



Brand Stereotypes: On the relationships with gendered brand personality and agentic and communal values in fostering Consumer–Brand identification

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ABSTRACT

This research draws on social identity theory and social role theory of gender stereotypes to investigate the role of brand gender personality (masculine and feminine) on generating brand warmth and competence, and how consumers' agentic and communal values condition the effects of brand stereotypes on consumer–brand identification. The theoretical model is tested via two different studies. In the first study ($N = 490$), 21 brands across different product categories are used to test the theoretical model. Then, a second study ($N = 469$) corroborates the previously identified relationships and further shows that the effect of brand stereotypes on consumer–brand identification is moderated by agentic and communal motivations. The present study contributes to research on brand stereotyping while providing managerial insights that can be used to enhance the relationship between brands and consumers.

1. Introduction

A multitude of reports published by Deloitte, Havas Group, McKinsey & Company and Consumer Brands Association underscore a growing expectation gap in consumer–brand relationships. Consumers increasingly perceive that promises made by brands are unfulfilled, leading to a sense of distrust. In their pursuit of competency, transparency and honesty they perceive that brands are falling short (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Additionally, the global survey Meaningful Brands (2021) by Havas Media¹ reveals that brand meaningfulness has reached an all-time low, contributing to the escalating mistrust in brands.

In response to this heightened disaffection and rising scepticism, brand management has been promoted under the Brands as Intentional Agents Framework (BIAF). This framework claims that consumers' impressions of brand warmth (worthy intentions) and competence (ability) are crucial in shaping interactions with brands (Kervyn et al., 2022). Building on the work of Diamantopoulos et al. (2021), Xue et al. (2020), Kervyn et al. (2012), and Kolbl et al. (2020), it is evident that both warmth and competence significantly influence brand admiration, emotions, value perceptions, and purchase intentions. Given the intensified scrutiny on brands, understanding the formation of these brand stereotypes (warmth and competence) and their role in building robust

bonds with consumers has become imperative (Rather et al., 2022).

While antecedents of brand warmth and competence, along with their consequences, have been identified in previous research within the BIAF (see Appendix A for a summary), three major gaps persist. This study aims to address them by integrating insights from Social Role Theory and Social Identification Theory to enrich the BIAF.

First, although previous studies have illustrated the influential role of consumer gender in shaping brand stereotypes (Bennet & Hill, 2012) and moderating their relationships with subsequent outcomes (Xue et al., 2020), the gender aspect of brand personality, referred to as gendered brand personality, has not been thoroughly analysed. Drawing from the Social Role Theory of gendered stereotypes, which associates masculine and feminine personality traits with warmth and competence judgments (Pogacar et al., 2021), we propose that gendered brand personality also predicts the content of brand stereotypes. Understanding whether (and how) gendered brand personality impacts on brand stereotypes is crucial for making informed brand positioning decisions in a context where brands struggle adapting to growing female empowerment and convergence of gender roles (Cooke et al., 2022) without losing the support of its traditional consumer target. For example, shifting towards an androgynous positioning (incorporating both masculine and feminine traits) or an undifferentiated one (characterized

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¹ https://www.havasgroup.com/press_release/havas-meaningful-brands-report-2021-finds-we-are-entering-the-age-of-cynicism/.

by the absence of both masculine and feminine traits) by masculine brands (e.g., Ford, Axe, Harley Davidson) and feminine brands (e.g., Dove, Nestle, Disney) might have implications on their social perceptions (e.g., warmth and competence) based on the existence of cross-links between masculine and feminine brand personality and brand stereotypes dimensions.

Secondly, the BIAF model, while emphasizing the diagnostic capabilities of both warmth and competence in explaining consumers' reactions, has encountered a gap in the literature concerning their effects on consumer-brand identification. Current research has either disproportionately focused on warmth (e.g., Stokburger et al., 2012) or has only confirmed the effect of this dimension (e.g., Kolbl et al., 2019) but not the effect of brand competence (see Appendix A). Due to the critical need for building identification-based relationships with consumers, as previously argued, we draw from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and extent the BIAF by examining how brand stereotypes contribute to consumer-brand identification. Importantly, **we integrate gendered brand personality into this analysis**, recognizing its role as an antecedent of identity-based bonds with brands (Ivens et al., 2015). This integration allows us to unify three previously isolated research streams - brand stereotypes, brand personality, and consumer-brand identification - and elucidate the unique contributions of warmth and competence in explaining consumers' identification with brands.

Addressing the ongoing debate on the relationships between brand stereotypes, particularly brand competence, and consumer-brand identification, underscores the need for analysing the conditions under which these relationships occur (Gidaković et al., 2021). To address this gap, we incorporate insights from the Identification Social Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to posit that consumers' values (agentic and communal) act as boundary conditions, shaping strong identification-based relationships when the values embodied by brand stereotypes align with the consumers' personal value priorities.

To fill these gaps, we conducted two studies with diverse consumer samples, brands, and products. In the subsequent sections, we review relevant literature, present hypotheses, discuss the research methodology and findings of both studies, and outline future research directions.

From a managerial perspective, our findings offer strategic guidance for brand managers devising gendered brand positioning strategies. These insights aim to trigger warmth and competence perceptions, reinforcing consumers' sense of belonging to brands. Additionally, we provide valuable considerations for brand practitioners by highlighting the influence of consumers' agentic and communal values on the effectiveness of brand warmth and competence in building consumer-brand identification.

2. Literature review on brand stereotypes: Warmth and competence

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2007) proposes that warmth and competence are the two most basic stereotypical perceptions that map out social perceptions and guide interactions with other people and social groups. The BIAF applied this same idea to brand perceptions and proposed that consumer-brand interactions are driven by the same two fundamental dimensions of the SCM. Accordingly, the warmth dimension, encapsulating positive traits such as goodwill, helpfulness, kindness, trustworthiness, and sincerity, is aligned with cognitive appraisals of brands' intentions. On the other hand, competence, encompassing skilfulness competitiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency, reflects the brand's ability to enact its intentions (Kervyn et al., 2012; 2022).

In support to the BIAF's central claim that social perceptions can also be applied to brand perceptions, a comprehensive review of prior research (see Appendix A) highlights the influence of brand positioning (Gong et al., 2021; Peter & Ponzi, 2018), brand personality (Ivens et al., 2015), brand logo (Japutra et al., 2018), and the assignment of brands to categories such as for-profit/non-profit (Bernritter et al., 2016), global/

local (Kolbl et al., 2019, 2020) or country of origin (Diamantopoulos et al., 2021) on the formation of warmth and competence judgements. Notably, only a minority of studies has examined how gendered brand representations through the use of colours and shapes (Hess & Melnyk, 2016), size cues in brand names (Zhang et al., 2022), and brand name gender (Pogacar et al., 2021) influence stereotypical judgements of warmth and competence despite the fact that they are imbued with subtle gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Particularly, no research has touched upon the role of gendered brand personality, being gender one of the most salient and accessible brand personality characteristics (Machado et al., 2019) that is vital in brand identity and positioning (Ulrich et al., 2020). By exploring this connection, this paper further enriches the BIAF model by expanding upon the work of Ivens et al. (2015) by delving into the gendered dimensions of brand personality as antecedents of warmth and competence.

Additionally, the scant research that examines the roles of stereotypical judgements on consumer-brand identification (see Kolbl et al., 2019; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), has primarily focused on the effect of warmth and explored the conditional effect of product involvement (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Given this backdrop of limited insights, the present study builds on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) idea that brands serve as carriers of symbolic meanings to introduce a breaking perspective – that the impact of such judgements depends on the resonance of values inherent in the judgements with those deemed significant by consumers.

