You’ve Got a Friend in Me: Including the Brand in the Self through Brand Relationships

by

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
in
Marketing and Consumer Studies

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

YOU’VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME: INCLUING THE BRAND IN THE SELF THROUGH BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

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Brand relationship literature assumes that consumers draw little distinction between the relationships consumers have with brands and those they have with people. However, are brand relationships and human relationships really so similar? This research builds on the application of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) to brand relationship theory by revealing an indirect effect and a boundary condition to explain how and when brand relationships influence the pattern of resource allocation strategies that reflect a cognitive merging of “self” and “brand” thereby demonstrating a departure from the resource allocation strategies of interpersonal relationships (Aron et al., 1991).
Dedication

To my family: Mom, Dad, Joseph, and Staesha.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my advisor, Dr. Tanya Mark, for allowing me to develop and pursue my research interests. You’ve been my biggest fan and devil’s advocate throughout this process. I truly appreciate the time spent working on this project with you.

Thank you to Dr. Theodore Noseworthy for being so generous with your time and for your thoughtful insight. Since joining my advisory committee, you’ve been an invaluable mentor. The dedication you’ve demonstrated in helping me to achieve my goals is inspiring.

Thank you to the Marketing and Consumer Studies faculty and administrative staff for your encouragement.

Thank you to the members of the NOESIS Lab for your constructive feedback and thoughtful comments. I am honored to be included as a member of this bright and creative group.

Thank you to my family, Mom and Dad, Joe, and Staesha for your love and support.

Finally, thanks to my friends who keep me smiling.
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Chapter 1.0 Introduction

Relationship partners such as best friends, husbands and wives, and boyfriends and girlfriends provide us with various important mechanisms for development and personal growth, such as a sense of belonging, social support, information resources, self esteem, and construction of identity. Close relationships are created when both members of the dyadic partnership bring these mechanisms into the relationship for the other to acquire and utilize. Therefore, we are led to others who help us to grow and fulfill our goals, and we help the other in return. However, does this reciprocal exchange between interpersonal relationship partners occur in relationships with brands? Susan Fournier would argue, yes, it certainly does: “[f]or the brand to serve as a legitimate relationship partner, it must surpass the personification qualification and actually behave as an active, contributing member of the dyad” (Fournier, 1998, pp. 3).

Consumer behaviour literature has established that interpersonal relationships are not the only type of dyadic relationships in which humans choose to engage. For instance, the connection between humans and brands has been examined as an extension of sense of self (Belk, 1988), self-brand connections (Kleine et al., 1995; Escalas & Bettman, 2003), brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005; Park et al., 2010), brand love (Carrol & Ahuvia, 2006), and even the personification of brands (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). Also, people enter many different types of relationships with brands just as they do with other human beings in order to achieve different personal goals such as self expression goals (Fournier, 1998), growth and personal development goals (Ji, 2002), and instrumental goals (Zayer & Neier, 2011). Most consumers clearly feel close to the brands they know and use.
However, the assumption that brand relationships are like interpersonal relationships has been contended as being fundamentally flawed. Since the word “relationship” is primarily understood in the context of close interpersonal interactions, it may not be suitable to apply this concept to inanimate objects, or things that only behave on behalf of a manager (Price & Arnould, 1999; Bengtsson, 2003). Additionally, Bengtsson (2003) suggests that the brand relationship metaphor is incompatible with the interpersonal relationship metaphor as brand relationships lack a sense of reciprocity, and this absence may be a basis for a reformation of the brand relationship construct (Bengtsson, 2003). This disagreement facilitates the debate that brand relationships may not behave in ways that exactly emulate interpersonal relationships, particularly with regards to goals involving the exchange of resources and a cognitive merging of self and other.

The answer however is perhaps not so clear-cut one way or the other. Brands may be transactional agents (Bengtsson, 2003; Keller, 2007); however, humans still form meaningful relationships with the brands they know and use (Fournier, 1998, Ji, 2002, Zayer & Neier, 2011; Fournier & Alvarez, 2012). Therefore, a cognitive merging due to a perceived exchange of resources should still occur, however not in the same way these patterns arise in interpersonal relationships.

The cognitive merging of brand and self is best described as an “inclusion of the brand in the self” (IBS), a construct coined by Reimann and Aron (2009). IBS is the brand relationship equivalent of “inclusion of other in the self” (IOS) which is a goal traditionally associated with self expansion in interpersonal relationships. Self expansion goals (Aron et al., 1996) are a type of higher order goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999) which refer to
when individuals seek to self expand, or achieve self efficacy to perform tasks and accomplish lower order goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999).

In the same vein as other psychological theories of motivation that stress the innate importance of close interpersonal relationships (Maslow, 1943; Reiss, 2000), the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) suggests that people enter and maintain interpersonal relationships in order to facilitate the achievement of goals through the exchange of resources. Since self expansion/IOS is an innate personal goal associated with close interpersonal relationships (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 1991), the application of this paradigm to brand relationships provides an opportunity to determine whether brand relationships mimic or differ from interpersonal relationships regarding resource allocation strategies that demonstrate IOS/IBS.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to investigate the application of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) to a brand relationship context. Three questions motivate this research: 1) Do brand relationships mimic interpersonal relationships regarding resource allocation strategies that demonstrate inclusion of other? 2) Which brand relationships best activate the goal to include the brand in the self? 3) What is the mechanism and boundary condition underlying the connection between brand relationships and resource allocation strategies that demonstrate IBS?

In order to address these questions, this research focuses on two main objectives: 1) to establish the extent to which different types of brand relationships influence goal-directed IBS allocation strategies and 2) to determine the specific underlying mechanism of this effect by identifying a mediator, and then validate the indirect effect by exposing a boundary condition.
Chapter 2.0 Literature Review

Fournier’s (1998) research was the first to present a framework for the relationships consumers form with the brands they know and use. This seminal study created a conceptual foundation to encourage the growth of brand relationship theory by demonstrating that brands can be considered active relationship partners with which humans form bonds. From three in-depth interviews, seven prominent dimensions were identified as classifying different types of brand relationships. From these dimensions, a typology of fifteen consumer-brand relationships of varying strengths and development characteristics was generated. The typology uses interpersonal relationship metaphors to classify relationships with brands. This is significant as it demonstrates that people anthropomorphize their brands as being part of an interactive, dyadic partnership which assists in serving motivations and goals in daily life.

References to goals are common in brand relationship literature. Particularly, the ability to achieve goals is frequently mentioned in Fournier (1998). For example, Fournier (1998) states, “consumer brand relationships are more a matter of perceived goal compatibility than congruence between discreet product attributes and personality trait images” (pp. 366). The relationships one forms with brands will therefore be more compatible with goals that are important for the individuals to fulfill rather than superficial product attributes or similarities between a consumer’s personality and a brand’s personality. The results of the interviews conducted by Fournier (1998) reveal that brands enhance an individual’s sense of self concept and provide a way to create and express identity. This fulfills an innate psychological desire to differentiate oneself and express individuality (Reiss, 2000). Therefore, Fournier’s results suggest that the relationships people form with brands are compatible with their goals to express their identity (Fournier, 1998).
Two qualitative studies corroborate and expand Fournier’s (1998) work by using different sample populations, children and male shoppers respectively, to extend the context of consumer-brand relationships and uncover other compatibles motivations. First, Ji (2002) created a brand relationship typology that focuses on the relationships that children form with brands. Ten consumer-brand relationships were produced from the responses of in-depth interviews with three children between the ages of 7 -13. Similar to Fournier (1998), it was concluded that brand relationships serve functions in the daily lives of children: brands are tools “through which children grow up, gain competence, pursue the pleasures of life, fulfill dreams, and become connected with others” (Ji, 2002, pp. 383). Thus, the motivational aspects of consumer-brand relationships encompass a wide scope of identity creation and self expression.

Second, Zayer and Neier (2011) developed a brand relationship topology focusing on heterosexual male shoppers. Through qualitative interviews and several accompanied shopping trips, researchers concluded that this sample of male consumers confirmed thirteen of Fournier’s original fifteen relationships metaphors and demonstrated the emergence of three new types of relationships with brands. These new relationships corroborate the finding that particular relationships are specifically associated with particular goals. For example, men accomplish instrumental goals with the business partner brand relationships they develop (Zayer & Neier, 2011).

Fournier (1998), Ji (2002), and Zayer and Neier (2011) conclude that brand relationships are compatible with important conscious and unconscious goals and motivations that individuals seek to accomplish, particularly those goals regarding identity creation and self expression. This is important because self expansion/IOS is an innate motivation to every individual (Aron & Aron, 1986). If interpersonal relationships facilitate self expansion/IOS goals and behaviours,
and we accept the assumption that brand relationships are like interpersonal relationships than comparable brand relationships should facilitate self expansion/IOS goals and behaviours in a similar way.

2.1 Increasing Self Efficacy through Interpersonal Relationships

Central to the discussion of self expansion is the concept of self efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Perceived self efficacy is “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, pp. 2). Self efficacy plays an important role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are attempted. The development of self efficacy begins in childhood and evolves over an individual’s lifetime as new skills, knowledge, and experiences are acquired (Bandura, 1995). People with strong self efficacy view difficult problems as undertakings to be mastered, develop a strong sense of commitment to their interests and activities, and recover quickly from setbacks. In contrast, people with low self efficacy avoid challenging tasks, focus on negative outcomes and personal failings, and lose confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1995). Therefore, self efficacy is important for individual well-being and growth. Bandura (1995, 1977) discusses four main sources of self efficacy: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal; however, these are not the only identified sources of self efficacy.

2.2 The Self Expansion Model

Aron and Aron (1986) suggest an additional source of self efficacy through the acquisition and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Aron and Aron’s (1986) model suggests that humans possess an innate motivation to form close relationships that goes beyond seeking to fulfill basic survival requirements, such as reproduction or safety, or even a sense of
belongingness (Maslow, 1943). The Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) is a model of motivation and cognition in the interpersonal relationship literature that amalgamates Western psychological research on motivation and cognition and Eastern psychological views of self development and interpersonal love. The Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) includes two main principles. The first main principle is a general motivation to expand the self. Self expansion refers to a “fundamental human motivation... to enhance potential self efficacy [which is the ability to accomplish desired goals by attaining] greater material, social, and informational resources” (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron & Aron, 1996). Self expansion has been described as being a similar construct to competence or self improvement (Aron, et al., 2008). While some people may be consciously aware of feelings of self expansion, the motivation to self expand is generally an unconscious process. Self expansion is achieved through the formation and maintenance of close relationships.

The second main principle is an inclusion of others in the self. Self expansion due to close relationships is best achieved by including other in the self. The inclusion of other in the self is defined as the degree to which the resources, perspectives, and identities of a close other are experienced as one’s own (Aron et al., 1991). Resources refer to the material, knowledge, and social assets that facilitate the achievement of goals. Perspective refers to the extent to which one experiences the world from the partner’s point of view. Identity refers to the characteristics, memories, and other features that distinguish a person from another (Aron et al., 1991).

Extant literature investigating cognition in close relationships reflects a reduced distinction between the self and the other. In other words, there is a merging of the self and other as the other is treated more and more as the self (Aron et al., 1991). This idea has been expressed by a collection of theorists and researchers in psychology and philosophy. Buber’s (1937)
discussion centers around the “I- Thou” relationship; Merleau- Ponty (1945) describes a close relationship as “double being”; Jung (1959) explains that relationship partners provide individuals with an unavailable aspect of self thereby allowing individuals to make the self whole; Bakan (1966) discusses the individual orientation of “communion” which constitutes the merging of a person into larger organisms, social relationships, and connections with others; Levinger and Snoek (1972) use an overlapping self-other Venn diagram to represent cognitive merging of self and other; Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) discuss the “collective” aspects of self; and Ickes et al., (1988) conceptualize dyadic intersubjectivity. These concepts are also consistent with research regarding intimacy, a construct synonymous with closeness (Sternberg, 1986; Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987). These literatures demonstrate a clear precedence for thinking about close relationships as including others in the self.

To empirically test that an inclusion of other in the self through close interpersonal relationships occurs to influence behaviour and information processing, Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson (1991) conducted three experiments. The first experiment tested the extent to which an “other’s” resources are considered one’s own by measuring the amount of figurative money allocated to another when thinking of various relationships (i.e., a friend, an acquaintance, or a stranger). A follow up study was also completed using real money. As predicted, the difference between self and other allocations were smallest when the other was a friend, intermediate when the other was an acquaintance, and greatest when the other was a stranger. The researchers concluded that a small difference in the amount of money allocated to the self and to another when the other represented a close relationship demonstrated a cognitive merging of self and other and an inclusion of other in the self.
The second experiment Aron et al., (1991) conducted tested the extent to which an individual includes an other’s perspective into the self. Previous research suggests that actor-observer asymmetry, or the difference in the way people explain their own behaviour versus another’s behaviour, is less in a close interpersonal relationship than in a distant relationship. A replication of a previous study that fit this paradigm (Lord, 1980; Lord, 1987) provided evidence that participants treat someone with whom they are in a close relationship (mother) as if they are the “self” more than a familiar stranger. The researchers concluded that this small difference in actor-observer asymmetry when the other was representative of a close relationship demonstrated an inclusion of other in the self.

The third experiment conducted by Aron et al., (1991) tested the extent to which characteristics of another are included as one’s own when in a close relationship. It was predicted that due to an overlap of cognitive structures, there would be slower reaction times for trait words that were different between the self and a close other (spouse) than for a non-close other (entertainment personality). Results from this study support the prediction that the self is more cognitively integrated with a spouse than with a non-close other. The researchers concluded that this difference in response times demonstrated an inclusion of other in the self.

