human-like features. One of the most challenging and interesting tasks for marketers is to humanise the products in every individual brand so as to categorise and analyse brand marketing

activity. The researcher has reviewed the previous studies in consumer research that studies have shown marketers have humanised products by applying visual cues, verbal cues, and rhetorical metaphors. To assist marketers in this task, a model of brand humanisation has been developed together with a template to analyse those activities. This model is developed simply by structuring the various ways of humanising a brand through the use of different types of metaphor.

6.5.2.2 The importance of actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategy)

The results suggest that actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategy) is more effective as a method of strengthening consumer emotional attachment than ideal self-congruence (aspirational branding strategies). However, they also show that ideal self-congruence is important in promoting favourable consumer attitudes, and therefore, that aspirational branding strategies are useful when this is the objective. Marketers are encouraged to focus on actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategy) rather than ideal self-congruence (aspirational branding strategies) when trying to increase consumer emotional attachment to a brand. Indeed, as noted by marketing scholars (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Malar et al., 2011), authentic branding strategies that play to consumers' actual self-congruence are dominant in marketing practice. In addition to the Dove example mentioned previously, a great many companies (e.g., IKEA, Converse, Nescafé, Sprite, l'Occitane en Provence) have used actual self-congruence (authentic branding strategy) as an approach to generate closer consumer emotional attachment.

6.5.2.3 The importance of the ideal of self-congruence (Aspirational branding strategies)

The third practical contribution is in the knowledge for management that aspirational branding strategies (aimed at achieving ideal self-congruence) have no effect on consumer emotional attachment. This may require managers to

reconsider their marketing approaches and question the overall effectiveness of the strategies currently being implemented. One reason for the absence of a general positive effect of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment is that the image of a humanised brand was not attainable, since this may in practice be perceived by the consumer as being unrealistic or not authentic. Therefore, it may be necessary to set realistic expectations among consumers of what branded products and services can deliver to them before aspirational branding strategies (ideal self-congruence) are adopted as a means of humanising a brand. In other words, marketing managers should be aware that aspirational branding strategies (ideal self-congruence), whilst suitable for luxury brands, are not appropriate for high street brands.

6.6 Limitations and future research

The study has a few limitations which, however, present opportunities for future research.

First, the study focused narrowly on brands, considering only those relating to consumer electronics products (Study 1), and to consumer footwear (Study 2). Therefore, future research may explore other brand categories associated with the self-ideal, such as automotive products, restaurants, luxury accessories, and hotels. For example, consumers might humanise the Coke or Starbucks brand and form a strong level of self-congruence. Indeed, one friend of the present researcher drives only BMW cars, and has a BMW logo on both his laptop and his notebook because he believes this image reflects the young professional image that he has of himself and wishes to convey to others. Future study focusing on luxury brands may find that the outcomes of the finding are different from those of the present work.

Second, the data were collected from one country (the UK) and with a limited sample, drawn from students at Cranfield University with an average age of 30 years. Most of the participants were male. Future researchers may wish to test the current conceptual model in different countries with different cultural contexts and a

different gender group. Collecting data from different age groups, a different gender group and from people with different cultural backgrounds would be valuable and yield new insights. These variables may affect consumer perceptions of brands that have been humanised (Hudson et al., 2016).

Third, the study has taken a limited focus on marketers' methods of humanising a brand by applying human-like features (human face, body and family characteristics). This is known as elicited agent knowledge – knowledge of non-human objects (Epley et al., 2007). However, some important factors may drive consumers to view brands as human when they are in different emotional states. Epley et al. (2007) have identified two primary factors that may drive humans to anthropomorphised objects, namely, (i) Effectance Motivation (the motivation to understand and explain other people's behaviour) and (ii) Sociality Motivation (the desire for social relationship and the need to belong to other people). Future research should include as many as possible of the consumer motivations to view brands as human. According to Epley et al. (2007), sociality motivation and effectance motivation are the main factors that increase or reduce consumers' tendencies to see brands as human. Such research should be conducted in order to learn how to design appropriate advertisements (e.g., how to humanise a brand) that may enhance consumer emotional attachment.

Finally, the reliance on scaled measurements of brand humanization is an important limitation of the present research. The possibility is that participants may not have consciously reported any of the brand humanization features. New scaled measurements for brand humanization are required. Moreover, qualitative interviewing methods and projective tests may be required to provide convergent evidence in future research on humanisation generated by visual metaphor and consciously leading to acknowledgements of brand humanisation, and emotional relationships.