3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

This study integrates two distinct psychological theories, namely the theory of gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2012) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), to form the foundation of the theoretical model (see Fig. 1). The integration of these theories is motivated by their complementary perspectives on identity formation, particularly in the context of gender, which is a key social identity. The first theory elucidates identity formation by delineating societal expectations and roles (being warmer or more competent) linked to gender attributes (being more feminine or masculine). In contrast, the second theory explains how individuals internalize and identify with social perceptions (warmth and competence) and gendered personality traits (masculinity and femininity) associated to the brand.

By intertwining these two theories, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between social perceptions (warmth and competence) and gender stereotypes (being masculine or feminine) to explain consumer-brand identification. In essence, this theoretical framework underscores the dual role of brand stereotypes, serving both as predictors of consumer-brand identification and as mediators in the influence of gendered brand personality.

We elaborate on the model relationships and associated hypotheses below.

3.1. Effects of gendered brand personality on brand stereotypes

In the branding literature, gendered brand personality is defined as 'the set of human personality traits associated with masculinity and femininity applicable and relevant to brands' (Grohmann, 2009, p. 106). Masculine brand personalities are defined by traits such as adventurous, aggressive, brave, daring, dominant and sturdy whereas feminine brand personalities embody characteristics like gracefulness, sensitivity, sweetness, and tenderness (Yuen et al., 2021).

This gendered brand personality conceptualization serves as the basis for our argument stating that, according to the social role theory of gender stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2012), the inherent masculine and feminine traits that characterized brand personality impact on judgements of competence and warmth. This theory suggests that warmth and competence judgements subtly incorporate gender stereotypes, stemming from the differing social roles and sociological distinctions

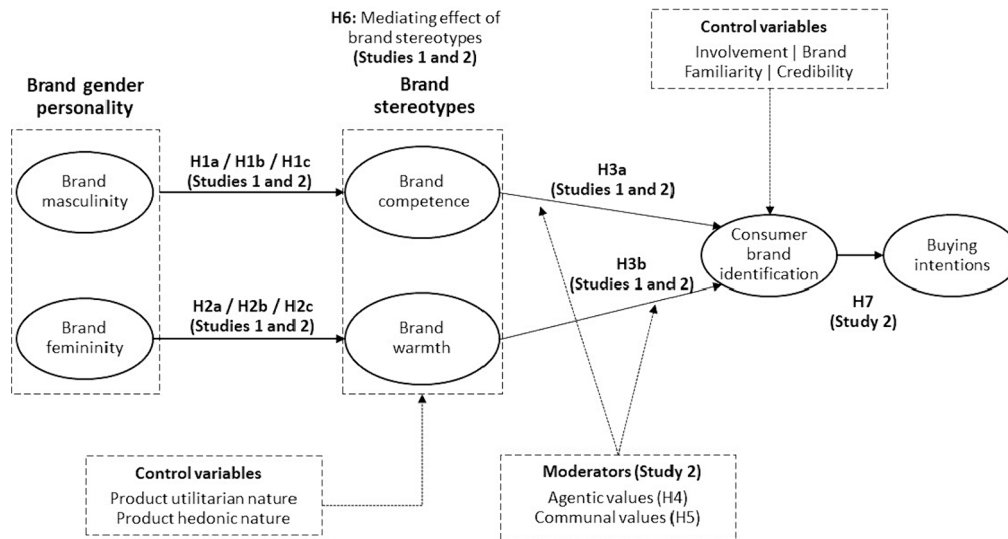


Fig. 1. Proposed research model.

between men and women (Friedman & Lowengart, 2019). These disparities have resulted in gender stereotypical conceptions, broadly defined as consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Social perceptions, shaped by these conceptions, place greater emphasis on goal achievement, performance, and assertiveness (i.e., competence) in the context of men, while warmth-related attributes like benevolence, trustworthiness, care taking and social functioning are highlighted in the context of women (Hentschel et al., 2019; Spielmann et al., 2021). This adaptive function of gender stereotypes facilitates the categorization and simplification of observed behaviours, enabling individuals to make predictions about others (i.e., warm, competent; Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Based on this theory and initial evidence, individuals attach greater weight to competency and task performance in evaluating men, while they prioritize considerations of social relationships and concern for others when assessing women (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Sczesny et al., 2019). Consequently, traits linked to a specific gendered brand personality (masculine vs. feminine) are expected to align more consistently with one of the brand stereotypes (competence vs. warmth). Consistent with the accessibility-diagnostics model (Feldman & Lynch, 1988), a feminine (vs. masculine) brand personality is more accessible and perceived as more diagnostic in shaping judgements of brand warmth (vs. competence). In essence, we posit that a feminine (vs. masculine) brand personality will have a greater impact on warmth (vs. competence) judgements. Formally, we hypothesize:

H1: Masculine brand personality exerts a positive effect on judgements of a) brand competence and b) brand warmth but with c) a stronger influence on brand competence than on brand warmth.

H2: Feminine brand personality exerts a positive effect on judgements of a) brand competence and b) brand warmth but with c) a stronger influence on brand warmth than on brand competence.

3.2. Brand stereotype impact on consumer-brand identification: The moderating role of agentic and communal motivations

Central to our study's framework (Fig. 1) is examining how warmth and competence brand assessments influence consumer-brand identification, which is considered as "the primary psychological substrate for that kind of deep, committed, and meaningful relationships that marketers are increasingly seeking to build with their consumers" (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003, p. 76).

Consumer-brand identification is rooted in the social identity theory

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which is the primary and most important theoretical foundation in explaining why and how people identify with certain groups and social entities (Rather et al., 2022). It proposes that people develop identity-based connections to enhance their self-identity.

Drawing on this theory, Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) expanded the notion of identification into the realm of marketing, suggesting that companies and brands serve as meaningful social categories with which consumers identify to construct and maintain their identity (Itani, 2021; Kolbl et al., 2019). Recognizing that warmth and competence represent two fundamental social impressions highly valued for organizing intergroup relations (Fiske et al., 2007), we draw on social identity theory to posit that brand warmth and competence positively influence consumer-brand identification—defined as consumers' state of oneness with the brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012).

In essence, brands perceived as competent and well-intentioned are particularly attractive as identity-based connections because they satisfy individuals' social identity needs. Formally, we state:

H3a: Brand competence has a positive effect on consumer-brand identification.

H3b: Brand warmth has a positive effect on consumer-brand identification.

To further elucidate the direct associations outlined above from a social identity perspective, the theory posits that individuals, during the identification process, engage in self-categorization into organizationally defined categories. This categorization enables consumers to compare their defining characteristics, such as values, with those defining the brand (Tuskej et al., 2013). Consistent with social identity theory, Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) assert that identity similarity with the brand shapes consumers' brand identification. This occurs as the brand becomes more attractive and meaningful as a means for individuals to authentically express and maintain their sense of self. The notion of identity similarity, akin to person-organization fit in marketing psychology literature, suggests that individuals are drawn to companies sharing similar values (Lam et al., 2013). Basic values, intricately linked not only to personality and self-concept (e.g., Diehl et al., 2004; Malär et al., 2018) but also to the socialization process (Fong & Wang, 2023), play a significant role in this regard.

Aligned with the aforementioned points, consumer-brand identification is reinforced when the importance consumers attribute to various values aligns with those values represented by brand stereotypes

(competence and warmth). This alignment makes these stereotypes more attractively diagnostic for consumers' self-definitional needs. Within this context, literature recognizes agentic and communal values as the two fundamental broad goals influencing perceptions, judgements, and behaviour (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012). Both agentic and communal values offer a concise and universal framework of values, consistent with other theoretical perspectives such as Schwartz's theory of ten basic values (Fong & Wang, 2023; Fung et al., 2016).

Agentic values are associated with self-enhancement (e.g., power and influence) and economic achievement (e.g., wealth and status), while communal values are linked to interpersonal relationships (e.g. being part of a social community and establishing close relationships with others). In essence, consumers' agentic values (versus communal values) align more closely with the values characterizing brand competence (versus brand warmth). Consequently, the effect of brand stereotypes on consumer-brand identification is intensified when the values represented by each stereotype closely mirror those values more relevant to consumers' self-definition needs. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H4: Consumers' agentic values positively moderate the strength of the relationship between brand competence and consumer-brand identification.