Overall, these three studies provide evidence for the inclusion of other in the self using a variety of close relationships (e.g., friend, mother, and spouse). It demonstrates that people are more likely to include others in the self if they have a close relationship with that person. This is important because it provides evidence that close relationships influence particular patterns of behaviour which reflect how close others are cognitively construed. Moreover, if close interpersonal partners are cognitively construed in a way such that the self merges with the other, then brands may be construed in the same way.
Theoretically, the three aforementioned components (resources, perspectives, and characteristics) constitute the ‘inclusion of other in the self’ principle. However, one component is predominantly favoured for self expansion over the others. Among the “inclusion of other in the self” components, the resource component is particularly significant because it refers to the perception that one has access to the resources of another and that these resources are considered to be one’s own. For example, a wife will perceive her husband’s bank account from which she can draw funds as a source of her own material resources; or, a boyfriend might expand his social resources by including his girlfriend’s friends into his social circle; or, an individual may feel more competent knowing that a partner can provide them with knowledge they require, for example, “I can complete [a task] because my partner will tell me how” (Reimann & Aron, 2009, pp. 68). A consequence of perceiving an “other’s” resources as one’s own is that the costs and rewards that an “other” experiences are also experience by the self as well. Therefore, an individual is likely to invest their own resources so as to maximize the other’s resources. This reciprocal exchange of resources operates to maintain the relationship and improve one’s sense of self efficacy.

The other two components, inclusion of the other’s perspectives and inclusion of the other’s identity into the self, are inherently connected to the inclusion of the other’s resources (Aron et al., 2005). For example, if an individual is concerned about their partner’s outcomes, they will evaluate the world from their partner’s perspective to get a better understanding as to how they can help. Similarly, if events in a partner’s life unfold in a way that impacts the partner’s material, social, or knowledge resources, such as getting fired from work or the loss of a family member, these events not only affect the partner but also the individual. Therefore, they both share the same experiences and identities for a time. Since inclusion of the other’s resources
essentially encompasses the other two components, it prevails as the fundamental aspect of inclusion of other in the self.

2.3 Relationship Partners and Unconscious Goal Pursuit

Self regulation research suggests that goals are mentally represented the same way as constructs, schemas, stereotypes, attitudes, and traits (Bargh 1990; Shah & Kruglanski 2003). As a result, they can be activated by features of the environment in which they are pursued (Bargh 1990; Shah & Kruglanski 2000). The likelihood of this occurring depends on the extent to which a goal representation is consistently and repeatedly activated in a particular context. The automatic model of automatic responses to the environment (Bargh, 1990, p. 101) provides three basic routes by which environmental features may activate goals automatically. One of the paths suggests that chronically accessible goals become activated automatically when the relevant environmental information is present. Once activated, a set of procedures to achieve the goal is initiated which subsequently influences perceptions and behaviours. Therefore, goals become activated without conscious awareness (Bargh et al., 2001) and guide behaviour to produce the same end state as if the goal was pursued consciously. Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, and Trotschel (2001) reconcile this conclusion with five experiments which demonstrate that behavioural goals can be activated without conscious awareness and function in ways that are equivalent to conscious goals, such as influencing goal-directed behaviour, increasing in strength until performed, persisting at tasks despite obstacles, and resuming tasks despite favourable alternatives. Extensions of Bargh et al., (2001)’s research focus on whether mental representations of places, people, and possessions act as sources of goal activation. In fact, extant
research in social and personality psychology has made headway in this endeavour investigating the effect relationship partners have on the activation and pursuit of unconscious goals.

Relationship partners have been identified as stimuli of unconscious goal pursuits (Shah, 2003; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Chartrand, Dalton, & Fitzsimons, 2007). Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003) conducted a set of four experiments that examine how an individual’s interpersonal goals become activated when primed with a relationship partner subsequently influencing perceptions and behaviours. They hypothesized that goals are basic components of the mental representation of relationship partners; therefore, certain goals will be activated whenever the relational representation is present. Qualitative data was collected to determine the content and associations of relationship goals of different relationship types, such as mother, friend, or co-worker.

Fitzsimons and Bargh’s (2003) first experiment was a field experiment designed to determine the willingness to help a stranger after being primed with a mental representation of a friend vs. a co-worker. People in a large international airport were approached to participate, and they filled out a questionnaire designed to prime the mental representation of a friend or a co-worker. After answering the questions, participants were asked to rate their hypothetical and actual willingness to participate in another longer study. The researchers predicted that since willingness to help is an interpersonal goal associated with a friend but not a co-worker, people in the friend condition would be more likely to help than people in the co-worker condition. The results suggest this effect: participants in the friend condition were significantly more willing to help the experimenter (stranger) than those in the co-worker condition. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that activating relationship representations can influence goal-directed behaviour. All of Fitzsimons and Bargh (2003)’s experiments included mood measures
to address the potential mood effect associated with priming relational representations. In all of their experiments, mood was found to have no significant influence on the effects.

The second experiment demonstrated that goal accessibility results from activating different relationship representations (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). It was predicted that participants would rate a target as having more motivation to succeed at school when “mother” is primed vs. “friend” or a control prime since the goal to succeed, or to make mom proud, is part of the representation of one’s mother and less so of one’s friend. To investigate this, participants read a vignette about a target character and answered questions regarding the extent to which they believed the target was motivated to succeed. In the mother and friend priming conditions, the vignette was preceded by a relationship questionnaire regarding either the participants’ mother or friend. As predicted, those in the “mother” condition rated the target as being more motivated than those in the control and friend condition. Therefore, a relational representation cue appears to activate a goal construct, which is a feature of the representation.

Experiment three tested the difference in interpersonal relationship goals holding the type of relationship constant (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). Participants who indicated an interpersonal goal to understand the behaviour of their friend were separated into two groups. In a friend priming condition, they received a subliminal prime of their friend’s name; whereas, in control condition, they received a subliminal prime of a name of someone who was not their friend. Participants then completed an attribution task designed to measure the extent to which people are motivated to make situational attributions for a target character’s behaviour. Results indicate that people in the friend condition made more situational attributions for positive and negative behaviours than those in the control condition. However, people in the friend condition who did not report having a goal to understand their friend’s behaviour also made significantly more
situational attributions than those in the control condition. The fourth experiment teases this finding apart by testing the assumption that the main effects of the relationship prime demonstrated by the previous experiments are driven by a subset of participants within the relationship prime condition who possess the interpersonal goal in question.

Experiment four replicated the third study using a mother-child relationship rather than a friend relationship and an interpersonal goal to make mom proud (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003). Participants were classified into two groups regarding whether they reported a goal to make their mother proud or not, and they were assigned to either a mother priming condition or control condition. After a supraliminal priming activity, participants completed a verbal skills task where they had to generate as many words as they could from a string of letters. The results demonstrate that participants in the mother primed condition performed better at the verbal task than those in the control condition. This effect was moderated by the predicted goal group; thus, those who possessed the goal to make their mother proud and who were primed with the mental representation of their mother performed better than those in any other condition. Importantly, the prime did not influence those who did not possess the goal to perform better. Mood did not have any effect on the results and participants reported no awareness of a connection between the tasks or that the first task influenced the second task. Results of a follow-up study corroborated that the previous results cannot be explained by the priming of partners’ standards rather than participants’ goals (Fitzsimons and Bargh, 2003). These results provide further support that when presented with relationship partner representations, interpersonal goals become activated which influence behaviours outside of individual awareness.

Overall, these four experiments provide support that personal goals associated with a relationship partner can become activated by the psychological presence of that relationship
partner which then unconsciously guides individual perceptions and goal-directed behaviours. This is important because relationship partners essentially act as stimuli resulting in goal-directed perceptions and behaviours, thus establishing the precedent to investigate if equivalent brand relationships behave in a similar way. Consumer behaviour research has also confirmed similar effects with brands.

2.4 Brands and Unconscious Goal Pursuit

Most people take a lot of pride in their possessions, particularly in the products and brands they enjoy and show off. Like significant others and relationship partners, brands have been identified as stimuli for goal pursuit (Chartrand et al., 2008). For instance, Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, and Tanner (2008) examine the processes through which unconsciously held thrift and prestige goals influence decisions in a choice task.

In conjunction with Bargh et al., (2001)’s findings, the first three studies demonstrate that primed goals have motivational properties consistent with goal pursuit, referred to as goal priming, but inconsistent with cognitive activation, referred to a trait priming (Chartrand et al., 2008). Finally, study four demonstrates that retail brands can serve as cues to unconsciously activate thrift/prestige goals thereby influencing purchase choices. During a visual acuity task, participants were subliminally primed with a prestige goal (e.g., Tiffany, Nieman Marcus, and Nordstrom) or a thrift goal (e.g., Wal-Mart, Kmart, and Dollar Store). Afterwards, participants indicated their relative preference for a thrift or prestige option for two product categories, a sock option (i.e., Nike socks at $5.25 for one pair or Hanes socks at $6.00 for two pairs) and a microwave option (i.e., 1 cubic foot Haier microwave for $69 or a 1 cubic foot Sharp microwave for $99). As predicted, participants primed with a thrift brand expressed stronger relative
preference for the thrift option than those primed with a prestige brand (Chartrand et al., 2008). Chartrand et al., (2008) concluded that the results could not be explained by participants’ knowledge or suspicion of the study’s objectives as they were unaware of the goal activation and goal-directed nature of their behaviour. This provides support that brands can automatically activate specific goals and that these goals can influence consumer preferences without their awareness or conscious intent.

Overall, the activation of goals via mental representations of significant others and brands are consistent with extant research (Bargh, 1990; Bargh et al., 2001) and suggest that brands, relationship partners, and significant others activate goals that subsequently influence perceptions, choices, and behaviours. This is important because it demonstrates that, independently, both brands and relationship partners are capable of activating unconscious goals resulting in changes in perceptions, choices, and behaviours. Since Fournier (1998), Ji (2002), and Nayer and Zeier (2011) demonstrate that brands are perceived as active, dyadic relationships partners, this provides some leverage to apply the interpersonal paradigm of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) to consumer-brand relationships as a basis for the inclusion other in the self.

2.5 The Self Expansion Model in Brand Relationship Theory

The application of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) into brand relationship theory is a burgeoning area of thought. In a theoretical application of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) to brand relationship theory, Reimann and Aron (2009) offer several propositions regarding the key principles of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) and their significance with regards to brands and consumer behaviour. The first of three propositions
of particular relevance suggests a positive association between brand loyalty and self expansion such that the greater the self expansion that occurs, the greater the brand loyalty (Reimann & Aron, 2009, pp. 74). They posit a positive correlation between resource ownership and brand loyalty, such that the more that a brand’s resources are perceived as one’s own resources, the more loyal one is likely to be towards the brand because the self expansion that occurs in a long-term, close relationship with a brand makes it difficult to terminate that relationship (Reimann & Aron, 2009). Additionally, if one does terminate the relationship with a brand, one loses the resources that the brand provides. Since no one likes to incur losses, this is not a desirable outcome. Additionally, one’s perceived self efficacy also suffers due to this loss of the brand’s resources.

The next two propositions build on the idea of “inclusion of other in the self”; however, in a brand context, “other” refers to a brand, therefore creating the construct, “inclusion of the brand in the self” (Reimann & Aron, 2009, pp. 74). Inclusion of the brand in the self is the degree to which the resources of a brand are experienced as one’s own (Reimann & Aron, 2009). Based on these perceptions of resource ownership and exchange, the consumer will make choices that reflect this merging of brand and self, such as behaving on behalf of the brand (Reimann & Aron, 2009).

Reimann, Castano, Zaichkowsky, and Bechara (2012) follow up on some of the propositions discussed in Reimann and Aron (2009) using a variety of methodologies from psychology and neuropsychology to investigate rapid self expansion in consumer-brand relationships. Three studies examined how consumers relate to brands over time, particularly with regards to rapid self expansion and inclusion of the brand in the self with new and established brand relationships (Reimann et al., 2012).
The first study investigated rapid self expansion and inclusion of the brand in the self with close, neutral, and new brand relationships. Participants were asked to think and write about a brand with which they had recently formed a close relationship (relationship condition) and a brand about which they felt completely neutral (neutral condition). Six months later, they returned to repeat the task. Manipulation checks determined that participants in the relationship condition felt more brand trust, brand love, and brand commitment than those in the neutral condition. Inclusion of the brand in the self (IBS) was measured with an adapted version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale (Aron et al., 1992). The results indicate that participants reported greater inclusion of the brand in the self for established brand relationships than for either neutral brand relationships or recently formed brand relationships. Also, inclusion of the brand in the self was found to be greater over time for close brand relationships than it was for neutral brand relationships. These results reveal a positive connection between consumer-brand relationship strength and inclusion of the brand in the self: when a consumer-brand relationship is weak or neutral, inclusion of the brand in the self is low; however, when a consumer-brand relationship is strong, inclusion of the brand in the self is high.

To further elucidate the results of the first study, study two measured skin conductance while participants viewed brands with which they had an established close relationship, a neutral relationship, and a recently formed relationship (Reimann et al., 2012). Participants were asked to name eight brands with which they held a close relationship for more than six months (established brand relationship), eight brands with which they held a close relationship for one month (recently formed brand relationship), and eight brands with which they had no relationship (neutral brand relationship). Participants were presented with pictorial representations of these brands, with their name and logo, in pseudorandom order for ten seconds.
with a four second gap in between. Skin conductance responses (SCR) demonstrate changes in emotional arousal: a significant main effect of time on SCR was found, such that recently formed brand relationships had greater levels of arousal than established brand relationships (Reimann, et al., 2012). Also, the SCR of neutral brand relationships were significantly smaller than the SCR of recently formed brand relationships but not significantly different from SCR of established close relationships (Reimann et al., 2012). This difference in arousal suggests rapid self expansion from recently formed brand relationships over established and neutral brand relationships.

To investigate the neuropsychological process of inclusion of the brand in the self, study three investigated whether established close brand relationships are associated with increased activity in the insula, an area of the brain associated with urges (Naqvi & Bechara, 2009) and the amalgamation of bodily information into emotional and motivational functions (Mesulam & Mufson, 1982). Participants were asked to name four brands with which they held an established brand relationship and four brands with which they held a neutral brand relationship. Participants completed a brand choice task while inclusion was measured with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

Inside the brain scanner, participants viewed pictorial representations of the brands, with their name and logo, during an anticipation phase. Next, they completed a choice task where they could choose the brand or not by pressing numbers on a response box. The results suggest that there were significant increases in activation levels in the right and left insula when participants anticipated making choices about brands with which they held established brand relationships compared to neutral brand relationships (Reimann et al., 2012). Additional brain activity was also found, such as increased activity in the caudate (transfer of controlled to automatic
behaviours), the parietal lobe (cognitive processing), and occipital lobe (visual process). Also, decreased activity was found in the frontal gryus (executive functions, will-power, and self control). These results suggest that activation of the insula by anticipating the choice of a brand with which one has an established relationship presumably influenced bodily reactions which triggered motivational-emotional processing in the form of cravings for the loved brand (Reimann et al., 2012). Additionally, the increased activation of the caudate, an area of the brain referred to as the impulsive system (Bechara, 2005), and the decreased activation of the prefrontal cortex suggest more habitual and automatic choice responding and reduced self control for an established brand relationship. These results are interesting because they are consistent with neural processes expected in the self expansion and IBS.