6.7 Personal reflection

I began this journey to learn more about the effect of brand humanisation on consumer emotional attachment. I was aiming to bring branding closer to consumers' minds and hearts by humanising it. On my journey I read many books and papers and watched many videos yielding overwhelming evidence that humanising branding via advertisements is very important for allowing a brand to speak to the consumer's mind and touch the consumer's heart. It has been a pleasure to see the great things that are happening in a research area that is growing. It is exciting to see how the marketing can change the attitude of consumers to the humanised brand.

This journey has, I believe, not only given me the skills, and knowledge to become a better researcher, but also has improved my personality. I have not only been able to attain the highest degree of academic study, but I have also been able to do so in a field that is close to my interests and heart. This has not been a straightforward accomplishment by any means. Many of the lowest and most difficult moments of my life have been included in the past six years, but also some of my favourite memories and proudest ones. In these past few years, I have encountered a mountain of challenges, the main one being to design new, unique, novel adverts. When I started my induction week at this university, I never imagined that I would design my own model of a humanised brand. This model will, I hope, help many marketing practitioners, and scholars to humanise brands or products and services. In the past fifteen years I have done many things, but this journey has been an quite different experience which I now leave with a great sense of self-belief, appreciation and achievement.

The advice that I would like to use in future research and that other researchers might like to consider before conducting an experimental survey approach, is to design and pre-test advertising in research in four steps. The first step in creating a draft advertisement is (i) copy development. In this step an initial idea for an advertisement is developed from a creative overview and screened in focus groups.

In the second step (ii), the first draft of the advertisements is assessed again by the same focus groups. The third step (iii) in copy testing is to test the final version of the advertisement. In business research, this step is known as pre-testing. The last step, (iv) tracking, is to assess the final version of the advertisements in the media which in business research is known as post-testing. In this final step the advertisements are analysed through surveys and sales data. Usually, the results of the surveys and the sales data are used to evaluate consumer attitudes and behaviour with regard to advertisements (Belch, and Belch, 2007). The key industry document PACT states that

“Copy testing is undertaken when a decision is to be made about whether the advertising should be run in the marketplace. Whether this stage utilizes a single test or a combination of tests, its purpose is to aid in the judgment of specific advertising executions.” (PACT,1982, p.8).

As a final note, I believe more than ever that humanising brands is a powerful tool, and one which could and certainly should be used more for the promotion of healthy food and sport. Now, I am looking forward to my next chapter and to discovering how I can use my research experience to contribute to the academic knowledge of business and industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summery of significant previous research in the field (Source: Author)

		Investigation of							
Studies	Study Purpose	Brand as human		Actual self-congruence	Ideal self-congruence	Emotional attachment	Limitations of the study	Findings	Gap
		Type	Measurement						
Aaker, 1997;	The purpose of the study was to develop a theoretical framework of brand personality dimensions and measurement scales for these dimensions.	Brand personality	Brand personality measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1.The measurement scales of brand personality might not be appropriate for brands crossing cultural communities 2.No tangible evidence is provided to measure consumers attitude and behaviour towards brand personality.	1.The Five brand personality traits are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. 2. Measurement scales for brand personality.	1. Additional research needs to find how marketers can develop new brand personality. 2. and investigate the impact of brand personality on consumer self-expression (etc.) Self-congruence) and other dependent variables.

Aaker, 1999;	The purpose of the study was to address the influence of the self-concept on consumer attitudes to a brand personality	Brand personality	Brand personality measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1. No tangible evidence is provided to consumers to make a judgment about their feeling towards brand personality, so the consumer needs to imagine brand personality traits which may have biased the participants' response.	1. Consumers have positive attitude to brand when brand personality matches their self-concept. 2. There is a relationship between brand personality and consumer self-congruence. 3. Brand personality could be used in advertisements to provide a brand with human personality.	1. Additional research need to find the impact of brand personality on consumer self-congruence and incongruence 2. What variables can be used to enhance the relationship between brand personality and consumer self-congruence. 3. Additional research needs to find whether ideal versus actual self-congruence predicts better brand preference.
Thomson, 2006	The purpose of the study was to address which factors may enhance consumer feeling to develop strong attachments to "human brands,"	Celebrities	No measurement scales for brand	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	1. The study used a qualitative approach to Investigate the impact of human brand on consumers' attachments, although a quantitative approach is useful to assess consumer attitudes, and behaviours, and generalize results from a larger sample population. This may not be evident from a qualitative approach	The consumer is likely to form strong attachments to a brand when a human brand enhances consumer's feelings of autonomy and relatedness but does not suppress feelings of competence. The mediating factors of emotional attachment are consumer satisfaction, trust and commitment.	1. Marketers should address how to make human brands more authentic (Actual person brand image) to create consumer emotional attachment. 2. Marketers need to create brands from scratch to target consumer feeling of autonomy and relatedness.