H5: Consumers' communal values positively moderate the strength of the relationship between brand warmth and consumer-brand identification.

3.3. Gendered brand personality, brand stereotypes and consumer-brand identification

Although research in this area is limited, empirical studies, such as those by Balaji et al. (2016), Kumar (2022), and McManus et al. (2022), have demonstrated that appealing brand personality traits contribute to stronger consumer-brand identification and connection. These findings, combined with our earlier argument that brand stereotypes impact on consumer-brand identification, suggest that both brand personality and stereotypes serve as antecedents for consumer-brand identification. However, there has not been an exploration of their simultaneous impact. We propose that the influence of gendered brand personality on consumer-brand identification operates through brand stereotypes. This proposition aligns with the central tenet of the SCM, as reflected in the BIAF (Kervyn et al., 2022), stating that perceivers of others engage in complex evaluation regarding the diagnosticity of warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2007, p. 79). Consumers are expected to categorise and simplify gendered brand personality perceptions to form rapid judgements about warmth and competence. This stereotyping process elucidates how gendered brand personality translates into consumer-brand identification. Thus, we model brand stereotypes as mediators in the relationship between gendered brand personality and consumer-brand identification:

H6a: Masculine brand personality indirectly and positively impacts consumer-brand identification through brand stereotypes.

H6b: Feminine brand personality indirectly and positively impacts consumer-brand identification through brand stereotypes.

Finally, our model specification ends with the notion that consumer-brand identification produces valuable pro-brand outcomes (i.e., buying intentions). This proposition is embedded within the theoretical framework of social Identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) that posits that social identification has implications for behaviour and the way one interacts with other social entities. To the extent that consumers align with what the brand symbolizes, it exerts a discernible impact on the behavioural tendencies toward that specific brand. Being so, and consistent with findings of prior research (e.g. Bhattacharya & Chen, 2003; Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Kolbl et al., 2019; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), we argue that consumers who identify with a brand are

more likely to purchase it as a means of self-expression. Accordingly, we propose that:

H7: Consumer-brand identification has a positive effect on buying intentions.

Fig. 1 summarises the proposed theoretical model and control variables.

4. Study 1

4.1. Research design

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed online from February 17 to March 7, 2022, through the platform of a large university of a Western Europe country. The university's email distribution list was employed to reach participants across various degree years and academic fields. There was no incentive provided for survey participation. Participants were randomly exposed to one of 21 brands from diverse product categories (see Appendix B). The selection of these brands and products resulted from a pilot test aimed at identifying items consumed by both male and female consumers, and brand names without any gender-specific resonance. The reason of using non-gender specific brand names was deliberate as previous research (Lieven et al., 2015; Veg-Sala, 2017) indicates that the femininity and masculinity of brand names can evoke gender associations, potentially influencing perceptions of warmth and competence. Utilizing brands without gender-specific resonance helps control for any biased effects associated with the brand name. Ultimately, a total of 490 valid questionnaires was obtained (333 female, $M_{age} = 21.15$, $SD = 4.8$).

All model constructs were measured using validated multi-item scales derived from prior research (see Table 1). The model incorporated various control variables potentially correlated with the primary dependent concepts— brand stereotypes and consumer-brand identification. Firstly, product category was considered a significant influencer of warmth and competence perceptions because hedonic products favour warmth judgements whereas utilitarian ones are perceived as more competent (Diamantopoulos et al., 2021; Peter & Ponzi, 2018; Pogacar et al., 2021).

Secondly, brand familiarity, denoting direct and indirect consumers experience with a brand, was deemed a crucial factor enhancing identification with the brand because it fosters positive associations and attitudes toward it (Junior et al., 2022). Finally, consumer-brand identification was controlled by product involvement because it connotes the perceived relevance of a product category to an individuals' self-concepts (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). We expect our hypothesized relationships to manifest above and beyond covariates effects.

4.2. Measurement model assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was initially conducted, demonstrating a good overall fit ($\chi^2(743) = 1919.74$, $p = 0.0$, $RMSEA = 0.060$, $NFI = 0.96$, $TLI = 0.98$, $CFI = 0.98$, $SRMR = 0.050$) and high construct reliability (ranging from 0.78 to 0.93; see Table 1). The convergent validity of the constructs is evident in Table 1, where all the loadings were significant at $p < .01$ and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed, as the 99 % confidence interval for each pair of constructs' correlations did not include a value of 1 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 2 provides means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the constructs.

Data, collected through consumers' self-reports, were checked for potential common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Harman's one-factor test was employed and revealed that the unrotated factor solution showed multiple factors with none accounting for the majority of covariance. Additionally, CFA indicated that a unidimensional model

Table 1
Constructs measures and psychometric properties.

Construct (source)	Stand. loadings (t-value)	CR	AVE
Consumer–brand identification (CBI; Kolb et al., 2019; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012)		0.93	0.79
I feel a strong sense of belonging to [BRAND] [ident1]	0.93 (27.11)		
I identify strongly with [BRAND] [ident2]	0.96 (28.69)		
[BRAND] embodies what I believe in [ident3]	0.85 (23.18)		
[BRAND] has a great deal of personal meaning for me [ident3]	0.82 (21.86)		
Brand warmth (BW; Fiske et al., 2007; Halkias & Diamantopoulos, 2020)		0.91	0.64
Friendly [warm1]	0.78 (20.03)		
Kind [warm2]	0.88 (24.48)		
Likeable [warm3]	0.79 (20.68)		
Nice [warm4]	0.81 (21.48)		
Good natured [warm6]	0.81 (21.29)		
Honest [warm7]	0.75 (19.13)		
Brand competence (BC; Fiske et al., 2007; Halkias & Diamantopoulos, 2020)		0.93	0.68
Capable [compe1].	0.85 (23.08)		
Competent [compe2].	0.84 (22.64)		
Efficient [compe3].	0.79 (20.73)		
Skilful [compe4].	0.83 (22.16)		
Expert [compe5].	0.84 (22.85)		
Professional [compe6].	0.84 (22.57)		
Effective [compe7].	0.79 (20.59)		
Brand familiarity (FAM; Kolbl et al., 2019)		0.78	0.64
I do not know [BRAND]/I know [BRAND] [fam2].	0.81 (14.66)		
I have not heard anything about [BRAND]/I have heard something about [BRAND] [fam3].	0.79 (14.34)		
Brand femininity (BFEM; Grohmann, 2009)		0.92	0.65
Express tender feelings [fem1].	0.84 (22.85)		
Fragile [fem2].	0.90 (25.11)		
Graceful [fem3].	0.72 (18.14)		
Sensitive [fem4].	0.72 (18.05)		
Tender [fem6].	0.79 (20.55)		
Affective [fem7].	0.88 (24.30)		
Brand masculinity (BMAS; Grohmann, 2009)		0.92	0.62
Adventurous [masc1].	0.81 (21.19)		
Aggressive [masc2].	0.78 (20.13)		
Brave [masc3].	0.78 (20.11)		
Daring [masc4].	0.85 (22.81)		
Dominant [masc5].	0.81 (21.33)		
Sturdy [masc6].	0.70 (17.50)		

Table 1 (continued)

Construct (source)	Stand. loadings (t-value)	CR	AVE
Assertive [masc7].	0.81 (21.28)		
Product involvement (INVOL; Veg-Sala, 2017)		0.91	0.77
This is a product that really matters to me [invol1].	0.92 (25.89)		
It is a product that I attach special importance to [invol2].	0.93 (26.55)		
I am particularly attracted to this product [invol4].	0.76 (19.47)		
Product utilitarian nature (UTIL; adapted from Kolbl et al., 2019)		0.88	0.71
This product is unhelpful/helpful [util1].	0.87 (23.03)		
This product is not functional/functional [util2].	0.90 (24.38)		
This product is unnecessary/necessary [util3].	0.77 (19.39)		
Product hedonic nature (HED; adapted from Kolbl et al., 2019)		0.85	0.66
This product is dull/exciting [hed1]	0.73 (17.87)		
This product is not delightful/delightful [hed2]	0.89 (23.30)		
This product is unenjoyable/enjoyable [hed3]	0.82 (20.70)		

Notes: [BRAND] = randomly assigned brand; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

yielded a considerable worse fit ($\chi^2 = 9378.73$, $df = 779$) compared with the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 1919.74$, $df = 743$). Hence, common method bias does not pose a significant threat in this study.