Together, these three studies support self-reported and neuropsychological mechanisms involved in self expansion and IBS in brand relationships. This is important because it provides evidence for associations between brand relationships and the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) paradigm. Accordingly, resource allocation strategies that demonstrate inclusion of the brand in the self may prove to be quite similar to resource allocation strategies for interpersonal relationships, but how similar?

Inclusion of the brand in the self is the degree to which a brand’s resources are experienced as one’s own (Reimann & Aron, 2009). Brand resources are the material, social, and knowledge benefits that come from owning and using the brand or in other words, the value that consumers receive from the brand (Reimann & Aron, 2009). Brand resources are distinct from brand personality and brand equity. Brand personality is defined by Aaker (1997) as “the set of characteristics associated with a brand” (pp. 347), and brand equity is the value that a company gets from a product with a recognizable name compared to a generic equivalent (Aaker, 1991;
Keller, 2001; Keller, 2003). While brand resources and brand personality help create brand equity, these three concepts remain discrete.

Keller (2007) explains that brands are marketing tools used to differentiate a company’s products or services from competitors and create value for target consumers. Consistent with Keller (2007), Reimann and Aron (2009) posit that brands offer two types of resources that create value. Firstly, brands offer material resources in the form of their functional utility, or the functional benefits that arise from using the product, for example, the clean, undamaged cloths one receives by doing their laundry with Tide detergent, or the youthful-looking skin one maintains by using L’Oreal Revitalift skincare products. These material resources are included in the self by perceiving them as one’s own resources.

Secondly, brands offer social resources in the form of the brand’s ability to allow an individual to express one’s identity or self concept as well as signalling social status to others. This value created by a brand’s social resources provides the individual with social utility. Inclusion of the brand in the self taps into the social value created by brands as it is the degree to which the social resources of a brand are experienced as one’s own. Brands have that ability to communicate a message about the user to others. Therefore, brands offer social resources, or social utility, in the form of status that one receives from having people know that one owns the brand. For example, an individual is viewed as being rich, powerful, and successful from people both inside and outside their social circle after being seen wearing a Rolex watch or carrying a Gucci handbag. Additionally, brands have the ability to allow individuals to express and validate their identity and construct their self-concept (Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1988; Aaker, 1997 Escalas & Bettman, 2003, Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Berger & Heath, 2007). For example, owning a Mac laptop might indicate that the owner is modern and creative, or owning a
Blackberry Smartphone signals that the owner is professional and resilient. These social resources are included in the self when they are perceived as one’s own resources. Through the accumulation of a brand’s resources, material and social, one increases their self efficacy and achieves self expansion.

The present research takes extant research (Remainn & Aron, 2009; Remainn, et al., 2012) one step further by causally investigating whether brand relationships influence self-expansion/IOS resource allocate strategies like interpersonal relationships (Aron et al., 1991). If they are the same, patterns should reflect those found by Aron et al., (1991). If not, the utility acquired in the brand relationship may play an important underlying role in the exchange of resources and cognitive inclusion.

2.6 Relationship Metaphors and Relationship Norms

Some relationships may be better at fulfilling particular goals than others (Fournier, 1998; Ji, 2002; Zayer & Neier, 2010). For example, a committed partnership brand relationship, characterized by intimacy, love, trust, and a desire to stay together despite adverse circumstances, may be more compatible with an attachment goal than a marriage of convenience brand relationship characterized by commitment based on environmental influence and expediency rather than deliberate choice. This opens the discussion as to which brand relationships and relationship metaphors may be most effective at facilitating a self expansion/IOS goal. A solution may reside in extant literature regarding interpersonal relationship norms (Clark & Mills, 1993).

In support of the assumption that brand relationships are like interpersonal relationships, it has been found that interpersonal relationship norms guide consumers’ interactions with brands.
after the relationship norm has been violated (Aggarwal, 2004), influence information processing strategies when evaluating a brand (Aggarwal & Law, 2005), and affect consumers’ aversion to loss (Aggarwal & Zhang, 2006). Relationship norms are expected patterns of beliefs and behaviours within a relationship (Clark & Mills, 1993). They are important because they help guide the expectations and behaviours of particular relationship partners. Clark and Mills (1993) make a simple distinction between two relationship norms based predominantly on rules associated with giving and receiving benefits. These norms are exchange relationship norms and communal relationship norms. A communal relationship norm emphasizes that “the receipt of a benefit does not change the recipient’s obligation to respond to the other’s needs” (Clark & Mills, 1993, pp. 684). In other words, the receiver feels no obligation or responsibility to return a comparable benefit to the giver. Similarly, the giver has no expectation of receipt. Given these prerequisites, strong communal relationships predominantly exist among family members, romantic partners, and close friends (Clark & Mills, 1993).

The exchange relationship norm, conversely, is based on a norm of reciprocity or quid pro quo (Latin for “this for that”), such that “benefits are given with the expectation of receiving a comparable benefit in return or as repayment for a benefit previously given” (Clark & Mills, 1993, pp. 684). In other words, the giver provides the receiver with benefits with the expectation that they will receive a comparable benefit in return, and in a timely fashion. Similarly, the receiver feels an expectation to return the benefit, either immediately or at a later date. It is important to note however that this understanding between giver and receiver does not mean that exchange relationships are casual in nature (Clark & Mills, 1993). Some exchange relationships may extend for long periods of time and become very important to the individuals involved, for example, a relationship between business partners.
Evidence of these norms is present in the definitions and conceptualizations of specific brand relationships since they discuss positive rewards gained from the relationship with the brand as well as an exchange of benefits (Fournier, 1998; Zayer & Neier, 2011). Best friendships are defined as “a voluntary union based on [the] reciprocity principle, the endurance of which is ensured through continued provision of positive rewards. [It is] characterized by revelation of true self, honesty, and intimacy, [and] congruity in partner images and personal interests [are] common” (Fournier, 1998, pp. 362). Conversely, business partners are defined as “voluntary relationships devoid of intimacy, largely instrumental in nature, [and] sustained solely to obtain positive rewards” (Zayer & Neier, 2011, pp. 96). These two types of brand relationships share an important characteristic: the subsistence of both a best friend and business partner relationship requires the receipt of positive rewards or benefits. Despite this important similarity, these two brand relationships also differ dramatically regarding another significant aspect. Based on the aforementioned definitions, these two brand relationships predominantly differ in levels of intimacy.

Intimacy refers to “feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness... that are derived from emotional investment in the relationship” (Sternberg, 1986, pp. 119). Intimacy has been found to be an important facet of interpersonal love (Sternberg, 1986) and brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998). Also, the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale (Aron et al. 1992) correlates positively with Sternberg’s (1988) intimacy scale (Aron et al., 1992). Therefore, the feelings of intimacy that differ among these two types of brand relationship should affect whether the brand is included in the self, demonstrated by different goal-directed resource allocation strategies (as in Aron et al., 1991). A pilot study will investigate this relationship.
Given the nature of the research questions and objectives, three hypotheses and three studies will be addressed one at a time (See the Appendices for the ethics certificate to perform research involving human participants). The first of three hypotheses focuses on directly applying the best friend and business partner brand relationship metaphors to the interpersonal paradigm of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 1991).
Chapter 3.0 Pilot Study

3.1 Hypothesis

When a brand’s material and social resources are experienced as one’s own, benefits that a brand acquires are considered benefits also gained by the self and losses inflicted on the brand are considered losses also inflicted on the self (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Reimann & Aron, 2009). Therefore, close brand relationships, like a best friend brand relationship, should influence decisions that demonstrate a cognitive merging of the self and the brand due to overlapping “brand” and “self” cognitive structures. Decisions that demonstrate this cognitive merging of brand and self, or an inclusion of brand in the self, can be measured as the difference in money allocations made to the self and to the brand, henceforth to be discussed as self-brand distinction.

As previously mentioned, Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson (1991) investigated the resource component of inclusion of other in the self by testing the extent to which an “other’s” resources are considered one’s own. To do this, they used an economic game called a decomposed game (Liebrand, 1982) to measure figurative money allocations made to the self (self allocations) and allocations made to an other (other allocations). The difference in the figurative amount of money resources allocated to the self and to the “other” results in a value called the self-other distinction (Self minus Other money allocations). They found that this self-other distinction was smallest when subjects perceived the other to be a best friend, intermediate when the other was an acquaintance, and greatest when the other was a stranger. Therefore, when the other was a best friend, participants on average allocated more money to the other than to the self; whereas when the other was an acquaintance or a stranger, participants on average allocated...
more money to the self than the other. These results did not significantly change when participants believed the “other” would know the amount of their allocations or not. Aron et al., (1991) concluded that the large self-other distinction indicated low inclusion of the other in the self while a small self-other distinction indicated a high inclusion of the other in the self. Additionally, these results replicated when real money was allocated.

Due to the assumption that consumers draw little distinction between brand relationships and interpersonal relationships, similar findings should result when someone is primed with a comparable relationship with a brand. If brand relationships mimic interpersonal relationships with regards to resource allocation strategies that demonstrate IOS/IBS, there should be a main effect of brand relationship type such that, there will be more money allocated to the brand than to the self (resulting in a low self-brand distinction and greater inclusion of the brand in the self) when individuals are primed with a best friend brand relationship; whereas, there will be more money allocated to the self then to the brand (resulting in a high self-brand distinction and lower inclusion of the brand in the self) when individuals are primed with a business partner brand relationship.

Formally, hypothesis one:

Brand relationship resource allocation strategies that demonstrate a cognitive merging of self and brand will mimic interpersonal relationship resource allocation strategies, such that a best friend brand relationship prime will cause individuals to allocate more money to the brand than to the self; whereas, a business partner relationship prime will cause individuals to allocate more money to the self then to the brand.
3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Participants and Design

The pilot study tests hypothesis one and investigates if brand relationships mimic the resource allocate strategies of interpersonal relationships that demonstrate a cognitive merging of brand and self. Participants were recruited through the Marketing 1000, 1000DE, 2600, and 4750 D2L websites at the University of Guelph. A total of 50 undergraduate marketing students participated in the pilot study for partial fulfillment of course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (Brand relationship type: Best friend vs. Business partner).

Two participants were very quick to complete the component measuring the dependent variable. This suggests that they did not respond to the questions with attention or accuracy; therefore, they were immediately removed from the dataset. In order to eliminate some of the noise caused by outliers around the independent variable, brand relationship type, participants
whose responses fell outside two standard deviations above and below the mean of the IBS manipulation check were removed. Therefore, a final dataset of 47 participants (36 male, 11 female, mean age= 19), was included in analysis.

Table 1: Sample Size, Means, and Standard Deviations for Each Cell in Pilot Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Pilot</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (Brand Closeness)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (Brand Closeness)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
<td>Business Partner</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Responders removed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±2 Std. Deviations from the Mean of IBS removed (Final)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2 Stimuli

Since important self-brand connections and brand relationships are usually formed with relevant products (Fournier, 1998; Berger & Heath, 2010), a pre-test was conducted in order to determine which product categories would be most appropriate for use the in brand relationship manipulations for each study. Thirty-six university students were asked to select three product categories they deemed to be most important to them from an original list of ten, including jeans, cellular phone, sunglasses, watch, backpack/purse, deodorant/perfume, headphones, laptop, coffee, and camera. These ten product categories were selected to be included in the pre-test based on the criteria that they are primarily symbolic in terms of the resources they provide. Additionally, most of the product categories have been previously used as stimuli in extant research regarding symbolic consumption (Chervev, 2011), identity signalling (Berger & Heath, 2007), and conspicuous consumption (Richins, 1994; Berger & Ward, 2010). Participants
indicated their first choice among the product categories; next, they selected their second choice; last, they selected their third choice.

Participants who selected the same product category for at least two of the three choices were removed from the data set, resulting in a final sample of thirty-three subjects. Of the ten product categories included the pre-test, cellular phones (29.3%), laptops (26.3%), and jeans (10.1%) were the most frequently selected product categories overall. Therefore, these three product categories were included in the brand relationship manipulation scenarios.

The brand relationship type scenario primed a business partner brand relationship or a best friend brand relationship. Both scenarios were modeled after a communal and exchange relationship prime used in Aggarwal (2004) and Aggarwal & Law (2005). A fictional brand of cell phone, Nicosia, was created for the purpose of this experiment to avoid elicitation of prior associations that may exist with real brands of this product category on the market, such as a Blackberry Smartphone or an Apple iPhone.

3.2.3 Dependent Measures

The Inclusion of the Brand in the Self (IBS) scale, a modified version of the Inclusion of Other in the self (IOS) scale (Aron et al., 1992), was used as the main manipulation check in this research. It is a single item, Venn diagram-like pictorial measure of closeness. This scale depicts a series of two circles that vary to the extent that they overlap with each other- no overlap depicts low closeness while great overlap depicts high closeness, with varying levels in between. Respondents select the picture that best represents their relationship. Since it is not possible to perform inter-item consistency measures on a one item scale (Russell et al., 1989), Aron et al.,
(1992) used two versions of the IOS scale in their study to perform reliability analysis. They found a good alpha value for the entire sample ($\alpha = 0.93$) as well as for subgroups ($\alpha = 0.87$ for family members, $\alpha = 0.92$ for friends, and $\alpha = 0.95$ for romantic relationships). Additionally, a two week test re-test reliability check provided adequate reliability results ($r = 0.83$ overall sample; $r = 0.85$ for family members; $r = 0.86$ for friends; and $r = 0.85$ for romantic relationships). The IOS scale provides a solution to the limitations of the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI) and other closeness measures that seek to tap into people’s sense of interpersonal interconnectedness. The IOS scale provides wider usability than the RCI as it may be used in populations that differ in age, social class, and cultural traits. Additionally, it only has one item to complete resulting in a quick and simple way to measure interpersonal closeness. The IOS scale has previously been adapted to the context of consumer research; specifically, regarding the perceived degree of closeness individuals feel towards the brands they know and use. For example, Reimann et al., (2012) used a brand inclusion diagram, an adapted version of the IOS scale, to test inclusion of the brand in the self. Also, Chernev et al., (2011) used a similar brand closeness scale to examine the perceived closeness people feel towards their most preferred brand from a specific list of options.