							alone. 2. No tangible evidence is provided to consumers to make a judgment about their emotional feeling towards brand personality.		
Aggarwal and McGill, 2007	The purpose of the study to examine the effectiveness and consequences of a humanised product.	Brand humanization	Brand anthropomorphism measurement	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1. The sample was based on one country, Canada.	1. Consumers view a product as human when anthropomorphize a product and their consequent evaluation of that product depend on the extent to which that product is endowed with characteristics congruent with the proposed human schema.	1. Future study might be examining the impact of a humanised brand consumer on potential differences in consumer memory. 2. Future study might be examining which type of humanisation may affect consumers.
Puzakova et al., 2009	The purpose of the study was to discuss the consumer self-concept and whether brand image congruity drives consumers to form connection brand humanisation.	Brand humanisation	No measurement scales for brand	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1. The findings of this research have not been tested and are all based on previous research.	1. Consumer self-concept and brand image congruity drive consumers to view a brand as human and form connections with this brand alone.	1. Additional research needs to find what variables may drive consumers to see brand as human (like human features and self-congruence) 2. Additional research may need for find under what conditions consumers may connect with a humanised brand and form a strong emotional attachment to this brand.

									3. Actual self-congruence may motivate consumers to form strong connection to a humanised brand.
Malar et al., 2011	The purpose of the study was to investigate which consumer's self-Actual or Ideal is better to target, to increase consumer emotional attachment to brands.	Brand personality	Brand personality measurement scales	Yes	Yes	Yes	1. No tangible evidence is provided to consumers to make a judgment about their feeling in regard to brand personality. 2. Consumers were asked to imagine brand personality; this is called participant bias, and it can have a huge impact on research findings.	Actual self-congruence has greater impact on consumer emotional attachment than Ideal self-congruence.	1. Marketers need to humanise brand and to measure consumer feeling with regard to brand personality. 2. The study of the impact of ideal self-congruence on consumer emotional attachment needs further research.
Delbaere et al., 2011	The purpose of the study was to investigate whether humanising products allows consumer to view a brand as human	Brand humanisation	Brand personality measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	1. Brand humanisation was a successful strategy in creating brand personality but what are the factors that encourage consumers to view a brand as human?	1. All forms of humanization allow consumers to see a brand as human under specific conditions. 2. Brand Humanisation is a powerfully persuasive tool to create brand personality and an emotional connection with consumers.	1. Marketers need to develop new brand a humanisation tools to create human brand that can communicate to consumer through advertisements. 2. And develop a theoretical model that specifies the most important moderating factors to determine when a brand humanisation tool would be

									effective. 3. What factors may encourage consumer to view brand as human?
Aggarwal and McGill, 2012	The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of humanised brand on consumer automatic behavioural priming.	Brand humanization	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1.The sample was based on one country, Canada.	1. Brand humanization is likely to encourage consumer to form successful social interaction with a brand. 2. It is often but not always brand humanization that has strong effects on consumer behaviour. It is probably brand image mediating the relationship between humanised brand and consumer behaviour. 3. Brand humanization is likely to encourage consumer behaviour to take risks and decisions and increase fitness.	1. Does brand humanisation have more significant effects on loyal consumers than on consumers who are not loyal?
Puzakova et al., 2013	The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of brand humanization on consumers when brand suddenly acquired a bad reputation.	Brand humanisation	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1. The sample was based on one country, Canada.	1. Brand humanisation reduces consumer negative attitude. 2. Brand humanisation may have less positive effects on consumers when brand experiences negative	1. Future research could humanise a product in a way that matched consumer self-concept.