4.3. Structural model and hypotheses test

Following the confirmation of reliability and validity of multi-item scales, we analysed the results of the structural model. This model encompasses hypothesized relationships (H1, H2, H3, and H6) and accounts for potential effects of earlier described covariates.

The structural model demonstrated a favourable fit (see Fig. 2). To enhance confidence in the model's specification, we compared it with an alternative model wherein brand stereotypes do not fully mediate between gendered brand personality and consumer-brand identification.

A chi-square difference test revealed a significantly better fit for the alternative model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 23.68$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .01$), where masculine brand personality exerts a positive and significant effect on consumer-brand identification. Consequently, this model was retained for hypotheses testing, and relevant parameter estimates are depicted in Fig. 2.

Consistent with predictions (H1a and H1b), masculine brand personality exhibited a positive and significant relationship with brand stereotypes (see Fig. 2). To assess differences in its impact on competence and warmth, we compared this model with another incorporating equality constraints on the paths from brand masculinity to competence and warmth. A chi-square difference test showed significant results between the two models ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 78.15$, $p < .01$), with the alternative model displaying a poorer fit. This implies that the effect of brand masculinity is stronger on competence compared with warmth, supporting H1c.

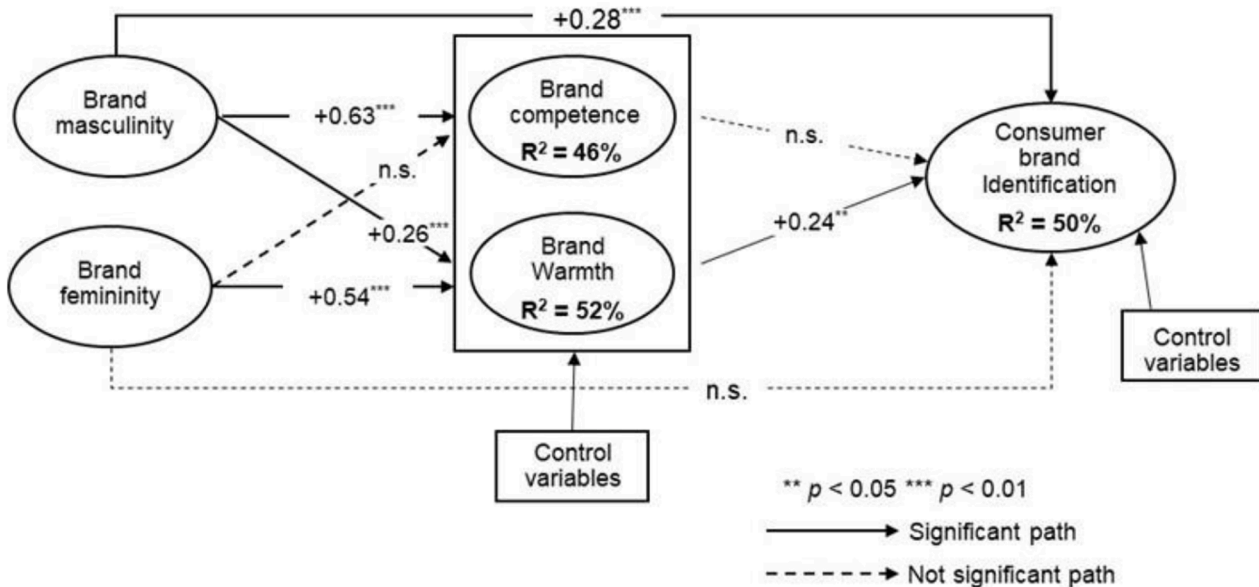
Concerning feminine brand personality, the findings align with H2b, indicating a positive and significant relationship with warmth. However, in contrast to H2a, it lacks a significant impact on competence. Applying equality constraints to paths from feminine brand personality to both competence and warmth, a chi-square difference test showed a worse fit for the alternative model ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 111.7$, $p < .01$). Consequently, brand femininity does not exert comparable effects on warmth and competence, with its impact on brand warmth being stronger,

Table 2

Construct means, standard deviations and correlation matrix.

Construct	Mean	SD	Correlations (phi estimates and standard errors)								
			CBI	BW	BC	FAM	BFEM	BMAS	INVOL	UTIL	HED
CBI	2.41	1.52									
BW	4.19	1.30	0.53								
BC	4.85	1.35	0.55	0.72							
FAM	6.08	1.67	0.17	0.14	0.22						
BFEM	3.48	1.49	0.39	0.69	0.36	−0.01					
BMAS	3.74	1.46	0.55	0.52	0.66	0.13	0.51				
INVOL	4.31	1.73	0.47	0.33	0.34	0.09	0.36	0.31			
UTIL	5.50	1.47	0.23	0.09	0.26	0.37	−0.02	0.25	0.41		
HED	5.37	1.49	0.24	0.20	0.21	0.35	0.18	0.23	0.34	0.53	

Notes: Correlations between any two constructs (phi) are shown below the diagonal. Standard errors of phi estimate between any two constructs are shown above the diagonal.



Fit of the model: $\chi^2 (751) = 2,852.25$, RMSEA = 0.073, NFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.072

Additional paths controlled in the model:

Brand familiarity → Consumer–brand identification	0.02 ^{n.s.}
Product involvement → Consumer–brand identification	0.29***
Product hedonic nature → Brand warmth	0.04 ^{n.s.}
Product utilitarian nature → Brand competence	0.09***

Fig. 2. Summary of structural model results.

supporting H2c.

H1 and H2 were formulated with the assumption that both masculine and feminine personality impact both brand stereotype dimensions. To formally assess whether this specification is superior, we compared the hypothesized model in Fig. 2 against an alternative model where brand masculinity solely affects competence, and brand femininity solely affects warmth—a scenario described as an “exclusive” approach by Davvetas & Halkias (2019). The chi-square difference test indicated that the alternative model exhibits a significantly poorer fit than the hypothesized model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 43.15$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.01$). Notably, the hypothesized model also accounts for a higher proportion of the variance in warmth ($R^2 = 0.52$ vs. 0.43) and competence ($R^2 = 0.46$ vs. 0.35). Therefore, both masculine and feminine brand personalities contribute to conveying information about brand properties for the formation of

brand stereotypes, albeit with varying importance.

Regarding H3, which proposes a positive effect of both brand stereotypes on consumer-brand identification, only the influence of brand warmth was found to be significant and positive (H3b supported), while competence did not yield statistical significance ($p > 0.10$; H3a not supported).

Concerning the hypothesized indirect effects of gendered brand personality on consumer-brand identification through brand stereotypes (H6a, H6b), the results indicate that the indirect effect of both brand masculinity ($\beta_{INDIRECT} = 0.14$, $p < 0.01$) and femininity traits ($\beta_{INDIRECT} = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$) is positive and significant, supporting H6a and H6b. Further analysis revealed that consumer-brand identification is better explained when considering these indirect effects. The estimation of an alternative model where gendered brand personality and stereotypes act

independently as drivers of consumer–brand identification results in a significant worse fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 414.76$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < .01$).