Additionally, to ensure that the brand relationship scenarios conveyed the appropriate brand relationship type, participants also answered a short brand relationship questionnaire. Two questions, anchored 1-5 (strongly disagree- strongly agree), assessed whether participants agreed that the brand is like best friend or business partner/colleague. The same questionnaire was utilized by Aggarwal (2004). If the brand relationship scenario elicits the correct relationship norm, participants primed with a best friend brand relationship should indicate higher values on the IBS scale and agree that the brand is more like a best friend than a business partner.
Conversely, participants primed with a business partner brand relationship should indicate lower values on the IBS scale and agree that the brand is more like a business partner than a best friend.

In order to determine that the brand relationship scenarios do not elicit different perceptions of quality, a short questionnaire of perceived quality modeled after Aggarwal (2004) was included. Participants completed a short questionnaire, anchored 1-7 (very poor- very good) which asked their perceived quality of the service and their perceived quality of the product described in the brand relationship scenario. Perceived quality of the service and the product should not differ between conditions.

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a reliable and independent measure of two dimensions of mood, positive and negative. It is a 20 item scale, 10 items measure positive affect and 10 items measure negative affect. It is designed to be an explicit measure of mood at various timeframes. High scores on the positive affect items indicate more positive affect while high scores on the negative affect items indicate more negative affect. The alpha reliabilities are sufficiently high thereby demonstrating good internal consistency. The alpha coefficients for positive affect and negative affect at the “current moment” timeframe is 0.89 and 0.85, respectively (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS is widely used in extant literature to measure mood. It is used in this research to assess reading the brand relationship scenarios influenced the participants’ moods. Mood should not differ between conditions.

Self-brand distinction, or the difference in hypothetical monetary allocations made to the self and to a brand, served as the dependent variable. The subsequent technique is an adapted replication of the dependent variable in Aron et al., (1991). A decomposed game technique,
previously demonstrated in research by Aron et al., (1991) and Liebrand (1984), provides participants with the opportunity to choose between pairs of options that allocate money to the self and to an “other”. Pairs of outcomes correspond to equally spaced points on a circle. The x-axis corresponds to money allocated to oneself while the y-axis corresponds to money allocated to an “other”. For the purpose of this experiment, the “other” corresponds to the brand indicated in the brand relationship scenario. On a computer screen, participants are presented with a series of binary choices from which to choose. Alternatives from which participants much choose include scenarios where the self and the brand both gain money, the self and the brand both lose money, the self gains money while the brand loses money, or the self loses money while the brand gains money. For example, the first screen provides a choice between two of the following options: Alternative A as the self gaining $10.00 and the brand gaining $17.30 and Alternative B as the self gaining $14.15 and the brand gaining $14.15. The participant selects his/her preferred alternative. The next screen provides a choice between two more options: Alternative A as the self losing $5.20 and the brand losing $19.30 and Alternative B as the self losing $10.00 and the brand losing $17.30. Again, the participant selects his/her preferred alternative. Twenty-four choice sets like these are presented to the participant in random order. Once the task is complete, the participant will have allocated a total amount of money to the self (self allocations) and to the brand (brand allocations). The difference between these two values (self minus brand allocations) indicates the extent to which there is a cognitive differentiation between the self and the brand or a self-brand distinction, indicating large or small inclusion of the brand in the self.

Some basic demographic information was also collected. Participants were asked to report their age, gender, and the current year of their undergraduate program. If participants were not undergraduate students, they selected an “other” option.
3.2.4 Procedure

MediaLab v2012 software was used to build the study and present it to participants. Participants arrived at the computer lab (MACS 311A) in groups as large as 15 or as small as 1, they read and signed a consent form to participate in the study. After receiving initial instructions on how to proceed, they began the experiment. They read a brand relationship scenario that primed either a best friend relationship or a business partner relationship with a fictional brand of cellular phone, Nicosia. Next, they completed the IBS scale as a manipulation check. They then received instructions regarding the dependent variable: they were presented with two boxes with a scenario in both regarding the self gaining or losing a specified amount of money and Nicosia gaining or losing a specified amount of money. Participants were asked to select their preferred choice. Next, participants completed the PANAS mood scale, perceived quality scale, and the demographic questions. Once they completed the study, participants were thanked and debriefed.

3.3 Results and Discussion

The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether brand relationships mimic interpersonal relationships regarding resource allocation strategies that demonstrate a cognitive merging of brand and self, measured by the extent to which money resources are allocated to the self and to the brand, after being primed with a best friend or business partner brand relationship.

The results of an independent t-test measuring brand closeness between brand relationship type conditions suggest that participants felt closer to the fictional cell phone brand when primed with a best friend relationship than when primed with a business partner brand relationship (Best Friend M= 5.21, SD= 0.833; Business Partner M= 2.61, SD= 1.270) ($t(37.744)= 8.261, p<0.01$).
Additionally, participants primed with a best friend brand relationship agreed that the brand was more like a best friend than a business partner (Best Friend M= 6.208, SD= 0.977; Business Partner M= 4.478, SD= 1.123) \( (t(45)= 5.642, p<0.01) \) and participants primed with a business partner brand relationship agreed the brand was more like a business partner than a best friend (Best Friend M= 5.792, SD= 0.978; Business Partner M= 7.522, SD= 1.123) \( (t(45)= -5.642, p<0.01) \). Therefore, the manipulation of brand relationship type was successful.

The first assumption of an independent t-test is the assumption of normality of the dependent variable. Therefore, the dependent variable should be normally distributed within each group. Normality is statistically tested with the Shapiro-Wilk’s test. The Shapiro-Wilk’s statistic tests the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the distribution of residuals is not normal and the assumption of normality is violated. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk’s test suggest that self-brand distinction is normally distributed in the business partner condition \( (W= 0.957, df(23), p= 0.407) \) but not the best friend condition \( (W= 0.894, df(24), p< 0.05) \). However, t-tests tend to be robust to violations of the normality
assumption as long as the difference between the group sizes is less than 1.5; therefore, deviations from normality do not have a large influence on type one error rates and analysis may proceed.

The second assumption of an independent t-test is the assumption of homogeneity of variance, or an equality of variance. Levene’s statistic tests the null hypothesis that the population variances are equal. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the variances are unequal and the assumption for homogeneity of variance is not met. The results of Levene’s test suggest that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected ($F = 0.106, p = 0.746$); therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met and analysis may proceed.

The results of an independent t-test measuring self-brand distinction between brand relationship type conditions revealed no significant main effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction (Best Friend $M = 25.679$, $SD = 13.346$; Business Partner $M = 20.478$, $SD = 15.164$) ($t(45) = 1.250, p = 0.218$).

Figure 3: Brand Relationship Type on Self Brand Distinction
Despite the successful manipulation of brand relationship type however, hypothesis one was not supported as the results on the dependent variable indicate that brand relationship type had no significant effect on the amount of money resources allocated to the self and to the brand. In fact, participants primed with the best friend brand relationship on average gave more money to the self than to the brand than those primed with a business partner brand relationship. Even though the differences between these means are not significant, the direction is opposite of the predicted effect.

PANAS results indicated no significant effect of brand relationship type on positive affect (Best Friend M= 28.917, SD= 7.824; Business Partner M= 28.174, SD= 8.968) \( (t(45)=0.303, p= 0.763) \) and negative affect (Best Friend M= 16.250, SD= 7.128; Business Partner M= 15.826, SD= 5.614) \( (t(45)=0.226, p= 0.822) \). Thus, explicit reports of emotion did not differ between conditions of brand relationship type.

When asked to report their perceived quality of the brand, the results of the quality perceptions scale indicate a significant effect of brand relationship type on perceived quality of the brand, such that participants primed with a best friend brand relationship believed the product and service of the Nicosia cell phone to be of better quality than those primed with a business partner brand relationship (Best Friend M= 13.292, SD= 0.908; Business Partner M= 12.044, SD= 1.147) \( (t(44)= 4.145, p<0.01) \). This test was included in the procedure to rule out the possibility that differing perceptions of brand quality, rather than the brand relationship prime, had an effect on whether more money was allocated to the brand than to the self. Since no significant difference between the brand relationship conditions was found on self-brand distinction, the finding that the best friend brand relationship prime elicited superior perceptions
of brand quality than the business partner brand relationship does not aid in the interpretation of the results for the dependent variable.

The results of previous research suggest that when cued with a close relationship, more money would be allocated to the other than to the self; whereas, when cued with a distant relationship, more money would be allocated to the self than to the other, demonstrating high IOS and low IOS respectively (Aron et al., 1991). However, the current study’s results do not mimic this pattern. While the differences are not significant, participants primed with a best friend brand relationship on average allocated more money to the self than to the brand than those primed with a business partner brand relationship. Therefore, even though subjects reported feeling closer to the brand in the best friend relationship, the difference in the amount of money allocations they made to the self and to the brand did not demonstrate inclusion of the brand in the self, or a cognitive merging of self and brand.

Therefore, hypothesis one is not supported. However, even though no main effect between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction was found, this does not necessarily mean that a relationship between these variables does not exist. Main effects between variables may be cancelled out by mediators with pathways that are opposite in sign (Hayes, 2009). Hence, the absence of a significant main effect of X on Y does not extinguish the prospect of investigating for mediators (Zhao et al., 2010). A relationship between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction may yet exist; however, it is mediated. Therefore, study two replicates the pilot study and investigates an indirect effect of social utility.
Chapter 4.0 Study Two

4.1 Hypothesis

The second of three hypotheses focuses on investigating an indirect effect. Instead of mimicking how IOS occurs in interpersonal relationships, brand relationships may influence resource allocations that demonstrate IBS through a mediator of social utility.

Some brands are better at providing social utility than others (Richins, 1994; Aaker, 1997). Chernev, Hamilton, and Gal (2011) distinguish between two types of brand associations: functional and symbolic. Functional brand associations, or functional brands, relate to the meaning of a brand based on “functional aspects of the product such as physical characteristics, performance, and reliability” (Chernev et al., 2011, pp. 70). Conversely, symbolic brand associations, or symbolic brands, “add value beyond intrinsic product attributes” (Chernev et al., 2011, pp. 70) and tend to offer the consumer the opportunity to express oneself. As part of a pre-test to their study, Chernev et al., (2011) asked participants to evaluate brands in terms of their functional or symbolic associations. Brands in product categories like soft drinks, cereal, paper towels, and sports drinks were deemed primarily functional while sneakers, shirts, jackets, and watches were considered primarily symbolic. It is important consider that purely symbolic brand associations are quite rare (Chernev et al., 2011). Even the examples of primarily symbolic product categories clearly have highly functional attributes, for example, jackets keep the wearer warm and dry from cold, wet weather, and watches allow the wearer to keep time effectively thereby reducing the risk of missing important appointments. Although functional utility is a component of inclusion of the brand in the self, all products are expected to deliver functional
utility and are expected to perform at an acceptable level of quality. Therefore, perceived functional utility of the brand should not be responsible for an indirect effect of brand relationship type on resource allocations that demonstrate IBS.

Social utility is another component of inclusion of the brand in the self. Brands provide consumers with social value by providing a way to create and display one’s identity and by signalling social status. This social value should be recognized in a close brand relationship, as opposed to a distant brand relationship, leading to a greater inclusion of the brand and the self. Since a best friend brand relationship encompasses intimacy and a revelation of true self (Fournier, 1998), the brand will provide more social utility due to this close relationship resulting in more money allocations made to the brand than to the self (demonstrating a small self-brand distinction). Conversely, since a business partner brand relationship is largely instrumental in nature, free of intimacy, and self expressive quality is not present (Zayer and Neier, 2010), the brand will provide less social utility. Therefore, a business partner brand relationship should lead to lower perceived social utility resulting in more money allocations made to the self than to the brand (demonstrating a large self-brand distinction). Hence, social utility should be an underlying mechanism for the relationship between brand relationship type on money resource allocations that represent a cognitive merging of self and brand.

Formally, hypothesis two:

There is an indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction, such that a best friend brand relationship will cause high social utility values resulting in more money allocations made to the brand than to the self; whereas, a
business partner brand relationship will cause lower social utility values resulting in more money allocations made to the self than to the brand.

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Participants and Design

To investigate the presence of an indirect effect, study two replicates the pilot study, and it examines perceived social utility as a mediator. One hundred and one participants were recruited through the Marketing 1000 and 2600 D2L websites, or they were intercepted as they entered or exited the University of Guelph University Center or McKinnon Building. Participants were compensated with either course credit or $10 in cash. They were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (Brand relationship type: Best friend vs. Business partner).

Results of a one-way ANOVA suggest that the location of the study had no significant effect on the dependent variable ($F(2, 98)= 0.030, p=0.970$). Also, results of an independent t-test suggest that compensation type (whether participants were compensated with course credit or cash) had no significant effect on the dependent variable ($t(99)= 1.364, p=0.176$); therefore, the groups were collapsed into one dataset.

Seven participants were immediately removed for completing the component measuring the dependent variable very quickly, suggesting that these participants did not respond to the questions with care or accuracy. In order to remove some of the noise caused by outliers around the independent variable, brand relationship type, participants whose responses fell outside two
standard deviations above and below the mean on the IBS manipulation check were removed. A final total of 91 participants (47 male, 44 female; mean age = 22) were included in the analysis.