								reputation in the social media.	
Japutra et al.,2014	The purpose of the study was to understand which variables drive consumers to form emotional attachments and what are the outcomes of emotional attachment	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.This study used semi-structured interviews to find which variables drive consumer to form emotional attachments and what the outcomes of this relationship are. A quantitative approach would have been useful to measure consumer attitudes and generalize results from a larger sample.	1. Actual and Ideal self-congruence has a significant impact on consumer emotional attachment. 2. Emotional attachment to a brand will increase when brand image matches consumer Actual or ideal self-congruence. 3. Marketers need to increase brand likeability and brand attachment by using Actual and Ideal self-congruence in their advertisements.	1. Which determinant (Actual or Ideal self-congruence) has the more significant impact on consumer emotional attachment?
Koo et al., 2014	The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of actual and ideal self-congruity on consumer reaction and purchase intention when evaluating an online apparel store.	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Yes	1. The sample was based on one gender (female) and one country (the US).	1. Actual self-congruity leads to the positive evaluation of atmospheric cues of an online store, while ideal self-congruity affects these evaluations negatively. 2. Online apparel store affects positively consumers' actual self-congruence but affects negatively consumer ideal self-congruence. 3. Most marketers focus on consumer Actual self rather than ideal self-congruence to advertise	1. Identify additional consumer factors that may influence visual cues and enhance consumers' emotional connection. 2. It will be interesting to test the framework with different genders and cultures to identify the variances caused by self-congruence.

								products in an online store.	
Hur et al., 2015	The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a humanised product on consumer desire, and self-control.	Brand humanisation	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1.The sample was based on one gender (female) and one country, South Korea	1. The study shows that a humanised product can weakens consumer self-control by mitigating consumer experience of low desire for a product. 2. The consumer self-control factor struggles between two psychological influences, desires and the restraint of long-term objectives. 3 .Brand humanisation increases or reduces consumer desire for a product when consumers have a positive or negative view of it.	1. Future study might examine which type of humanisation may increase consumer belongingness and preferences for certain products.
Hart et al., 2017	The purpose of the study to examine the effects of brand humanization on consumer attitude and purchase intention.	Brand humanisation	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1.The visual metaphor that was used to humanise the product was very basic and is unlikely to have persuaded consumers to see the product as human.	1. Brand humanization softens the consumer attitude to the brand and strengthens purchase intentions. 2. Brand humanization is an effective promotional tool to influence consumer attitudes to a brand.	1. A humanised product needs to be simple and direct in nature to persuade consumers to see the brand as human.

MacInnis and Folkes, 2017	The purpose of this study was to review research on humanised brands and consumer relationship	Brand humanization	No measurement scales for brand	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.The proposed hypotheses of this research were not tested.	1. Consumers often, but not always, form emotional attachments to humanised brands. 2.Actual and Ideal self-congruence are important variables to strengthen the relationship between humanised brands and consumer emotional attachment.	1. Marketers and researchers can use visual or verbal metaphorical tools to humanise a brand in many ways to match consumer self-congruence and increase consumer emotional attachment.
Puzakova & Aggarwal, 2018	The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of anthropomorphism on consumer belongingness. and preferences for distinctive brands.	Brand humanisation	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Not investigated	1. The sample was based on one country, the US.	1. Consumer hardly perceive unique humanised brands. 2. Humanisation is not effective. 3. Brand humanization under high distinctiveness motives has a negative effect on evaluations of a distinctive brand.	1. The study may be applied to 2-3 different cultural communities to generalise the result. 2. The situations where loneliness can affect the evaluation of humanised brands should be discussed in greater detail.
Japutra et al., 2019	The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of actual and ideal self-congruence on brand attachment and impulsive and obsessive-compulsive buying.	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Yes	1. The study was based in the UK and the sample was small.	1. Actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence positively affect brand attachment.	1. It would be useful to investigate the effect of self-discrepancy on ideal and actual self-congruence. 2. Future studies should increase a sample size and examine the study in different cultural context in order to enhance its generalizability.
Delgado-Ballester, et	The purpose of this study was to deal with the role of	Brand anthropomorphism	Brand anthropomorphism	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	1.The study was not thinking about the fact	1.A humanised brand has a beneficial impact on certain	1. Brand stereotypes may be taken into account in future

al., 2020	brand humanisation, and consumers' liking for the humanised version of the brand.		measurement scales				that consumer–brand relationships vary over time. 2. This study was focused on imaginative anthropomorphism, a type of anthropomorphism in which the imagination plays a key role rather than focusing on brand humanisation (brand preunification).	consumer emotions. 2.brand humanisation is only beneficial when consumers find the humanised version of the brand attractive.	studies. 2. It would be useful to investigate whether humanising a brand is a more successful way to creating brand attachment and influencing consumer attitudes and behaviour.
Zhang et al., 2020	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of brand anthropomorphism and brand distinctiveness on brand attitude. Moreover, tests the mediating effect of warmth and competence.	Brand anthropomorphism	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	1.The sample's features may limit the results' generalizability.	1.Brand humanisation creates positive effects brand attachment by invoking positive emotions. 2.Brand humanisation improved consumers' emotional attachment to brand. 3.Cnumser consider humanised brands to be close, intimate, and friendly objects with which they may converse.	1.Focus on the impact of consumers' personality traits on consumer attitude. 2. Other interpersonal theories, such as social exchange theory and expectation theory, could be applied to the consumer–brand relationship.
Rabbanee et al., 2020	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects a chain of interactions that	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.The data collected from a single country (Australia), and more	1.The finding of study one shows brand attachment was influenced by actual and social selves, but not	1. Future study may look into a broader range of focal brands (such as retail brands, , and luxury brands)