In a further examination of the empirical results, we run the theoretical model without control variables to test its robustness. The outcomes remained stable and consistent, confirming all hypothesized effects except for the relationship between brand competence and consumer-brand identification (H3a). While H3a lacked support in the model with control variables, without them H3a was confirmed at a 5 % significance level. Notably, this finding diverges from the study of Kolbl et al. (2019), where such an effect was not observed in a model without other variables influencing consumer-brand identification. Thus, as observed in this study, it appears that brand competence fosters consumers' identification with the brand in the absence of other predictors of consumer-brand identification.

4.4. Discussion

The results from Study 1 are intriguing and promising; however, their generalisability is limited. Firstly, our data come from a convenience sample of students. Secondly, Study 1 did not control for the possibility that warmth and competence judgements of existing brands may also be influenced by consumers' direct experiences with them or by brand perceptions developed over time (via advertising campaigns, etc.). To enhance the validation and generalization of the findings, we conducted Study 2 with a national sample of consumers, introducing a fictitious brand with a primed gendered personality (masculine/feminine). The main aim of Study 2 is to shed light on how consumers' values condition the effect of brand stereotypes on consumer–brand identification (H4, H5). Additionally, we also expanded our examination of brand outcomes by incorporating consumers' buying intentions as a consequence of identifying with the fictitious brand (H7).

5. Study 2

Previous research on brand gendering has shown that brand cues like brand name/logo, design, font type, and package shape can influence the gendering of brand personality (Boeuf, 2020; Pang & Ding, 2021; Wen & Lurie, 2018). However, minimal research has primed gendered brand personality using human values associated with the brand, with Veg-Sala (2017) being a notable exception.

Human values are abstract representations of desired end states guiding people's lives (Wu et al., 2020) and brands can be imbued with these values to gain consumer preferences (Pinna, 2020; Torelli et al., 2012). In line with the notion that men and women generally exhibit distinct values due to biological differences and various social experiences (Pinna, 2020), they attach different importance to self-transcendence values (STvalues; e.g. tolerance, social justice, unity with nature and benevolence) and self-enhancement values (SEvalues; e.g. social status/prestige, personal success, power and independence; Veg-Sala, 2017).

In the context of brands, values are considered a pertinent content domain for generating brand meanings in the form of brand personality (Batra, 2019). Recent research (see Boeuf, 2020; Veg-Sala, 2017) has experimentally tested the effects of specific values associated to brands on their masculinity and femininity personality.

Based on this rationale, we adopted a similar approach to prior work (e.g., Boeuf, 2020; Veg-Sala, 2017). This procedure involves creating two descriptions for a fictitious brand using self-enhancement and self-transcendence values to prime gendered brand personality. The underlying premise is that, as previously explained, STvalues generate feminine content and that SEvalues generate masculine one.

5.1. Stimulus development and pre-test

To establish value concept primes for a fictitious clothing brand, a convenient sample of 100 participants (44 % female, $M_{age} = 31.7$, SD_{age}

$= 9.28$) were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement). They viewed an identical advertisement, differing only in the headline and message frames. The layout of each advertisement contained the brand name with a slogan followed by an ad concept copy (see Appendix C).

Following exposure to one of the two advertisements, participants rated the brand's association with SEvalues (two items: power and achievement, $\alpha = 0.93$) and STvalues (two items: social concerns and concerns with nature, $\alpha = 0.889$) on 7-point scales (Wu et al., 2020). Ratings for masculine ($\alpha = 0.90$) and feminine ($\alpha = 0.92$) brand personalities (Grohmann, 2009), and brand familiarity were also collected.

A paired samples *t*-test of the mean differences revealed that the self-enhancement brand concept scored higher on SEvalues than on STvalues ($p < .01$). Conversely, the self-transcendence brand concept scored significantly higher on STvalues than on SEvalues ($p < .01$). Additionally, the self-enhancement brand concept also rated higher on SEvalues than the self-transcendence concept ($M_{self-enhancement\ concept} = 4.68$, $M_{self-transcendence\ concept} = 3.30$, $t_{98} = 3.95$, $p < .01$), while the reverse was true for STvalues ($M_{self-enhancement\ concept} = 1.62$, $M_{self-transcendence\ concept} = 4.90$, $t_{98} = -11.25$, $p < .01$).

As expected, the self-enhancement brand concept rated significantly higher on masculine traits than on feminine ones ($M_{masculine\ traits} = 3.65$, $M_{feminine\ traits} = 1.93$, $t_{50} = 8.62$, $p < .01$). In contrast, the self-transcendence brand concept was perceived as more feminine than masculine ($M_{masculine\ traits} = 3.20$, $M_{feminine\ traits} = 3.51$, $t_{48} = -2.06$, $p < .05$). These findings confirm that both brand concepts effectively prime gendered information about the fictitious brand. Notably, the brand was unfamiliar to participants ($M = 1.69$, on a 7-point scale, $t(99) = 14.67$, $p < .01$).

5.2. Method and measures

Participants were recruited through the Netquest company's online consumer panel, employing probability sampling to ensure representation of a large Western European country's population. Random selection from the panel and a quota system guarantee demographic and geographic distributions reflective of the country's population. Participants accessed a password-protected website anonymously to complete the online questionnaire between July 6th and 8th, 2022. The final number of questionnaires received (469 individuals) was aligned with the budget constraints we had. Table 3 provides demographics details.

New concepts were measured as follows: purchase intentions comprised three 7-point items (e.g. unlikely/likely, improbable/probable, unsure/sure; $\alpha = 0.89$, CR = 0.89, AVE = 0.74; Diamantopolous et al., 2021). Agentic and communal values (Trapnell & Paulhus, 2012)

Table 3
Demographic characteristics of respondents (Study 2, sample = 469).

Categories	Count (%)
Gender	
Men	225 (48)
Women [ident2]	244 (52)
Age (years)	
18–24[rm1]	63 (13.4)
25–34[arm2]	88 (18.8)
35–44[warm3]	122 (26)
45–54[4]	109 (23.2)
>54 m[6]	87 (18.6)
Household income (€, monthly)	
<1,500[compe1].	93 (26.72)
1,501–3,000[mpe2].	162 (46.55)
3,001–5,000[compe3].	71 (20.40)
>5,000 [compe4].	22 (6.32)
Missing.	
Education	
High school or lower	219 (46.69)
Bachelor level	173 (36.88)
Master/PhD level	77 (16.41)

were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = ‘not important to me’ and 7 = ‘highly important to me’). Four items assessed agentic motivations (e.g. power and status; $\alpha = 0.82$, CR = 0.82, AVE = 0.55) and six items assessed communal motivations (e.g. humanity, compassion and altruism; $\alpha = 0.93$, CR = 0.93, AVE = 0.70). A one-item measure of credibility of the brand concept description was also included.

5.3. Manipulation check

Participants rated the self-enhancement brand concept significantly higher on SEvalues ($M = 4.28$) than on STvalues ($M = 3.07$, $t_{236} = -10.246$, $p < .01$). Conversely, the self-transcendence brand concept received higher ratings for STvalues ($M = 4.72$) than SEvalues ($M = 4.13$, $t_{231} = 6.929$, $p < .01$). A paired t -test indicated that self-enhancement brand concept was perceived as more masculine than feminine ($M_{\text{masculine traits}} = 4.04$, $M_{\text{feminine traits}} = 3.02$, $t_{236} = -11.125$, $p < .01$). For the self-transcendent brand concept, it was perceived slightly more masculine than feminine ($M_{\text{masculine traits}} = 4.06$, $M_{\text{feminine traits}} = 3.94$, $t_{231} = -2.409$, $p < .05$). However, this result does not invalidate the theoretical model estimation, as the primary goal of the brand concepts was to generate gendered personality brand meaning, which the test confirms.

