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**BRANDS WE LOVE TO HATE:
AN EXPLORATION OF BRAND
AVOIDANCE.**

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ABSTRACT

Brands, and the process of branding, are of considerable importance in both marketing academia and practice. Although most research has focussed on the positive attitudes and behaviours that consumers have toward brands, there is a growing interest in anti-consumption. This thesis contributes to anti-consumption research by exploring the phenomenon of brand avoidance.

Earlier studies investigating the avoidance of brands have been one-dimensional, failing to account for the wide range of reasons underlying brand avoidance. Therefore, this thesis addresses the limitations of existing models by providing an integrative and comprehensive approach to understanding brand avoidance.

As an anti-consumption phenomenon, brand avoidance concerns the negative interaction between consumers, as social actors, and brands, as meaningful objects, within a social and historical context. Therefore, this thesis adopts an interpretive approach, a social constructionist epistemology, and historical realist ontology. Since research in the immediate area of brand avoidance is limited, this thesis employs a grounded theory methodology to analyse, code, and generate theory from the qualitative data gathered through 23 in-depth interviews.

Four main types of brand avoidance (experiential, identity, deficit-value, and moral) and the circumstances in which brand avoidance may be restricted or alleviated (avoidance antidotes) emerge from the data. Existing literatures are used to further inform these findings and an original negative brand promises framework is developed to help increase understanding of the brand avoidance phenomenon. The main components of this research are then integrated into an emergent theoretical model of brand avoidance. This model offers a synopsis of how the various brand avoidance constructs may relate to one another and to other pertinent branding concepts within a consumption system. Combined, the findings of this thesis provide a comprehensive appreciation of why consumers avoid certain brands in addition to potential insights that may be used in the management of brand avoidance. Overall, this thesis contributes knowledge to the growing field of anti-consumption research by providing an innovative overview and an integrative understanding of an under-explored domain, brand avoidance.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Definition of Brand	2
1.2 Definition of Avoidance	5
1.3 Problem Identification and Thesis Objectives	8
1.4 Academic and Practical Justification	11
1.5 Contributions	14
1.6 Structure of Thesis	15
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHOD	18
2.1 Ontology	18
2.2 Epistemology	19
2.3 Theoretical Perspective	20
2.3.1 Interpretive approaches: Symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics	21
2.3.1.1 <i>Symbolic Interactionism</i>	22
2.3.1.2 <i>Hermeneutics</i>	23
2.4 Methodology: Grounded Theory	25
2.4.1 Induction versus deduction	26
2.4.2 Role of the methodology and the researcher	28
2.4.3. Sources of data and existing literature	28
2.4.4 Different perspectives in grounded theory	30
2.4.4.1 <i>Glaser versus Strauss</i>	31
2.4.4.2 <i>Constructivist versus objectivist grounded theory</i>	32
2.4.5 Core principles of grounded theory	34

2.4.5.1 Emergence	34
2.4.5.2 Theoretical sensitivity	35
2.4.5.3 Theoretical sampling	35
2.4.5.4 Constant comparison	35
2.4.5.5 Memo writing	37
2.5 Summary of Research Strategy	37
2.6 Method and Procedures	39
2.6.1 Recruiting the participants	40
2.6.1.1 Sensitisation interviews	41
2.6.1.2 Main group of informants	43
2.6.2 In-depth interviews	46
2.6.2.1 Interviewing style and rapport	48
2.6.2.2 Interview process	49
2.6.2.3 Negative case analysis	51
2.6.2.4 Closing the interview	53
2.6.3 Data management and analysis	54
2.6.3.1 Coding	55
2.6.3.2 The iterative process	58
2.6.3.3 Memos and existing literature	60
2.6.4 The core category of brand avoidance	61
2.6.5 Assessing quality	63
2.6.5.1 Evaluation of research quality	63
2.6.5.2 Evaluation of research trustworthiness	70
2.6.5.3 The use of judges	73
2.7 Summary of Methods and Procedure	75
CHAPTER THREE: THE REASONS FOR BRAND AVOIDANCE	77
3.1 Experiential Avoidance: Undelivered Promises	79
3.1.1 Main theme: Unmet expectations	80
3.1.1.1 Sub theme: Poor performance	86
3.1.1.2 Sub theme: Hassle factor	91
3.1.1.3 Sub theme: Store environment	94
3.1.2 Summary of experiential avoidance	96
3.2 Identity Avoidance: Unappealing Promises	97
3.2.1 Main theme: Undesired self	100
3.2.1.1 Sub theme: Negative reference group	103
3.2.1.2 Sub theme: Inauthenticity	106