	runs from brand self-congruency—which might come from the actual, ideal, or social self –to brand attachment, and then to consumer involvement on social networking sites (SNS).						data from other countries is needed to generalise the result.	by ideal selves. 2.The finding of study two shows brand attachment was influenced by actual and ideal self-congruency.	as well as other social media platforms.
Rasool et al.,2020	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of actual and ideal self-congruence on numerous elements of ethically minded consumer behaviour.in the presence of brand attachment as a mediator.	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Yes	1. The data collected from a single country (Pakistan), and more data from other countries is needed to improve the conceptual framework.	1. Actual, and ideal have a positive relationship with brand attachment. 2.Consumer actual self influenced ethical minded consumer behavior, while ideal self-congruence did not. 3. Marketing managers may create a marketing strategy that creates value for both the actual, and ideal selves of the consumer.	1.Future study may adopt other theoretical foundations, such as the theory of planned behaviour, social cognitive theory, and self-verification theories, may be used in future study to explain multi-dimensional effects of the proposed relationships.
Zogaj et al., 2021	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of actual, and ideal self congruence on brand personality credibility dimension (trustworthiness and competency) to increase purchase intention.	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	Yes	Not investigated	1.Essential identity characteristics such as race and gender need to be considered.	1.Actual self-congruence impact positively on trustworthiness, whereas ideal self-congruence has no effect. 2.Ideal self-congruence impact positively on competence more strongly than actual	1.Examine the moderating role of self-esteem in the influence of ideal self-congruence on trustworthiness. 2. Examine the direct effect of actual, and ideal self congruence on consumer attitude, and behaviour.

								self-congruence	
Chen et al., 2021	The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of anthropomorphism communication in the marketing of unattractive produce, and to find an underlying psychological process that aids empathy.	Brand anthropomorphism	Brand anthropomorphism measurement scales	Not investigated	Not investigated	Yes	1. Self-reported purchase intention was measured in this study instead of capturing actual consumer behaviour.	1. The effect of humanisation on enhancing purchase intentions for unattractive products is strong. 2. Humansaition increases purchase intent by generating empathy in consumers.	1. it would be interest to conduct field research in a real shopping environment (e.g., a grocery) to test the theory in future research.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a research to study **consumer attitude toward brands**. This study is being undertaken by Tariq Almutairi from Cranfield University .

It will take you approximately **3** minutes to complete this survey. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any question.

There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be safe.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Tariq Almutairi (t.m.almutairi@cranfield.ac.uk).

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Tariq Almutairi

Appendix C: Pre-test iPhone & Lumia, Nike, and Zara Survey

. Rate the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.The advertisement presented the product as human-like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The advertisement encouraged me to think of the product as human	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Rate the following statement:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Representative of a family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Not representative of a family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D: Survey to study the impact of humanised brand (iPhone & Lumia) on consumer emotional attachment

1. Describe how you see and feel about this image:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
Real	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Fake
Conscious:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unconscious
Natural	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Artificial
Human-like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Machine-like
Sincere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Insincere
Approachable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Avoidable

2. Indicate your feeling about this image

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Affectionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Passionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Connected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Friendly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Delighted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Bonded.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Loved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Captivated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Attached.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Peaceful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E: To study the relative importance of actual and ideal self-congruence in consumer emotional attachment to humanised brands (Nike & Zara)

1. Describe how you see and feel about this image:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
Real	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Fake
Conscious:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unconscious
Natural	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Artificial
Human-like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Machine-like
Sincere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Insincere
Approachable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Avoidable

2. Please take a moment to think about Nike shoes. Describe the personality characteristics of shoes such as easy-going, friendly etc. Please rate the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The personality of this product is consistent with how I see myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The personality of this product is a mirror image of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

me.					
3. The personality of this product is consistent with how I would like to be.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The personality of this product is a mirror image of the person I would like to be.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Indicate your feeling about this image