5.4. Measurement model assessment

To test the measurement and structural models in Study 2, we followed the same analytical procedures as in Study 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated a good overall fit ($\chi^2 = 3,063.28$, $df = 1,270$, RMSEA = 0.057, NFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.041). Construct reliability values ranged from 0.82 to 0.96, while average variance extracted (AVE) scores ranged from 0.55 to 0.86, surpassing the commonly accepted standards of 0.60 and 0.50, respectively (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Additionally, the square roots of the AVE of each latent variable were considerable larger than the correlations of each pair of constructs, supporting discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.5. Structural model and hypotheses test (H1, H2, H3, H6, H7)

To test hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H6, and H7 we estimated a structural equation model that yield an overall acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 2,449.11$, $df = 914$, RMSEA = 0.063, NFI = 0.98, NNFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.041). However, to assess the model’s specificity, we compared it to an alternative model proposing a partial mediating effect of brand stereotypes, where both brand masculinity and femininity directly impact on consumer–brand identification. The chi-square difference test indicated non-significant result ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.55$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p = .26$), suggesting that a full mediating effect does not significantly worsen the fit. Thus, we retained the proposed Fig. 1 model for hypothesis testing. Table 4 illustrates results consistent with Study 1.

Both brand masculinity and femininity exhibit positive and significant effects on competence (brand masculinity: $\beta = 0.56$, $p < .001$; brand femininity: $\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$), and warmth (brand masculinity: $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$; brand femininity: $\beta = 0.59$, $p < .001$). Consequently, H1a, H2b, H2a, and H2b are all substantiated. To compare the impact strength of brand masculinity and femininity on stereotype content dimensions (H1c, H2c), we again contrasted the proposed model with others that incorporate equality constraints on relevant paths. All comparisons yielded significant chi-square difference statistics (brand masculinity: $\Delta\chi^2 = 63.91$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .001$; brand femininity: $\Delta\chi^2 = 60.32$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .005$), signifying that brand masculinity and femininity exert no comparable influences on warmth and competence, supporting H1c and H2c.

Regarding the effects of brand stereotypes on consumer-brand identification, the findings indicate a significant positive effect for brand warmth ($p < .001$; H3b supported) but not for brand competence

Table 4

Structural model estimation results (Study 2).

Estimated paths	β	Hypothesis	Supported
<i>Direct effects</i>			
Brand masculinity → Brand competence	0.56***	H1a	✓
Brand masculinity → Brand warmth	0.31***	H1b	✓
Brand femininity → Brand competence	0.35***	H2a	✓
Brand femininity → Brand warmth	0.59***	H2b	✓
Brand competence → Consumer-brand identific.	n.s.	H3a	
Brand warmth → Consumer-brand identific.	0.64***	H3b	✓
Consumer-brand identific. → Buying intentions	0.79***		
<i>Indirect effects</i>			
Brand masculinity → Consumer-brand identific.	0.17***	H6a	✓
Brand femininity → Consumer-brand identific.	0.34***	H6b	✓
<i>Control relationships</i>			
Product hedonic nature → Brand warmth	0.05*		
Product utilitarian nature → Brand competence	n.s.		
Product involvement → Consumer-brand identific.	0.09***		
Brand familiarity → Consumer-brand identific.	0.11***		
Credibility of the brand concept → Consumer-brand identific.	0.16***		

Notes: β = standardised coefficient; n.s. = hypothesised effect not significant, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

(H3b not supported). Additionally, H7 is confirmed as consumer–brand identification positively influences buying intentions ($\beta = 0.79$, $p < .01$).

Table 4 reveals that the corresponding indirect effects of masculine and feminine brand personality via brand stereotypes on consumer–brand identification are positive and significant, thus supporting H6a and H6b.

Overall, the model relations explained 72 % and 74 % of the variance in competence and warmth, respectively, 71 % of the variance in consumer–brand identification, and 62 % of the variance in buying intentions, indicating substantial effect sizes (Cohen, 1988).

5.6. Moderation analysis (H4 and H5)

To assess conditioning effects of communal and agentic values (H4, H5), two separate moderation analyses were conducted using PROCESS (model 1) with 5,000 bootstraps and a 95 % confidence interval. One analysis involved brand warmth, while the other involved brand competence as predictors of consumer-brand identification. As expected, the results revealed significant two-way interactions between warmth and communal values ($b = 0.053$, $t = 2.153$, $p < .05$) and between competence and agentic values ($b = 0.052$, $t = 2.083$, $p < .05$), supporting H4 and H5.

To aid interpretation, the interactions are illustrated by plotting the simple slopes of the relationships between warmth and competence with consumer–brand identification at ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ values of the corresponding moderating variables. As hypothesised (see Fig. 3), warmth was significantly and positively related to consumer–brand identification at low, medium and high levels of consumers’ communal values, with conditional effects of 0.68, 0.75 and 0.81, respectively. Concerning the moderating effect of competence (see Fig. 3), it was significantly different from zero only at medium and high levels of agentic values but not at low levels ($p = .198$). Therefore, the effect of competence on consumer–brand identification is conditioned at medium and high levels of agentic values.

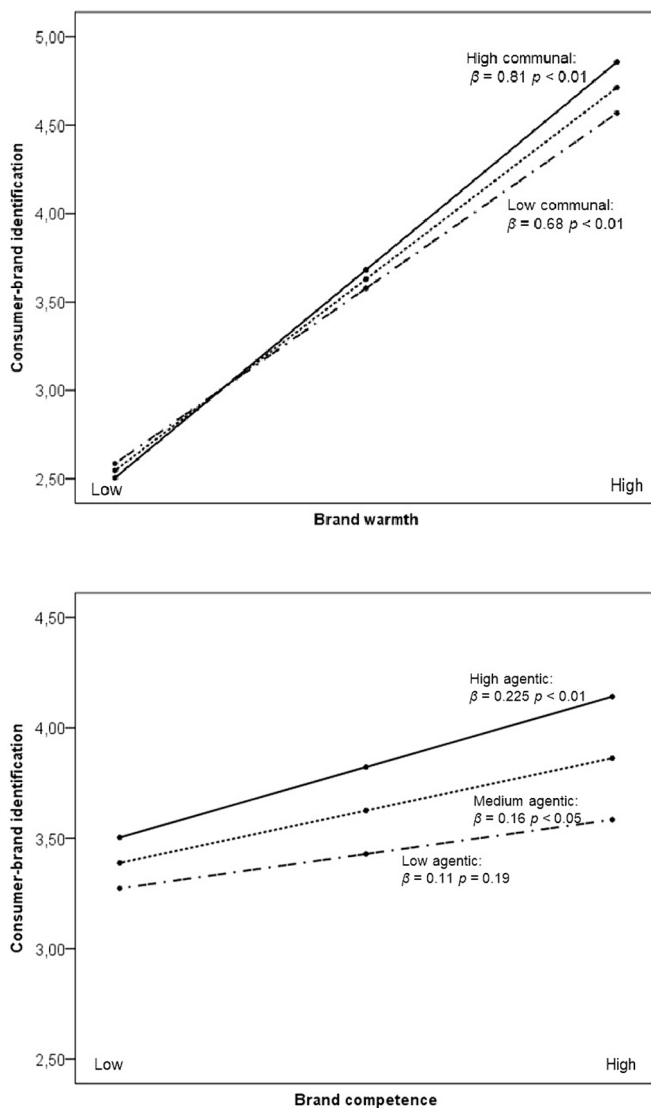


Fig. 3. The moderating effect of agentic and communal motivations.