### Table 2: Sample Size, Means, and Standard Deviations for Each Cell in Study Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Two</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (Brand Closeness)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (Brand Closeness)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
<td>Business Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raw</strong></td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fast responders removed</strong></td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>±2 Std. Deviations from the Mean of IBS removed (Final)</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.2.2 Stimuli

The brand relationship type scenario primed either a best friend brand relationship or a business partner brand relationship. Like the pilot study, both scenarios were modeled after a communal and exchange relationship prime used in Aggarwal (2004) and Aggarwal & Law (2005). To avoid an unwanted emotional reaction, the word “happy” was removed from the business partner brand relationship scenario, as it was present in the pilot study. Also, a fictional brand of laptop computer, Galia Barnett (GB), was created for the purpose of this experiment to avoid elicitation of prior associations that may exist with real brands of this product category currently on the market, such as Mac or PC.

#### 4.2.3 Dependent Measures

Similar to the pilot study, the IBS scale (Reimann et al., 2012) was used as a measure of brand closeness and served as the main manipulation check. The brand relationship questionnaire
(Aggarwal, 2004) was also used as an extra manipulation check. PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was included as an explicit measure of emotion. The perceived quality questionnaire (Aggarwal, 2004) was used to measure perceived quality of the brand. Finally, the decomposed game was used to measure self-brand distinction.

This study also included a measure of social utility to investigate the indirect effect. In their investigation of a model of brand love, Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) created a scale to measure a self expressive brand construct. Carroll & Ahuvia (2006) reported a maximum likelihood factor analysis of one factor with all loadings exceeding 0.72 and explaining 70% of the variance in the items ($\alpha = 0.94$). This scale however provides a promising measure of social utility as its items imply a brand’s ability to provide and convey individual self expression and social status. This five-point Likert scale includes a total of eight items, four of which measure an individual’s expression of their inner self (ex. “this brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside”) while the remaining four items measure an individual’s social self (ex. “this brand improves the way society views me”). In effect, these items require the respondent to indicate the extent to which the brand provides social value or social utility as it has been previously discussed. Therefore, this scale was used to measure the proposed mediator, perceived social utility.

4.2.4 Procedure

MediaLab v2012 software was used to build the study and present it to participants. Participants completed the study in either MACS 311A, the University Center, or the lobby of the McKinnon Building. Participants read and signed a consent form to participate in the study. After receiving initial instructions on how to proceed, they began the experiment. They read a brand relationship scenario that primed either a best friend relationship or a business partner
relationship with a fictional brand of laptop computer, Galia-Barnett (GB). Next, they completed the IBS scale and the brand relationship questionnaire as a manipulation check. Next, they completed the measure of social utility. They then received instructions regarding the dependent variable: they were presented with two boxes with a scenario in each box regarding the self gaining or losing a specified amount of money and the brand, GB, gaining or losing a specified amount of money. Participants were asked to select their preferred choice. Finally, participants completed the PANAS mood scale, perceived quality scale, and demographic questions. Once they completed the study, participants were thanked and debriefed.

4.3 Results and Discussion

The purpose of study two was to determine if social utility mediates the relationship between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction. The results of an independent t-test measuring the difference between conditions on brand closeness suggest that participants primed with a best friend brand relationship felt significantly closer to the brand than participants primed with a business partner brand relationship (Best Friend M= 4.33, SD= 1.1108; Business Partner M= 2.83, SD= 1.180) ($t(89)= 6.280, p<0.01$).
Additionally, participants were able to distinguish between a best friend relationship and a business partner relationship: the results of an independent t-test measuring levels of agreement that the brand was like a best friend or business partner confirmed that participants primed with a best friend brand relationship agreed that the brand was more like a best friend than a business partner (Best Friend M= 6.267, SD= 1.405, Business Partner M= 4.652, SD= 1.418) (t(89)= 5.457, p<0.01) and participants primed with a business partner brand relationship agreed that the brand was more like business partner than a best friend (Best Friend M= 5.733, SD= 1.405, Business Partner M= 7.348, SD= 1.418) (t(89)= -5.457, p<0.01). Therefore, there was a successful manipulation of brand relationship type.

To assess the assumption of normality of the dependent variable, a Shapiro-Wilk’s test was run. The results for the best friend brand relationship condition suggest that the null hypothesis, that there is a normal distribution, cannot be rejected (W= 0.953, df(45), p=0.064). Therefore, the assumption of normality is upheld. The results for the business partner brand relationship condition suggest that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (W= 0.959, df(46),
Therefore, the assumption of normality is upheld. To assess the assumption of homogeneity of variance, a Levene’s test was run. The results suggest that the null hypothesis, that there is an equality of variance, cannot be rejected ($F = 0.151, p = 0.699$). Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met. With these assumptions met, analysis of the dependent variable may proceed.

Despite the successful manipulation of brand relationship type however, no significant main effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction was found. The results of an independent t-test measuring self-brand distinction between brand relationship conditions reveal no significant main effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction (Best Friend $M = 20.418, SD = 16.630$; Business Partner $M = 19.863, SD = 17.548$) ($t(89) = 0.155, p = 0.877$).

Figure 5: Brand Relationship Type on Self Brand Distinction

Thus, there was no statistically significant difference between the amounts of money allocated to self and to the brand between brand relationship conditions. Participants primed with a best friend brand relationship on average allocated more money to the self than to the brand
than those in the business partner brand relationship. Although the difference between the means of these two groups is not significant, the direction is similar to that found in the pilot study though much smaller in magnitude. Again, the pattern of results demonstrated by Aron et al., (1991) was not found in the context of brand relationships. These results replicate the results of the pilot study and suggest that brand relationships do not influence IBS in a way that mimics the way that interpersonal relationships influence IOS.

PANAS results indicates no significant effect of brand relationship type on negative affect (Best Friend M= 15.844, SD= 5.257; Business Partner M= 15.130, SD= 4.856) \( (t(89)= 0.673, p=0.503) \); however, a significant effect of brand relationship type on positive affect was found (Best Friend M= 32.911, SD= 6.758; Business Partner M= 29.109, SD= 7.628) \( (t(89)= 2.515, p<0.05) \).

The results of the quality perceptions measure indicates no significant effect of brand relationship type on perceived quality of the brand (Best Friend M= 12.778, SD= 1.557; Business Partner M= 12.391, SD= 1.064) \( (t(89)= 1.380, p= 0.171) \). Therefore, perceived quality of the brand did not differ between brand relationship type conditions.

Traditionally, in order to begin investigating mediation, the Baron and Kenny (1986) method requires that a significant zero order effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable first be established (Zhao et al., 2010). However, since technical literature has highlighted flaws in the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach, a superior method of mediation analysis has become available, specifically the bootstrap test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009). It has been posited that the only requirement to demonstrate mediation is a significant indirect effect of \( a \times b \) by a Sobel test or by a superior bootstrap test.
Unlike the Sobel test, bootstrapping has no assumptions about the shape of the sampling distribution; therefore, this procedure allows researchers to avoid issues of power introduced by asymmetries and non-normality in the sample distribution of $a \times b$ (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Additionally, bootstrapping may be applied to small sample sizes with more confidence (Zhao et al., 2010). Bootstrapping is accomplished by taking a large number of samples from the original sample data, sampling with replacement, and computing the indirect effect in each sample (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This process is repeated several thousand times in order to yield estimates for the total and specific indirect effects of X on Y (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

When zero is not included in the bootstrapped confidence interval (usually 95% confidence) it may be concluded that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < 0.05$ (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009).

To establish an indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction, Preacher and Hayes’s (2008) bootstrap script testing indirect effects was used with a bootstrap of 5000 draws. The bootstrap analysis reveals a mean indirect effect that is positive and significant ($a \times b = 3.442$) with a 95% confidence interval that excludes zero (CI: 0.966; 7.309). Therefore, mediation is established. In the indirect path, as brand relationship type changes, or as best friend changes to business partner, social utility decreases by 3.570 units ($a = -3.570, SE= 1.18, t= -3.019, p<0.01$). Holding brand relationship type constant, a unit increase in social utility reduces self-brand distinction by 0.95 units ($b = -0.964, SE= 0.307 t= -3.146, p<0.01$). The direct effect is not significant (path $c'$; $B= -3.997, SE= 3.589, t= -1.113, p= 0.269$); therefore, mediation is indirect-only (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). Hypothesis two is supported.
The absence of a main effect of X on Y, or brand relationship type on self-brand distinction, does not rule out the existence of a mediator and an indirect effect of X through M on Y, or brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction. Accordingly, the results of the bootstrap test (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) reveal indirect-only mediation. Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010) identify indirect-only mediation as when a mediation effect \((a \times b)\) exists, however there is no significant direct effect. Therefore, indirect-only mediation overlaps with Baron and Kenny’s (1986) full mediation. Thus, the mediator is consistent with the hypothesized theoretical framework and the presence of other omitted mediators is unlikely. A discussion of the specific mediation process follows.

The results of study two support hypothesis two and provide support for an exchange of social resources in a brand relationship context that diverts a little from the way it is represented within an interpersonal relationship context (Aron et al., 1991); however, the same pattern holds when the mediator of social utility is included. The results demonstrate that as brand relationship type changes, or as best friend shifts to business partner, social utility decreases. This is
consistent with the amalgamation of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) into brand relationship theory (Reimann & Aron, 2009) because people gain less social utility from the brand such as social status and the ability to express oneself when a distant relationship with a brand is maintained than when a close relationship with a brand is maintained. This interpretation is corroborated by a significant main effect of brand relationship type on social utility: the results of an independent t-test measuring perceived social utility between brand relationship conditions suggest a significant main effect of brand relationship type, such that participants primed with a best friend brand relationship reported greater social utility values than participants primed with a business partner brand relationship (Best Friend M= 25.36, SD= 0.767; Business Partner M= 21.63, SD= 0.930) (t(86)= 3.067, p<0.01). Therefore, participants primed with a best friend relationship gained more social resources, or utility, from the brand than participants primed with a business partner relationship.

The results of the mediation analysis also suggest that as social utility increases, self-brand distinction values decrease, or as social utility increases, more money resources are allocated to the brand than to the self. This is consistent with the foundation of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) as the close best friend relationship enables an exchange of social resources and influences an inclusion of the brand in the self, demonstrated by low self-brand distinction values. However, in a business partner brand relationship, people do not gain or gain fewer social resources from the brand. Thus, an exchange of resources and an inclusion of the brand in the self do not occur resulting in high self-brand distinction values. Therefore, the results of study two successfully support hypothesis two: there is an indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction.
It is noteworthy to discuss the significant result of brand relationship type on positive affect. Participants primed with a best friend brand relationship reported more positive affect than those primed with a business partner brand relationship. An exploratory investigation elucidates the role that positive affect plays in the mediation model rather than provides an alternative explanation for the results.

If consumers are gaining social utility from a brand, they are presumably quite happy about it. Therefore, it is possible that when social resources are gained from a brand due to a close brand relationship, levels of positive affect increase resulting in greater money allocations made to the brand than to the self, or a low self-brand distinction. Hayes’s syntax for serial mediation (Model 6, Hayes, 2012) with a bootstrap of 5000 draws supports this explanation. The mean indirect effect of brand relationship type through positive affect on self-brand distinction is not significant (CI: -1.0115; 4.0338); however, the mean indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility through positive affect on self brand distinction is significant and positive ($\alpha \times b = 1.4338$) with a 95% confidence interval that excludes zero (CI: 0.4684; 3.4403).

In the indirect effect, as brand relationship type changes from best friend to business partner, social utility decreases by 3.727 units ($a = -3.7267, t = -3.0666, p<0.05$). Holding brand relationship type constant, a one unit increase in social utility increases positive affect by 0.524 units ($d = 0.5241, t = 4.1887, p<0.01$), and as positive affect increases by one unit, self-brand distinction decreases by 0.734 units ($b_k = -0.7341, t = -2.8106, p<0.01$). Also, the mean indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction is still positive and significant ($\alpha \times b = 2.091$) with a 95% confidence interval that excludes zero (CI: 0.0200; 5.7084). Holding brand relationship type constant, a one unit increase in social utility reduces self-brand distinction by 0.561 units ($b = -0.5610, t = -1.6952, p<0.10$). Therefore, the
incorporation of positive affect into the mediation model reveals that positive affect is not a confound variable and exposes its role in serial mediation.

Social utility is successfully identified as a mediator; therefore, the opportunity arises to validate the mechanism and expose a boundary condition to this indirect effect. Study three investigates this opportunity.
5.1 Hypothesis

In his seminal work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman asserts that social life is a performance, whereby people take on “lines of action” in order to give off a particular impression (Goffman, 1959). As a result, people behave in ways that are consistent with impression management. Impression management, often considered to be synonymous with self presentation, is the attempt to control the impressions that are made about us (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Leary et al., 1994).

When people enter social situations, they acquire information about the people around them and convey information about themselves, such as socio-economic status, character traits, and self concept. The information that is conveyed and acquired helps define the situation and guide individuals’ expectations of behaviour (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) further posits that, by contributing to the definition of the situation, the individual expresses himself in such a way as to create an impression to get others in the situation to willingly act in accordance with his interests.

While it is possible that impression management may lead individuals to convey false information about the self, research suggests that people tend to convey information and images that are consistent with their self concept (Gergen, 1968; Schlenker, 1980; Jones & Pittman, 1982). In fact, self concept is a primary determinant of the impressions people project due to their desire to have others perceive them accurately (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

There are a variety of “sign-vehicles” used to convey one’s self concept in a social setting (Goffman, 1959). As previously discussed, symbolic brands play a predominant role in
presenting and conveying information about the self. One of the main objectives of self expression is to signal or communicate to other people who we are or who we want to be. Either way, the purpose of self expression is to present the self to others, or to create an impression.

It is essential to consider, however, that there are particular situations in which people are more motivated to self present than others. These situations have mainly been investigated in laboratory settings. For example, people are generally motivated to impress individuals who are perceived to be superior. Therefore, people are more likely to engage in impression management when interacting with those who are perceived as powerful or who have high status (Gergen & Taylor, 1969). Additionally, those who can dispense valued outcomes such as bosses or teachers (Bohra & Pandey, 1984; Hendricks & Brickman, 1974) also incite impression management. An experiment with undergraduate students in a training program for naval officers demonstrated this effect. Gergen & Taylor (1969) showed that participants in a low status condition self-enhanced more than participants in a high status condition when completing an ambiguous, complex decision task that required giving and taking orders. Additionally, Bohra & Pandey (1984) demonstrated that participants modified patterns of ingratiation behaviour as the target individual for that behaviour changed. For example, participants consistently reported more ingratiating responses, such as self enhancement, name dropping, and opinion conformity when presented with a hypothetical situation involving a boss as opposed to a stranger or a friend (Bohra & Pandey, 1984).