	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Affectionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Passionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Connected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Friendly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Delighted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Bonded.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Loved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Captivated.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Attached.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Peaceful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix F: Tests of Normality (iPhone, Lumia, Nike and Zara)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test Nike & Zara						
Pre-test iPhone1	.160	50	.020	.946	50	.077
Pre-test iPhone 2	.111	50	.200	.968	50	.367
Pre-test Lumia1	.240	50	.000	.872	50	.000
Pre-test Lumia2	.212	50	.000	.934	50	.008
First research question						
Lumia like non-human	.238	36	.000	.755	36	.000
Lumia like human	.300	36	.000	.799	36	.000
iPhone like non-human	.262	36	.000	.778	36	.000
iPhone like human	.225	36	.000	.828	36	.000
Pre-test Nike & Zara						
Pre-test Nike1	.310	50	.000	.654	50	.000
Pre-test Nike2	.107	50	.000	.887	50	.000
Pre-test Zara1	.179	50	.000	.840	50	.000
Pre-test Zara2	.091	50	.003	.955	50	.000
Second research question						
Nike-like nonhuman	.137	50	.021	.955	50	.057
Nike-like nonhuman AC	.135	50	.023	.919	50	.002
Nike-like nonhuman ID	.206	50	.000	.937	50	.010

Nike-like nonhuman EA	.166	50	.001	.936	50	.009
Nike-like human	.246	50	.000	.781	50	.000
Nike-like human AC	.247	50	.000	.778	50	.000
Nike-like human ID	.307	50	.000	.870	50	.000
Nike-like human EA	.245	50	.000	.807	50	.000
Zara-like nonhuman	.249	50	.000	.773	50	.000
Zara-like nonhuman AC	.241	50	.000	.880	50	.000
Zara-like nonhuman ID	.267	50	.000	.877	50	.000
Zara-like nonhuman EA	.180	50	.000	.915	50	.002
Zara-like human	.147	50	.008	.936	50	.009
Zara-like human Ac	.236	50	.000	.860	50	.000
Zara-like human ID	.287	50	.000	.889	50	.000
Zara-like human EA	.225	50	.000	.914	50	.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix G: Five Ethical approvals

Dear Tariq

Reference: CURES/3370/2017
Title: Study 1 Favourite brands

Thank you for your application to the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

Your proposed research activity has been confirmed as Level 2b risk in terms of research ethics. You may now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

Please remember that CURES occasionally conducts audits of projects. We may therefore contact you during or following execution of your fieldwork. Guidance on good practice is available on the [research ethics intranet pages](#).

If you have any queries, please contact cures-support@cranfield.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards

CURES Team

Dear Tariq

Reference: CURES/5271/2018
Title: Study 2 humanised brands

Thank you for your application to the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

Your proposed research activity has been confirmed as Level 2b risk in terms of research ethics. You may now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

Please remember that CURES occasionally conducts audits of projects. We may therefore contact you during or following execution of your fieldwork. Guidance on good practice is available on the [research ethics intranet pages](#).

If you have any queries, please contact cures-support@cranfield.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards

CURES Team

Dear Tariq

Reference: CURES/5453/2018

Title: Study 3 the impact of humanised brand on consumer emotional attachment

Your proposed research activity has been reviewed by CURES and you can now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

Please remember that CURES occasionally conducts audits of projects. We may therefore contact you during or following execution of your fieldwork. Guidance on good practice is available on the [research ethics intranet pages](#).

If you have any queries, please contact ures-support@cranfield.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards

CURES Team

Dear Tariq

Reference: CURES/5454/2018

Title: Study 4 humanised brand

Your proposed research activity has been reviewed by CURES and you can now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

Please remember that CURES occasionally conducts audits of projects. We may therefore contact you during or following execution of your fieldwork. Guidance on good practice is available on the [research ethics intranet pages](#).

If you have any queries, please contact ures-support@cranfield.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards

CURES Team

Dear Tariq

Reference: CURES/6425/2018

Title: Study 5 actual and ideal self-congruence

Thank you for your application to the Cranfield University Research Ethics System (CURES).

Your proposed research activity has been confirmed as Level 2b risk in terms of research ethics. You may now proceed with the research activities you have sought approval for.

Please remember that CURES occasionally conducts audits of projects. We may therefore contact you during or following execution of your fieldwork. Guidance on good practice is available on the [research ethics intranet pages](#).

If you have any queries, please contact cures-support@cranfield.ac.uk

We wish you every success with your project.

Regards

CURES Team