6. General discussion and implications

While previous research has extensively explored the antecedents and consequences of brand warmth and competence stereotypes (see Appendix A), our study is the first to empirically examine how these stereotypes are influenced by gendered brand personality and how consumers' agentic and communal values serve as a boundary condition in the link between brand stereotypes and consumer-brand identification.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

In line with social role theory of gender stereotypes, our study contributes to branding literature by establishing masculine and feminine brand personality as antecedents of brands stereotypes. This relationship is demonstrated for both real (Study 1) and fictitious brands (Study 2). This focus on gendered brand personality adds theoretical value by addressing gaps in current knowledge related to the impact of consumer gender (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Fiske et al., 2007) and gendered brand cues (Hess & Melnyk, 2016) on stereotypes. Our findings reveal the asymmetrical importance of the two gendered personalities in influencing brand stereotypes, aligning with prior research that evidences that masculine traits are more diagnostically relevant than femininity

traits (see Hess & Melnyk, 2016; Vacas de Carvalho et al., 2020). Notably, our results show that gendered brand personality effects hold over and above the perceived hedonic and utilitarian product properties, which have previously been linked to brand warmth and competence (Peter & Ponzi, 2018).

Consistent with prior research (e.g., Diamantopolous et al., 2021, Kolbl et al., 2019, 2020; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), this study upholds the assertion that consumer-brand identification hinges more on warmth rather than competence. This primacy of warmth judgements is explained by the fact that they occur both before competence assessments (Cuddy et al., 2008) and with heightened cognitive accessibility (Wojciszke, 1994). From an evolutionary perspective, prioritizing warmth judgements aligns with the notion that discerning others' intentions for goodwill or harm is more crucial for survival than evaluating their capabilities (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2007). Furthermore, warmth judgements significantly shape approach-avoidance tendencies, constituting a fundamental aspect of evaluation (Cacioppo et al., 1997; Peeters, 2001). Cognitively, this result is also explained by individuals exhibiting greater sensitivity to warmth-related information compared to competence-related details (Hack et al., 2007; Willis & Todorov, 2006; Ybarra et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, our study reveals that competence influences consumer-brand identification under specific conditions, enhancing our understanding of the boundary-spanning mechanisms shaping these effects (see Appendix A). Advancing past research that failed to discern a competence effect (Kolbl et al., 2019, 2020), we found that, within the domain of consumer-brand identification, the alignment of values between consumers and those embodied by brand stereotypes can elucidate the impact of brand competence. Study 2 reveals a positive and significant effect of brand competence at moderate and high levels of agentic values but not at low levels. Although we cannot substantiate hypothesis 3a (a direct effect of brand competence on consumer-brand identification), the absence of a connection between these two concepts becomes apparent only when consumers exhibit low levels of agentic values. This aligns with insights from Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012) and Kolbl et al. (2019), suggesting that brands perceived as cold (e.g., competent) are less robust and meaningful candidates for identification than warmer brands. In our study, this effect is specifically noted among individuals with low agentic values, where competence is deemed less significant, resulting in weaker brand sentiments (Kolbl et al., 2019) or even negative affect towards the brand (Davvetas & Halkias, 2019). Conversely, at moderate and high levels of agentic values, brand competence emerges as a pertinent factor in explaining consumer-brand identification.

Finally, prior studies explored the independent effects of brand personality (Ivens et al., 2015) and stereotypes (Kolbl et al., 2019, 2020) on consumer-brand identification. However, the joint influence of these factors on identity-based bonds has not been explored. This research fills this gap by integrating gendered brand personality and stereotypes within the same model, unveiling the dual role of brand stereotypes as predictors and mediators. Our findings illustrate that specifying brand stereotypes as mediator enhances the understanding of consumer-brand identification in the context of gendered brand personality.

6.2. Managerial implications

Our findings offer actionable implications for brand managers. They should note that both masculine and feminine brand personalities positioning can enhance impressions of competence and warmth. An exemplar of this approach is evident in the AXE brand's success. Initially, the brand effectively conveyed competence attributes, emphasizing dominance and power in its original "AXE effect" campaign aimed at attracting females. Subsequently, AXE transitioned to a more contemporary representation of masculinity with the "Men do cry" campaign, portraying a warmer and emotionally expressive brand positioning. Another noteworthy example is Channel, which initially

centred its positioning around a notion of femininity depicted through delicate and elegant women in emotionally charged and warmly styled advertisements. However, the brand has recently undergone a transformation to project a more potent and independent feminine image, emphasizing competence traits. This transformation is exemplified by the use of celebrities appearing in iconic suits while engaged in activities such as driving motorcycles or speedboats.

In this context, the literature suggests various strategies to reinforce masculine or feminine traits in brands, including brand design elements like logos, colours, and shapes, as well as utilizing size cues in brand names (Hess & Melnyk, 2014; Kim & Maglio, 2021; Pang & Ding, 2021). Managers can emphasize the femininity or masculinity of their brands by crafting messages that convey traits listed by Grohmann (2009) for brand personality. Associating brands with STvalues or SEvalues can also shape gendered brand perceptions, as demonstrated in Study 2. For instance, brands have implemented marketing programmes aligning with feminine STvalues (e.g. supportiveness, sustainability and caring for others). Nike supports women and the LGBT community in sports, while Barbie (Mattel) has introduced dolls with disabilities. Scott (Switzerland) has a sustainability-focused programme, Re-Source by Scott, and Trek (United States) collaborates with the World Bicycle Relief in a campaign where customers donate bicycles to empower under-resourced communities globally.

Although we observed the primacy of warmth over competence in explaining consumer–brand identification, we do not advocate omitting brand competence impressions from brand management practices. Consumers keep brands under constant scrutiny, leveraging the influence of social networks to transform minor concerns into significant boycotts. Brands face boycotts not only for perceived warmth-related issues, such as environmental harm or animal mistreatment (e.g., L’Oreal’s animal testing), but also for competence-related reasons like data breaches and faulty products. High-profile examples include the Samsung Galaxy Note 7’s battery explosions, the 2013 horsemeat scandal affecting several supermarkets like Tesco, Asda or Lidl, and Tesla’s recent recall of 1.6 million cars in China. A sole focus on a specific stereotype may lead to a suboptimal strategy for fostering positive consumer responses because, for consumers with moderate and high levels of agentic values, brands with a competence stereotype are highly attractive to identify with. Similarly, communal values also boost the effect of warmth on consumer–brand identification and, subsequently, on buying intentions. Therefore, brand managers are well-advised not only to estimate consumers’ current value priorities (e.g., [strategicbusinessinsights.com](#)) but also prime consumers’ agency-communion motivations. On the one hand, examples of agentic messages are Axe’s ‘Find Your Magic’, Shiseido’s ‘Power is you’ and Lush’s ‘Sleigh your gifting game’. On the other hand, the brand Love Beauty & Planet (Unilever)

uses a communal message on its webpage with the statement ‘Transform bath-time into a small act of love for body, mind and planet’. In addition, real-life illustrates examples of companies that have used both motivation types. In 2018, Barbie (Mattel) launched the Dream Gap Project with the slogan ‘If you can dream it, you can be it. #Unapologetic’. More recently, in 2021, the company launched ‘Barbie Loves the Ocean’ with the campaign ‘The future of Pink is Green’, thereby moving from agentic motivation to communal motivation. These messages potentiate the effect of brand stereotypes, thereby creating a stronger bond between brand and consumers.