People are also more likely to self present when the target individual is physically attractive or socially desirable (Mori, et al., 1987; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Mori, Chaiken, and Pliner (1987) found that women tended to eat less food in the presence of a desirable male partner, as opposed to an undesirable male partner, a desirable female partner, and an undesirable
female partner. Additionally, increased or decreased food intake was found to be a function of threat to femininity and partner awareness manipulations (Mori et al., 1987). For example, when desirable male partners were believed to be aware of sex role feedback, participants whose feminine identity had been threatened ate less than when it had been reinforced; however, when male partners were not aware of sex role feedback, participants whose feminine identity had been reinforced ate less than when it had been threatened (Mori et al., 1987). These results strengthen the presumption that self presentation goals prompted by socially desirable partners influence public behaviours.

Situational factors in everyday life also influence the extent to which people self present or manage impressions. For example, Leary et al., (1994) found that for heterosexual individuals, participants were less motivated to self present in familiar same-sex interactions than in familiar opposite- sex interactions. This finding has been explained by evidence that suggests same-sex friendships to be more stable over time than opposite-sex friendships (Nezlek, 1993). Also, opposite-sex friendships have the potential to evolve into romantic relationships that can provide desirable outcomes that cannot be acquired through same-sex friendships (Nezlek, 1993). Since these concerns don’t tend to exist in same-sex interactions, impression management is more likely to occur when interacting with familiar individuals of the opposite sex.

The aforementioned studies provide evidence that situational factors play an important role in whether individuals will self present or attempt to manage impressions made about them. Given these findings, when impression management is perceived to be necessary, self expressiveness and social signalling should be more salient; whereas, when impression management is perceived to be unnecessary, self expressiveness and social signalling should be less salient. Therefore, the importance of a brand’s ability to provide social utility and effectively
express the self and signal status should vary depending on the perceived necessity to self present. Therefore, a situation in which the need to impression manage is high should facilitate an exchange of social utility while a situation in which the need to impression manage is low should stymie it.

Since social utility is not gained in a business partner brand relationship, impression management will have no effect on the indirect effect of social utility. However, social utility is gained in a best friend brand relationship; therefore, the indirect effect of social utility will be present when impression management is high; whereas, the indirect effect of social utility will not be present when impression management is low, thereby revealing a boundary condition.

Formally, hypothesis three:

Impression management will moderate the indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction such that, social utility will mediate the relationship between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction when impression management is high but not when impression management is low.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 Participants and Design

To validate the indirect effect and expose a boundary condition, study three examines impression management as a moderator of the indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction. A 2 (Brand relationship type: Best friend vs. Business partner) x 2 (Impression management: High vs. Low) between-subjects factorial design was used.
Participants were recruited by advertisements on the website Kijiji.ca, flyers posted around the University of Guelph campus, or they were intercepted as they entered or exited the University of Guelph University Center. A total of 129 subjects participated in the study; however, one participant was immediately removed for participating in the study twice. Participants were compensated with $10.00 in cash.

The results of a one way ANOVA suggest that the location of the study had no significant effect on the dependent variable \((F(2, 125)= 0.161, p=0.852)\). Therefore, the groups were collapsed into one dataset. No participants were removed for completing the component measuring dependent variable too quickly.

In order to identify multivariate outliers, the probability for the Mahalanobis Distance (Mahalanobis \(D^2\)) was computed for variables brand relationship type and impression management. A multivariate outlier is identified when the probability associated with its \(D^2\) is less than or equal to 0.001. The results suggest that there were no cases of multivariate outliers (no cases with a \(D^2\) probability of \( \leq 0.001\)); therefore, no additional participants were removed. Thus, a total of 128 participants were included in the final analysis (45 male, 82 female, 1 missing, mean age=23.37).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Two</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (Brand Closeness)</th>
<th>Std. Deviation (Brand Closeness)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Best Friend</td>
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</table>
5.2.2 Stimuli

The brand relationship type scenario primed either a best friend brand relationship or a business partner brand relationship. Similar to the two previous studies, both scenarios were modelled after a communal and exchange relationship prime used in Aggarwal (2004) and Aggarwal & Law (2005). A fictional brand of jeans, Orly, was created for the purpose of this experiment to avoid elicitation of prior associations that may exist with real brands of this product category on the market, such as a Guess or Levi.

Impression management was manipulated by presenting a short scenario in which the participant imagines using the fictional brand from the brand relationship scenario in a situation that requires the individual to self present (Impression management high) or not (Impression management low). The high impression management condition described a situation whereby the participant must imagine using the brand to prepare for a date with someone they really like; whereas, the low impression management condition described a situation whereby the participant must imagine using the brand to prepare to meet a buddy who they have known for a long time. These scenarios were fashioned after confederate manipulations used in extant literature (Mori et al., 1987).

5.2.3 Dependent Measures

Similar to the pilot study and study two, the IBS scale (Reimann et al., 2012) was used as a measure of brand closeness and the main manipulation check. The brand relationship questionnaire (Aggarwal, 2004) was also used as an extra manipulation check. The PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was included as an explicit measure of emotion and the
perceived quality questionnaire (Aggarwal, 2004) was included to measure perceived quality of the brand.

The dependent variable was the same decomposed games as the previous two studies; however, it was slightly reworded. Two boxes revealed two scenarios regarding the self gaining or losing a specified amount of money and the Orly brand gaining or losing a specified amount of money. However, the scenarios were worded in a way so as to fit a transaction setting. For example, the self gaining scenario allowed participants to save money for themselves; the self losing scenario required participants to pay taxes; the brand gaining scenario allowed participants to spend money towards the Orly brand of jeans; the brand losing scenario allowed participants to spend money towards a different brand of jeans (not the Orly brand).

In order to check that participants perceived the need to manage impressions after reading the aforementioned scenarios, a short five-point Likert scale with three items to measure the impression management goal was created. After reading the scenario, participants were asked how much they agreed with the following statements: 1) I feel like I need to convey a good impression; 2) It is important that I show myself off, 3) It doesn’t really matter how I’m viewed (question 3 is reverse coded). Since extant research usually use confederates to manipulate impression management goals, these three questions were created based on extant literature’s definition of impression management and self presentation (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Leary et al., 1994)). If the impression management manipulation is successful, participants in the high impression management condition should indicate high scores on the manipulation check while participants in the low impression management condition should report low scores.
5.2.4 Procedure

MediaLab v2012 software was used to build and present the study to participants. They read and signed a consent form to participate in the study. After receiving initial instructions regarding how to proceed, they began the experiment. They read a brand relationship scenario that primed either a best friend relationship or a business partner relationship with a fictional brand of designer jeans, Orly. Next, they completed the IBS scale and the brand relationship questionnaire as a manipulation check. They then read a hypothetical scenario to prime either a high or low impression management situation and completed the manipulation check. Next, they completed the same measure of social utility as in study two. They then received instructions and completed the adjusted version of the decomposed game. Next, participants completed the PANAS mood scale, perceived quality scale, and demographic questions as in the pilot study and study one. Once they completed the study, participants were thanked and debriefed.

5.3 Results and Discussion

The purpose of study three was to expose a conditional indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction with impression management as the moderator.

The results of an ANOVA that measured brand closeness between brand relationship conditions confirmed a significant main effect of brand relationship type: participants primed with a best friend brand relationship reported greater closeness to the brand than participants primed with a business partner brand relationship condition (Best Friend $M= 4.22$, $SD= 1.39$; Business Partner $M= 2.80$, $SD= 1.12$) ($F(1, 126)= 39.72$, $p<0.01$).
Additionally, participants primed with a best friend brand relationship agreed that the brand was more like a best friend than a business partner (Best Friend $M= 6.318$, $SD= 1.401$; Business Partner $M= 4.708$, $SD= 1.343$) ($F(1, 126)= 44.06$, $p<0.01$) and participants primed with a business partner brand relationship agreed it was more like a business partner than a best friend (Best Friend $M= 5.683$, $SD= 1.401$; Business Partner $M= 7.292$, $SD= 1.343$) ($F(1, 126)= 44.06$, $p<0.01$). Therefore, the manipulation of brand relationship type was successful.

As previously mentioned, a short, three-item questionnaire was created for the purpose of determining if the impression management scenario effectively elicited a situation that encouraged or did not encourage participants to self present. The impression management questionnaire demonstrates good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha$) of 0.867. This suggests that the items in the impression management scale are measuring the same latent construct. The results of an ANOVA measuring the difference between high and low impression management conditions on the perceived necessity to self present suggest that participants primed with high impression management believed the situation (going on a date) was one where
making a good impression was important and desirable; whereas, participants primed with low impression management (spending time with a buddy) believed the situation was one where making a good impression was not very important (High Impression Management M= 12.672; SD= 1.968; Low Impression Management M= 9.734, SD= 2.807) ($F(1, 126)= 46.98, p<0.01$). Therefore, the manipulation of impression management was successful.

![Figure 8: Impression Management Manipulation Check](image)

PANAS results indicate no significant effect of brand relationship type on positive affect (Best Friend M= 29.476, SD= 8.080, Business Partner M= 28.508, SD= 8.597) ($F(1, 124)= 0.428, p=0.514$) and no significant effect of brand relationship type on negative affect (Best Friend M= 14.683, SD= 5.494, Business Partner M= 15.092, SD= 6.307) ($F(1, 124)= 0.148, p= 0.701$). Therefore, explicit reports of positive affect and negative affect did not significantly differ between conditions of brand relationship type and cannot provide an alternative explanation for the results. Additionally, PANAS results indicate no significant effect of impression management on positive affect (High M= 29.109 SD= 8.422, Low M= 28.859, SD=...
8.298) \((F(1, 124)= 0.032, p=0.858)\) and no significant effect of impression management on negative affect (High M= 15.031, SD= 6.768, Low M= 14.750, SD= 4.934) \((F(1, 124)= 0.071, p= 0.791)\). Therefore, explicit reports of positive affect and negative affect did not significantly differ between conditions of impression management and cannot provide an alternative explanation for the results.

The first assumption of ANOVA is an independence of observations. This assumption presupposes the effects of a between-subject design: participants are exposed to only one treatment through randomization. This assumption is maintained by random assignment of participants to experimental conditions. Since participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions, this assumption is upheld.

The second assumption of ANOVA is a normal distribution of residuals. To assess the assumption of normality for self-brand distinction, a Shapiro-Wilk’s test was run. The results suggest that the distribution of residuals is not normal in either brand relationship conditions (Best Friend \(F(63)= 0.952, p<0.05\); Business Partner \(F(65)= 0.919, p<0.01\)). Since the null hypothesis can be rejected, the assumption of normality is violated; however, ANOVA is robust to violations of the normality assumption. To assess the assumption of normality for social utility, the results of a Shapiro-Wilk’s test suggest that the distribution of residuals is normal in both brand relationship conditions (Best Friend \(F(63)= 0.990, p=0.873\); Business Partner \(F(65)= 0.971, p=0.125\)). Since the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, the assumption of normality is upheld.

The third assumption of ANOVA is homogeneity of variance. The results of Levene’s test for self-brand distinction suggest that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected \((F(3, 124)=\)
0.603, \( p=0.603 \)); thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is met. The results of Levene’s test for social utility also suggest that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected (\( F(3,124)= 2.494, p=0.063 \)). Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is upheld.

Despite the successful manipulation of brand relationship type, there was no significant effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction: the results of a two-way ANOVA measuring the difference of self-brand distinction between brand relationship conditions reveal no significant main effect of brand relationship type (Best Friend \( M= 79.444, SD= 75.107 \); Business Partner \( M= 98.985, SD= 85.462 \) \( F(1,124)= 1.840, p=0.177 \)).

This result indicates that brand relationship type did not significantly influence the amount of money allocated to the self and to the brand. This suggests that even though participants reported feeling closer to the brand when primed with a best friend relationship than when primed with a business partner brand relationship, and they were able to distinguish between “best friends” brands and “business partners” brands, the difference in the amount of
money allocations they made to themselves and to the brand did not demonstrate the pattern established by Aron et al., (1991). The direction of the results is in the predicted pattern found by Aron et al., (1991); however, the difference between these means is not statistically significant.

The results of the quality perceptions measure indicates a significant effect of brand relationship type on perceived quality of the fictional brand of jeans (Best Friend M= 13.111, SD= 1.206; Business Partner M= 12.477, SD= 1.324) $(F(1,124)= 8.015, p<0.01)$. Therefore, participants believed the product and service of the Orly brand of jeans to be of better quality when primed with a best friend brand relationship than when primed with a business partner brand relationship. However, this result does not aid in providing an alternative explanation since the results of a regression indicate that quality perceptions do not significantly affect resource allocations $(R^2=0.003, B=-3.50, F(1,126), t=-0.634, p=0.527)$. There was no significant difference of perceived quality between impression management conditions (High M= 12.781, SD= 1.386; Low M= 12.797, SD= 1.224) $(F(1,124)= 0.002, p=0.961)$.

To establish a conditional indirect effect, Hayes’s PROCESS syntax (Model 7, Hayes, 2012) was used with a bootstrap of 5000 draws. This process yields estimates for the conditional indirect effects of X on Y through the mediator (M) when W is included in the model, or simply called moderated mediation (Muller et al., 2005). When zero is not included in the bootstrapped confidence interval (95% confidence), it may be concluded that the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p< 0.05$. If zero is not included in a set of confidence intervals at one level of W and is included in a set of confidence intervals at the other level of W, this represents a conditional indirect effect of the mediator, and a boundary condition (Muller, et al., 2005; Hayes, 2012).
The bootstrap confidence intervals confirmed a significant indirect effect as the 95% confidence intervals exclude zero. Social utility mediates brand relationship type on self-brand distinction when impression management is low (CI: 0.0270; 27.8404) and when impression management is high (CI: 0.2602; 28.8128). This does not represent a conditional indirect effect as both sets of confidence intervals exclude zero; however it does suggest that a conditional indirect effect may yet be present.