3.2.1.3 Sub theme: <i>Deindividuation</i>	110
3.2.2 Summary of identity avoidance	113
3.3 Deficit-value Avoidance: Inadequate Promises	114
3.3.1 Main theme: Unacceptable trade-off	115
3.3.1.1 Sub theme: <i>Unfamiliarity</i>	121
3.3.1.2 Sub theme: <i>Aesthetic insufficiency</i>	123
3.3.1.3 Sub theme: <i>Food favouritism</i>	126
3.3.2 Summary of deficit-value avoidance	129
3.4 Moral Avoidance: Detrimental Promises	130
3.4.1 Main theme: Country effects	137
3.4.1.1 Sub theme: <i>Animosity</i>	139
3.4.1.2 Sub theme: <i>Financial patriotism</i>	142
3.4.2 Main theme: Anti-hegemony	147
3.4.2.1 Sub theme: <i>Monopoly resistance</i>	152
3.4.2.2 Sub theme: <i>Impersonalisation</i>	160
3.4.2.3 Sub theme: <i>Corporate irresponsibility</i>	163
3.4.3 Summary of moral avoidance	168
3.5 Summary of Chapter Three: The Reasons for Brand Avoidance	170
CHAPTER FOUR: MANAGING BRAND AVOIDANCE	172
4.1 Avoidance Antidotes	175
4.1.1 Main theme: Transforming promises	176
4.1.1.1 Sub theme: <i>Genuine adaptation</i>	177
4.1.2 Main theme: Diversifying promises	179
4.1.2.1 Sub theme: <i>Sub-branding</i>	179
4.1.3 Main theme: Enhancing promises	182
4.1.3.1 Sub theme: <i>Value augmentation</i>	183
4.1.3.2 Sub theme: <i>Image adaptation</i>	187
4.1.3.3 Sub theme: <i>Network formation</i>	190
4.1.3.4 Sub theme: <i>Positive word of mouth (WOM)</i>	194
4.1.4 Main theme: Restoring promises	198
4.1.4.1 Sub theme: <i>Sampling solution</i>	198
4.1.5 Main theme: Irreconcilable promises	202
4.1.5.1 Sub theme: <i>Incurable avoidance</i>	202
4.1.6 Summary of avoidance antidotes	205
4.2 Summary of Chapter Four: Managing Brand Avoidance ...	207

CHAPTER FIVE: AN EMERGENT THEORY OF BRAND AVOIDANCE	208
5.1 The Brand as an Incompatible Promise	212
5.2 Increased Attractiveness of Competing Promises	215
5.3 Negative Brand Equity	216
5.4 Insights into Branding	218
5.5 Summary of Chapter Five: The Emergent Theory of Brand Avoidance	221
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDING REMARKS	224
6.1 Contributions	224
6.2 Implications	227
6.3 Limitations	230
6.4 Future Research	234
6.5 Conclusion	239
REFERENCES	242

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Participant details	45
Table 2	Interview guide and probes	51
Table 3	Probes used to elicit negative case data	53
Table 4	End-of-interview procedure	54
Table 5	General grounded theory criteria	64
Table 6	Grounded theory criteria for assessing the research process	64
Table 7	Grounded theory criteria for assessing the empirical grounding of a study	65-66
Table 8	Arnold and Fisher's criteria for evaluating the quality of hermeneutical research	67
Table 9	McCracken's criteria for evaluating the quality of explanations derived from qualitative data	68
Table 10	Golden-Biddle and Locke's criteria for assessing the convincingness of an interpretation	69
Table 11	Spiggle's criteria for evaluating the quality of interpretive research	70
Table 12	Criteria for evaluating trustworthiness	72
Table 13	The four types of brand avoidance	78
Table 14	Negative consumption experiences	85
Table 15	Restricting and alleviating brand avoidance	175
Table 16	The degree of organisational control and the likelihood of success for avoidance antidotes	176

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	The role of theory and evidence in deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches to theory testing and building	27
Figure 2	Overview of the philosophical positioning of this thesis (as indicated by the shaded area)	38
Figure 3	Emergent theoretical model of brand avoidance	211

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Brand Definitions	263
Appendix 2- Functional versus Symbolic Associations	264
Appendix 3- Ethics Approval	266
Appendix 4- Advertisement for Participants	267
Appendix 5- Interview Participant Information Sheet	268
Appendix 6- Demographic Questionnaire	269
Appendix 7- Experiential Avoidance	270
Appendix 8- Identity Avoidance	270
Appendix 9- Deficit-value Avoidance	270
Appendix 10- Moral Avoidance	271
Appendix 11- Avoidance Antidotes	272