6.3. Limitations and further research recommendations

This study has certain limitations that call for further research. Primarily, it considered only two gender positioning strategies. Acknowledging masculinity and femininity as independent dimensions rather than endpoints on a continuum, the androgynous and undifferentiated brand positioning strategies warrant additional attention. Second, the role of men and women in developed countries has evolved, forcing some companies to reposition their brands in accordance with emergent role models, exemplified by fathers involved in traditionally female domestic activities (e.g. Aunt Bessie’s) or the evolving ideals of masculinity and femininity (e.g. AXE or Mattel). Our research did not explore the acceptance of gender stereotypes or gender identity. Future investigations should examine how these factors influence the efficacy of brand positioning strategies. Furthermore, a third limitation arises from the acknowledgment that cultural variations exist in the degrees of masculinity and femininity, as well as in the adherence to traditional gender roles. Cultural research should explore relationships between gendered brand personality and brand stereotypes (warmth and competence) to assess the generalizability of findings across diverse countries.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Elena Delgado-Ballester: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Estela Fernandez-Sabiote:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. . Overview of studies on brand stereotypes

Study	Theoretical background	Journal	Brand stereotypes antecedents	Brand stereotypes analyzed	Mediators (related to W&C)	Moderators (related to W&C)	Brand Stereotypes Outcome(s)	Methods
Aaker et al. (2010)	No explicitly mentioned	Journal of Consumer Research	Organisation type (profit vs non for profit)	Warmth Competence	Endorsement credibility: High vs low (study 2) Prime: money vs control (study 3)		Admiration Willingness to Buy	3 experiments
Aaker et al. (2012)	No explicitly mentioned	Journal of Consumer Psychology		Warmth Competence	Admiration		Purchase intentions	1 survey
Bennett & Hill (2012)	BIAF model	Journal of Consumer Psychology	Demographic factors (age, gender, income,	WarmthCompetence			Purchase intentions	1 survey

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Kervyn et al. (2012)	BIAF model	Journal of Consumer Psychology	education, and ethnicity)	Warmth Competence	Brand related emotions: admiration, pity, envy, contempt	Purchase intentions Brand loyalty	1 experiment 1 survey
Stokburger-Sauer et al. (2012)	No explicitly mentioned	International Journal of Research in Marketing		Warmth	Consumer-brand identification	Product Involvement Brand loyalty Brand advocacy	2 pilot studies (depth interviews + survey) 1 Survey (panel members) 1 survey
Bennett et al. (2013)	Stereotype content & BIAF models	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	Race	Warmth Competence	Brand related emotions (admiration, pity, envy, contempt)	Purchase likelihood Brand loyalty	1 survey
Valta (2013)	No explicitly mentioned	Journal of Business Research		Warmth Competence	Relational norms Brand related quality	Brand loyalty	1 survey
Kervyn et al. (2014)	Stereotype content model	Social Cognition	Blame attribution (lack of warmth vs lack of competence)	Warmth Competence		Positive information (warmth frame vs competence frame) Purchase intention (study 1) Punitive judgements (study 2) Reputation repair (study 3)	1 survey 2 experiments
Bratanova et al. (2015)	BIAF model	Psychologica Belgica		Warmth Competence	Water taste (study 1), Chocolate taste (study 2)	Loyalty	1 survey 1 experiment
Ivens et al. (2015)	Stereotype content model Consistency theory Theory of social perception	Psychology & Marketing	Brand personality	Warmth Competence	Brand emotions: admiration, contempt, pity, envy	Brand attitude Behavioral intention	1 survey
Bernritter et al. (2016)	BIAF model	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Brand type: for-profit vs nonprofit	Warmth Competence		Brand Symbolism (high vs low)	6 experiments, 1 survey
Hess & Melnyk (2016)	Memory theory	European Journal of Marketing	Gender cues: shape and colour (feminine vs masculine)	Warmth Competence		Competence cues: verbal and visual (high vs low)	4 experiments
Wu et al. (2017)	Stereotype content model Brand attachment theory	Journal of Marketing Management	Style of smart interaction (friend-like vs engineer-like) (study 1) Brand positioning (friend-like vs engineer-like) (study 2)	Warmth Competence		Brand attachment	2 experiments
Japutra et al. (2018)	No explicitly mentioned	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Aesthetic benefit Self-expressiveness benefit	Warmth Competence		Satisfaction Trust Commitment Social benefit	2 surveys
Peter & Ponzi (2018)	Stereotype content & BIAF models	Journal of Advertising Research	Brand description (overall positive, only competent, only warm)	Warmth Competence		Brand type (mixed, hedonic, utilitarian), Product involvement	1 experiment
Davvetas & Halkias (2019)	Stereotype content model & BIAF models Consumer culture theory Associative network memory models	International Marketing Review	Perceived brand globalness Perceived brand localness	Warmth Competence	Global brands category ability & Local brands category intention (study 1), Positive and negative affect (study 2),	Purchase intention (study 2) Switching intention (study 2) Brand loyalty (study 3) Resilience to	1 experiment 2 surveys

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					Brand passion and brand intimacy (study 3)		relational adversity (study 3)	
Fang (2019)	Service dominant logic	Information & Management	Value in use: personalization, experience and relationship	Warmth Competence			Continuance Intention Brand loyalty	1 survey
Kolbl et al. (2019)	Stereotype content & BIAF models	Journal of Business Research	Perceived brand globalness Perceived brand localness	Warmth Competence	Consumer- brand identification		Purchase intentions Brand ownership	2 surveys
Kolbl et al. (2020)	Stereotype content & BIAF models Signalling theory Theory of consumption values	Journal of Business Research	Perceived brand globalness Perceived brand localness	Warmth Competence	Perceived value: functional, emotional, social		Purchase intentions Brand ownership	2 surveys
Xue et al. (2020)	Stereotype content & BIAF models, Empathizing- systemizing theory	Frontiers in Psychology		Warmth Competence	Brand trust	Gender (study 2)	Purchase intentions	2 experiments
Diamantopoulos et al. (2021)	Stereotype content model	International Marketing Review	Country warmth Country competence	Warmth Competence		Brand typicality Utilitarian/ hedonic properties	Brand attitude Purchase intentions	1 survey
Gidaković et al. (2021)	Stereotype content model, Cue utilization theory Consumer learning by analogy model Model of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods, Consumer lay theories	British Journal of Management	Origin warmth, Origin competence User warmth User competence	Warmth Competence	Perceived value		Purchase intentions	2 surveys
Gong et al. (2021)	Theory of reasoned action Theory of planned behavior	Journal of Product and Brand Management	Green brand positioning (emotional vs functional)	Warmth Competence		Construal level (low vs high)	Brand attitude Purchase intentions	2 experiments
Joo & Wu (2021)	BIAF model	Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	Model body size: diverse vs straight only	Warmth		Consumer body size (plus vs straight)	Brand attitude Purchase intention	1 experiment
Pogacar et al. (2021)	Stereotype content model	Journal of Marketing	Brand name gender	Warmth		Typical user gender (study 5), Product category (study 6)	Brand performance (study 1), Attitude (study 2), Product choice (studies 3 & 4)	Content analysis, 1 Survey, 4 experiments
Zhang et al. (2022)	Accessibility- diagnosticity model	Journal of Consumer Research	Brand name size cues	Warmth Competence	Gender associations	Gender positioning Culture		1 text mining 6 experiments

Appendix B. . Brands and product categories (Study 1)

Product category	Brands
Social networks and smartphones	Pinterest, LinkedIn, Samsung, Sony, Snapchat, TikTok and Apple
Deodorants	Dove and Nivea
Chocolate and snacks	Nestle, Ferrero Roche, Lay, Pringles, Ruffles, Milka and Suchard
Shoes and clothes	Zara, Pull & Bear, Nike, Adidas and New Balance

Appendix C. . Brand concepts (Study 2)

 <p>Never apologise for being ambitious</p> <p>HK is a clothing and accessories brand. Influential, innovative and trend-setter. Its new collection symbolises success. It is the perfect icon to show the best version of yourself. An exceptional choice to enhance your social status. Release the best of you and increase your next personal achievements.</p> <p>a) Self-enhancement brand concept</p>	 <p>Dress the change nature needs</p> <p>HK is a clothing and accessories brand. Committed to society and in harmony with nature. Its new collection symbolises its passion for a more sustainable and fairer world. An exceptional and inspiring choice towards a lifestyle that is more respectful to our community and the planet.</p> <p>b) Self-transcendence brand concept</p>
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