As previously mentioned, the scale used to measure social utility incorporates two components of brand self expression, inner self expression and social self expression (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Inner self expression is consistent with internal social utility, or the value provided by the brand’s ability to allow a customer to express her inner self. These items include “this brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside” and “this brand reflects my personality” (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), for example. Social self expression, on the other hand, is consistent with external social utility, which refers to the value bestowed by the brand’s ability to provide an individual with external rewards such as social status and desirability among one’s peers. These items include, “this brand has a positive impact on what others think of me” and “this brand improves the way society views me” (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), for example. A factor analysis confirmed these two components of measurement, one to be called internal social utility and external social utility. Since the desire to self present is particularly salient in important social settings, high and low impression management conditions would be particularly relevant to elicit or impede external social utility, respectively, rather than internal social utility.

Hayes’s PROCESS syntax (Model 7, Hayes, 2012) was used to assess the conditional indirect effect with internal social utility included as the mediator, the bootstrap confidence intervals reveal no significant indirect effect for low or high impression management conditions.
as the 95% confidence intervals include zero. Thus, there is no significant indirect effect of brand relationship type through internal social utility on self-brand distinction when impression management is low (CI: -1.4762; 22.7341) or when impression management is high (CI: -1.5254; 22.9506).

However, when external social utility was included in the moderated mediation model (Model 7; Hayes, 2012), the bootstrap confidence intervals reveal a conditional indirect effect of impression management. There is no significant indirect effect of brand relationship type through external social utility on self-brand distinction when impression management is low (CI: -0.5008; 23.2377); however, there is a significant indirect effect of brand relationship type through external social utility on self-brand distinction when impression management is high (CI: 0.3718; 25.5408). Therefore, impression management successfully moderates the indirect effect of brand relationship type through external social utility on self-brand distinction. A discussion of the specific mediation process under high impression management follows.

The results of study three partially support hypothesis three and provide support for an exchange of external social resources for a close brand relationship in the context of high impression management that is consistent with the results of study two. Hayes’s PROCESS syntax (Model 4, Hayes, 2012) was used to analyze the indirect effect of brand relationship type through external social utility on self-brand distinction. The results of a bootstrap analysis suggest that the mean indirect effect when impression management is high is positive (a × b = 14.275) and significant with a 95% confidence interval that excludes zero (CI: 1.021; 37.679). As brand relationship type changes from best friend to business partner, external social utility decreases by 1.99 units (a= -1.985, t= -3.238, p<0.01). This suggests that people gain fewer
external social resources and gain less external social utility when primed with a business partner brand relationship than when primed with a best friend brand relationship.

Also, holding brand relationship type constant, a unit increase in external social utility reduces self-brand distinction by -7.190 units ($b=-7.190$, $t=-1.753$, $p<0.10$). Therefore, as social utility is gained by the brand relationship, participants on average gave more money to the brand than to the self. The direct effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction was not significant (path $c'$; $B = 2.201$, SE = 21.416, $t = 0.103$, $p = 0.919$) Again, this supports the results that were found in study two: brand relationships exhibit a similar pattern of IBS indirectly through a mediator of social utility, specifically external social utility.

Figure 10: Empirical Mediation Model under High Impression Management

*Significant at $p<0.10$
**Significant at $p<0.05$
***Significant at $p<0.01$
Chapter 6.0 General Discussion

The purpose of the three studies was to establish if brand relationships influence inclusion of the brand/other in the self resembling interpersonal relationships. These studies also investigated the presence of a mediator and a boundary condition. This research provides experimental evidence that, when it comes to monetary resource allocation strategies that demonstrate an inclusion of the brand/other in the self, brand relationships do not mimic interpersonal relationships.

Aron et al., (1991)’s study demonstrated that close interpersonal relationships influenced a main effect on IOS whereby individuals allocated more money to an “other” than to the self resulting in a small self-brand distinction when the other was viewed as a close or intimate relation. As demonstrated by study two, close brand relationships require the mediating variable of social utility to indirectly demonstrate a similar pattern: individuals on average allocated more money to the brand than to the self, demonstrating high IBS, when a close relationship with the brand was primed because they gained more social utility from the brand. This represents an exchange of resources between the brand and the individual.

Finally, study three validates the mechanism by exposing a boundary condition of the indirect effect. Since social utility is made up of two components, internal and external social utility, the desire to self present or manage impressions is particularly influential for acquiring external social resources. Therefore, when the goal to self present is relevant, the indirect effect is present; however, when the goal to self present is not particularly relevant, the indirect effect is not present.
6.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research advances prior consumer behaviour research and extends brand relationship literature by causally demonstrating that brand relationships do not mimic the resource allocation strategies of interpersonal relationships that demonstrate cognitive merging of self and other (Aron et al., 1991). Consumer behaviour literature has taken for granted that brand relationships are just like interpersonal relationships. While a stream of literature advocates for their similarity (Fournier, 1998; Ji, 2002; Zayer & Neier, 2009), researchers have largely overlooked what makes them different, and how these differences yield interesting results in the cognitive psyche and actions of human beings.

This research focuses on inclusion of the brand in the self, a concept born out of an amalgamation of interpersonal relationship literature and the psychological theory of self expansion, which encompasses “the inclusion of other in the self”. This research suggests that the concept of inclusion of other in the self, where “other” refers to a brand rather than another person, produces a somewhat different pattern of cognitive merging than what has been demonstrated in previous psychological literature (Aron et al., 1991). The element that seems to differentiate the two patterns of cognitive merging is the acquisition of social resources that a brand is able to provide. The value that these resources provide is particularly important to help explain the how brand relationships influence IBS. Understanding how this process occurs is an important theoretical contribution because it provides insight into the mechanics of the cognitive phenomenon.

The application of brand relationships to the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986: Reimann & Aron, 2009) suggests that IBS occurs due to an exchange of social resources. Thus,
an individual gains from the brand the ability to signal status and portray their identity to others they hope to impress. The presence of the indirect effect of social utility experimentally corroborates this theoretical understanding of including the brand in the self.

This research also contributes to consumer behaviour literature by validating the mediator of external social utility and identifying a boundary condition of the indirect effect. The indirect effect of brand relationship type through external social utility on self-brand distinction is present when the need to self-present is high but prevented when it is low. The importance of this finding is twofold. Firstly, it validates the mechanism of external social utility. Meaning, when access to the mediator is blocked, the relationships between the variables disappear. This is important because it proves that the mediating variable correctly explains the relationship between brand relationship types and including the brand in the self.

Secondly, the validation of the mediating variable also demonstrates a boundary condition of the indirect effect. Boundary conditions elucidate under what circumstances effects tend to occur. Being able to identify when an effect will occur is an important theoretical contribution because it allows researchers to gain further insight into the technicalities of the phenomenon. External social utility facilitates the relationship between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction when there is a high need to manage the impressions made about us; however, this relationship between brand relationship type, external social utility, and self-brand distinction is prevented when there is little need to manage the impressions that are made about us.
6.2 Managerial Contribution

Inclusion of the brand in the self is an important concept for marketers since it represents the idea that consumers view the brand’s resources as their own resources, and consumers need those resources from the brand to achieve their goals (Reimann & Aron, 2009). Hence, there is an overlap in the cognitive structures between two separate entities, the individual (self) and the brand. This cognitive overlap facilitated through the use of brand relationships is therefore something of which marketers should gain awareness and knowledge in order to effectively make use of it for successful customer-relationship management.

The evidence of a mechanism and a boundary condition is particularly helpful to marketers for information regarding how and when to use brand relationships and brand relationship cues to their maximum advantage. The results of this research provide reasonable evidence which suggests that close brand relationships cue an inclusion of the brand in the self by gaining value from the social resources of a brand. Marketers may use this information to create effective advertising campaigns through the use of brand relationship cues. For instance, advertisements that cue a best friend brand relationship that displays how the consumer gains social status in a situation when showing off that status is worthwhile could be an especially effective way to generate revenue. However, an advertisement may prove not to be particularly effectual if the best friend brand relationship cue is present without an appeal to the resources individuals are able to gain from the brand, or if the situation does not evoke a need to manage impressions via those resources.
6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of these three studies must be addressed. First, all three studies use a between-subjects experimental design. Experimental designs are commonly conducted in the laboratory to control for any potential confounds that may influence the data other than the treatment. Therefore, experimental designs tend to lack external validity. Generalizing the conclusions to a larger, more diverse population should be done with caution (Cook & Campbell, 1979). However, the benefit of experimental design and random assignment to treatment conditions is that causality may be inferred (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Therefore, there is an inherent trade-off of external validity for internal validity. While this is a limitation for a substantive contribution, the nature of the contribution outlined by the research questions and objectives explored in this thesis are primarily theoretical. Therefore, this trade-off is warranted.

Second, notwithstanding the use of different product categories in each of the brand relationship scenario manipulations, each study used the same operationalization of the variables under investigation, such as brand relationship type, social utility, and self-brand distinction. Robust experimental designs usually examine the same phenomenon with conceptual replications of the design using different operationalizations of the same variables under investigation to increase experimental rigour, rule out alternative explanations, and reduce potential methodological limitations. The main variables of this research are not operationalized differently. Therefore, future research may consider adopting different operationalizations of the main variables for rigorous conceptual replication.
Third, the independent variable of brand relationship type was inconsistent with regards to its influence on positive affect and perceived quality of the brand. Extant research regarding brand relationships (Fournier, 1998; Zayer & Neier, 2010), interpersonal relationship norms (Clark & Mills, 1993) and brand relationship norms (Aggarwal, 2004) suggests that the two brand relationship types, business partner and best friend, should elicit similar perceptions of quality and no significant differences in emotion. Rigorous pretesting of different brand relationship type scenarios may have elicited more consistent findings between studies regarding the effects of brand relationship type on positive affect and perceived quality of the brand.

Fourth, this research uses a previous study (Aron et al., 1991) as a basis to compare the resource allocation strategies of interpersonal relationships and IOS to those of brand relationships and IBS. This research would have provided a more powerful basis to compare resource allocation strategies had both categories of relationships been investigated concurrently. A 2 (Relationship type: best friend vs. business partner) x 2 (Partner type: brand vs. human) factorial design would have accomplished this goal. Future research could investigate the present research questions under this design.

Fifth, there is an implicit challenge in applying an economic game, like a decomposed game, to a brand relationship because game theory relies on the actions of other human beings playing the game. Therefore, economic games assume that an element of reciprocity is present among the players. Decomposed games or dictator games, however require only one active “proposer” and a passive “receiver”. Despite no strategic action on the end of the receiver, the nature of the game still relies on an “other” who can gain and receive resources in a reciprocal manner. It has been argued that despite the assumption that consumers draw little distinction between the relationships they have with brands and those they have with people, brand
relationships lack the sense of reciprocity to be effective relationship partners (Bengtsson, 2003). Therefore, brands may not be appropriate players in resources allocation games. In other words, it may be unnatural for individuals to think of allocating or withholding monetary resources from a brand as opposed to a fellow human being. Therefore, future research initiatives could explore these research questions with alternative dependent variables that measure a decrease in the differentiation between self and brand or a cognitive inclusion of the brand in the self. For example, Implicit Association Tests (IATs) may provide a promising operationalization of IBS due their ability to capture implicitly held attitudes. IATs assess how fast individuals respond to paired words or pictures. Fast responses are interpreted as representing stronger associations in memory between pairs than slow responses. A cognitive inclusion of brand in the self may influence faster response times due to a reduced distinction between self and brand.

Another avenue for future research could investigate why no significant main effect of brand relationship type on self-brand distinction was found. The results of study two suggest the presence of indirect-only mediation of social utility through brand relationship type on self-brand distinction. Even though indirect-only mediation theoretically parallels full mediation, the lack of a significant main effect raises the possibility of the presence of additional mediators that are opposite in sign. Since the social utility pathway is positive in sign, an omitted mediator that is possibly cancelling out the main effect must be negative in sign. Therefore, future research may investigate potential mediating pathways that are negative in sign.

Finally, the investigation of other boundary conditions for the indirect effect of brand relationship type through social utility on self-brand distinction may provide further understanding regarding when brand relationships successfully influence IBS. The concept of impression management may overly focus on external social utility, or the value one gains from
the brand to signal social status and social desirability rather than internal social utility, which focuses on the value one gains from the brand to express personal values. A different moderating variable could isolate the relationship when internal social utility mediates the relationship between brand relationship type and self-brand distinction.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, three studies experimentally investigate the application of the Self Expansion Model (Aron & Aron, 1986) into brand relationship theory. This thesis examines how close brand relationships influence patterns of money allocations that demonstrate IBS by gaining social utility from a brand. Gaining social utility, particularly external social utility, from a brand is essential for IBS to occur. This thesis also validates the necessary indirect effect by demonstrating when IBS will occur and when it will not. The revelation of this mechanism and boundary condition contributes to the theoretical discussion applying brand relationship metaphors to interpersonal, psychological domains, and it contributes to marketing managers’ knowledge of how and when to use these metaphors and associated norms to influence customer perceptions and behaviour.
References


Appendices
Appendix 1: Brand Relationship Scenarios

Pilot Study: Best Friend

You have been a Nicosia cell phone client for the last five years. You use your Nicosia cell phone quite extensively and have been happy with the style and the quality of their cell phone and services. You have a strong bond with Nicosia and you feel like Nicosia is always there when you need it. Therefore, the Nicosia brand has great personal meaning to you. When you decided to buy your first cell phone, you went to Nicosia over other cell phone stores. You still remember how excited you were to take it home with you. You have positive feelings towards Nicosia because of these early memories. Without your Nicosia cell phone, you feel like you are missing an important part of you. Whenever you go to your Nicosia location, the staff is very nice; they remember your name and always greet you with a smile no matter how busy they are. Overall, your experience with Nicosia has been memorable.

Pilot Study: Business Partner

You have been a Nicosia cell phone client for the last five years. You use your Nicosia cell phone quite extensively and have been happy with the style and the quality of their cell phone and services. Nicosia’s deals are among the best in town. What could have been a tiresome transaction was performed effectively and quickly by well-trained staff. Nicosia’s efficient products and services are a large reason why you remain a Nicosia client, otherwise you probably wouldn’t bother. You buy Nicosia because it works, not because it is something you particularly care about. The Nicosia brand does not have great personal meaning to you; therefore, you view your Nicosia cell phone as a means to an end. Whenever you go to the Nicosia location, the service is quick; they respect that your time is valuable. Overall, your experience with Nicosia has been practical.
Study Two: Best Friend

You have had a Galia-Barnett (GB) laptop for the last five years. You use your GB laptop quite extensively and have been happy with the style and the quality of their laptop and services. You have a strong bond with GB and you feel like GB is always there when you need it. Therefore, the GB brand has great personal meaning to you. When you decided to buy your first laptop, you went to GB over other laptop stores. You still remember how excited you were to take it home with you. You have positive feelings towards GB because of these early memories. Without your GB laptop, you feel like you are missing an important part of you. Whenever you go to your GB location, the staff is very nice; they remember your name and always greet you with a smile no matter how busy they are. Overall, your experience with GB has been memorable.

Study Two: Business Partner

You have had a Galia-Barnett (GB) laptop for the last five years. You use your GB laptop quite extensively and enjoy the style and the quality of their laptop and services. GB’s deals are among the best in town. What could have been a tiresome transaction was performed effectively and quickly by well-trained staff. GB’s efficient products and services are a large reason why you remain a GB customer, otherwise you probably wouldn’t bother. You buy GB because it works, not because it is something you particularly care about. The GB brand does not have great personal meaning to you; therefore, you view your GB laptop as a means to an end. Whenever you go to the GB location, the service is quick; they respect that your time is valuable. Overall, your experience with GB has been practical.
Study Three: Best Friend

You have been buying Orly designer jeans for the last five years. You wear your Orly jeans quite extensively and have been happy with their style and quality. You have a strong bond with Orly and you feel like Orly is always there when you need it. Therefore, the Orly brand has great personal meaning to you. When you decided to buy your first pair of jeans, you went to Orly over other clothing stores. You still remember how excited you were to take your first pair home with you. You have positive feelings towards Orly because of these early memories. Without your Orly jeans, you feel like you are missing an important part of you. Whenever you go to your Orly location, the staff is very nice; they remember your name and always greet you with a smile no matter how busy they are. Overall, your experience with Orly has been memorable.

Study Three: Business Partner

You have been buying Orly designer jeans for the last five years. You wear your Orly jeans quite extensively and you enjoy their style and quality. Orly's deals are among the best in town. What could have been a tiresome transaction was performed effectively and quickly by well-trained staff. Orly's quality product and efficient staff service are a large reason why you remain an Orly customer, otherwise you probably wouldn't bother. You buy Orly jeans because they work for you, not because they are something you particularly care about. The Orly brand does not have great personal meaning to you; therefore, you view your Orly jeans as means to an end. Whenever you go to the Orly location, the service is quick; they respect that your time is valuable. Overall, your experience with Orly has been practical.
Appendix 2: Inclusion of Brand in the Self (IBS) Scale

Please select the picture below which best describes your connection with the brand Nicosia/GB/Orly.
Appendix 3: Brand Relationship Questionnaire

Please indicate on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), your level of agreement with the following statements.

1. If Nicosia/GB/Orly was a person, it would be like a best friend

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<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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2. If Nicosia/GB/Orly was a person, it would be like a business partner or a co-worker

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Appendix 4: Sample of Decomposed Game

Instructions

The next slides you will see will present two boxes. Please read the scenario in each box and select your preferred choice, A or B.

Pilot Study

Please select your preferred choice
A or B

If NICOSIA was a person how much money would you allocate to NICOSIA and yourself?

- **A**
  - Self gains $0.00
  - NICOSIA gains $20.00

- **B**
  - Self gains $5.20
  - NICOSIA gains $19.30
Study Two

Please select your preferred choice
A or B

If GB was a person how much money would you allocate to GB and yourself?

A
Self loses $5.20
GB loses $19.30

B
Self loses $10.00
GB loses $17.30

Study Three

Please select your preferred choice
A or B

A
Pay $97 in taxes
Spend $26 towards Orly jeans

B
Pay $87 in taxes
Spend $50 towards Orly jeans
Appendix 5: Perceived Quality Scale

Please indicate your answer on a scale from 1 (Very poor) to 7 (Very good)

1. I believe the quality of the product to be:

   1  Very Poor  2  Poor  3  Somewhat Poor  4  No opinion one way or the other  5  Somewhat Good  6  Good  7  Very Good

2. I believe the quality of the service to be:

   1  Very Poor  2  Poor  3  Somewhat Poor  4  No opinion one way or the other  5  Somewhat Good  6  Good  7  Very Good
Appendix 6: Demographics

Age

What is your age?

Press ENTER when you have typed your answer
Gender

What is your gender?

Press ENTER when you have typed your answer

Undergraduate year

What year of your undergraduate program are you currently in?

1st Year
3rd Year
5th Year
2nd Year
4th Year
6th Year
Other
Appendix 7: Social Utility Measure

Please indicate on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), your level of agreement with the following statements.

1. This brand symbolizes the kind of person I really am inside.

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree

2. This brand reflects my personality

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree

3. This brand is an extension of my inner self.

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree

4. This brand mirrors the real me.

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree

5. This brand contributes to my image.

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree

6. This brand adds to a social ‘role’ I play.

   1 Strongly Disagree
   2 Disagree
   3 Neither agree nor disagree
   4 Agree
   5 Strongly Agree
7. This brand has a positive impact on what others think of me.

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<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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8. This brand improves the way society views me.

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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Impression Management Manipulation Scenarios

High Impression Management

You are going out on a first date with someone you really like. You put on your Orly Jeans, your favourite top and blazer, and you leave to meet your date.
You are going to see a good buddy of many years. You put on your Orly Jeans, your favourite top and blazer, and you leave to meet your buddy.
Appendix 9: Impression Management Manipulation Check

Please indicate on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), your level of agreement with the following statements.

In this situation,

1. I feel like I need to convey a good impression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. It is important that I show myself off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. It doesn’t really matter how I’m viewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10: PANAS Mood Scale

Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers. Use the following scale to record your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very slightly or not all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Quite a bit</td>
<td>Extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Distressed</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guilty</td>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>Proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irritable</td>
<td>Alert</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td>Inspired</td>
<td>Nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
<td>Jittery</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 11: Quality Questionnaire

Please indicate on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), your level of agreement with the following statements.

3. I believe the quality of the product to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Somewhat Poor</th>
<th>No opinion one way or the other</th>
<th>Somewhat Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I believe the quality of the service to be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Somewhat Poor</th>
<th>No opinion one way or the other</th>
<th>Somewhat Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 12: Product Category Frequencies

<table>
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<th>Overall % Product Categories Selected</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeans</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpack/Purse</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunglasses</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deoderant/Perfume</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headphones</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13: Ethics Approval Certificate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH</th>
<th>RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD – General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REB-G</td>
<td>Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| APPROVAL PERIOD: | January 23, 2013 to January 23, 2014 |
| REB NUMBER:      | 12DC037 |
| TYPE OF REVIEW:  | Delegated Type 1 |
| RESPONSIBLE FACULTY: | TANYA MARK |
| DEPARTMENT:      | Marketing & Consumer Studies |
| SPONSOR:        | N/A |
| TITLE OF PROJECT: | You've Got a Friend in Me: Activating Inclusion of the Brand in the Self through Consumer-Brand Relationships |

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human subjects in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition. The REB requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The REB must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please complete the Change Request Form. If there is a change in your source of funding, or a previously unfunded project receives funding, you must report this as a change to the protocol. Unexpected events and incidental findings must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Responsible Faculty, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols. The Tri-council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition, requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, a final report and, if the approval period is longer than one year, annual reports. Continued approval is contingent on timely submission of reports.

Membership of the Research Ethics Board - General: S. Banerjee, Community Member; J. Carson, Community Member; C. Carstairs, COA; S. Chuang, FRAN (alt); K. Chuong, Graduate Student; J. Clark, PoliSci (alt); J. Devlin, OAC; J. Dwyer, FRAN; M. Dwyer, Legal; B. Ferguson, CME (alt); H. Gilmour, Community Member (alt); J. Goertz, CME; B. Gottlieb, Psychology; B. Gigueré, Psychology (alt); S. Henson, OAC (alt); L. Kuczynski, Chair; R. Ragan, Legal (alt); V. Shalla, SOAN (alt); R. Stansfield, SOAN.

Approved:

per

Chair, Research Ethics Board- General

Date: ______________________
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Brand Experiences Study**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Tanya Mark, Dr. Theodore Noseworthy, and Suzanne Rath, from the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to the thesis component in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Science. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Suzanne Rath (srath@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 58567) or the Faculty Supervisor Dr. Tanya Mark (markt@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 53687).

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to determine how different experiences with brands influence how fictitious amounts of money are distributed.

**PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we ask that you do the following things:

1. Read a scenario presented on the computer screen (2 minutes)
2. Complete a computer-assisted questionnaire. (8 minutes)
3. Complete a computer-assisted task designed to measure distribution of money (8 minutes).

It will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete this study. Please contact Suzanne Rath (srath@uoguelph.ca) if you have any questions. In addition, if you are curious about the results of this study, Suzanne can make them available to you upon request in July 2013.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no physical or psychological risks associated with this study. Since the tasks and questionnaire are computer-based, you will be looking at a computer screen for the duration of the study. Should you experience any eye-strain from the brightness of the computer screen, please take a moment and look away from the screen. Resume when ready.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants and society will benefit from this study by gaining a better understand of how different experiences with brands affect choices regarding allocating money.

**PARTICIPATION COMPENSATION**

You will receive 0.5% course credit upon completion of the study.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. Your identity and the data you provide will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a 3 digit ID code. ID codes will not be matched to your name or any identifying information in any way. You will not be asked to provide your name and student number once the study begins. All data will be kept on a secure, password protected USB drive and stored in a locked desk drawer.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. You may choose to remove your data from the study. The investigator may withdraw your data from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so. Once you have submitted the data and left the experimental room, the investigators will not be able to single out or identify your data in order to withdraw it.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time and stop participation in the study without any consequences. You are not giving up any legal rights or claims because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read and understood the information provided for the study “Brand Experiences Study”. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

__________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant

__________________________________________
Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

__________________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

__________________________________________
Signature of Witness

__________________________________________
Date
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

*Brand Experiences Study*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Tanya Mark, Dr. Theodore Noseworthy, and Suzanne Rath, from the Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to the thesis component in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Science. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Suzanne Rath (srath@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 58567) or the Faculty Supervisor Dr. Tanya Mark (markt@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 53687).

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**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no physical or psychological risks associated with this study. Since the tasks and questionnaire are computer-based, you will be looking at a computer screen for the duration of the study. Should you experience any eye-strain from the brightness of the computer screen, please take a moment and look away from the screen. Resume when ready.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants and society will benefit from this study by gaining a better understand of how different experiences with brands affect choices regarding allocating money.

**PARTICIPATION COMPENSATION**

You will receive $10.00 in cash upon completion of the study.
CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. Your identity and the data you provide will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a 3 digit ID code. ID codes will not be matched to your name or any identifying information in any way. You will not be asked to provide your name and student number once the study begins. All data will be kept on a secure, password protected USB drive and stored in a locked desk drawer.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You may choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. You may choose to remove your data from the study. The investigator may withdraw your data from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so. Once you have submitted the data and left the experimental room, the investigators will not be able to single out or identify your data in order to withdraw it.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may choose to withdraw your consent at any time and stop participation in the study without any consequences. You are not giving up any legal rights or claims because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON  N1G 2W1

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I have read and understood the information provided for the study “Brand Experiences Study”. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

____________________________________
Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

____________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

____________________________________
Signature of Witness

Date
Appendix 16: Debrief Form

Research Participation Debrief

Thank you for your participation in this study! The true name of this study is “You’ve Got a Friend in Me: Activating Inclusion of the Brand in the Self through Consumer-Brand Relationships”. The consent form that you read stated that the study was about how different experiences with brands influence choices in distributing fictional amounts of money. This was in fact, a minor deception. The true purpose of the study was to determine how different brand relationships activate an unconscious goal to “include the brand in the self” thereby influencing goal-directed choices. It is very difficult to study unconscious goals, especially when one knows that is what is being done. For this reason, it was important that the true name and purpose of the study was hidden from you. If you wish to have your data deleted from the data set at this time, please inform the student investigator.

There are many different types of brand relationships, for example, flings, secret affairs, committed partnerships, and marriages of convenience. In this study, a best friend relationship and a business partner relationship was being investigated. The choice task that you completed is called a decomposed game. It presents you with a choice between two options that allot a hypothetical amount of money to yourself and to a brand. The difference between the amount of money allocated to yourself and to the brand, based on the choices you made, produced your self-brand distinction value. This self-brand distinction is a reflection of your “inclusion of the brand in the self”, or the extent to which you view a brand’s resources as your own resources. It was hypothesized that this value would change depending on the brand relationship scenario you read.

The information that you have provided by your participation today will guide researchers to further understand how different brand relationships influence goal-directed choice. More specifically, it will lend further understanding as to how different brand relationships activate an unconscious goal to acquire a brand’s social resources, such as its ability to provide social status and self expressiveness, and how this influences choices. This information is useful for marketers as it provides support that references to brand relationships can be used in advertising campaigns to increase ad effectiveness.

Just as a reminder, all data is strictly confidential. Your name will not be linked to your responses in any way. Please feel free to contact Suzanne Rath if you have any questions regarding this research or if you wish to know more about the results, which will be available in July 2013. Please do not share the information in this debriefing form with others, should they wish to participate.
Thank you very much!

Suzanne Rath
MSc Candidate | University of Guelph
Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies
MacDonald Institute
srath@uoguelph.ca
Appendix 17: Factor Analysis of Social Utility Scale

### Communalities

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Extraction</th>
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<td>SU3</td>
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<tr>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

### Total Variance Explained

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
<th>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
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</thead>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>4.608</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>3.647</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>100.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Component Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.
### Rotated Component Matrix\(^a\)

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<tr>
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<td>.695</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.211</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU4</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.220</td>
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<td>SU5</td>
<td>.228</td>
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<td>.704</td>
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<tr>
<td>SU8</td>
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
\(^a\) Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

### Component Transformation Matrix

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-.643</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.