



A Qualitative Inquiry of Brand Pride Motives

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Abstract

This study investigates the motives underlying consumers' experiences of brand pride, an underexplored positive emotion in consumer-brand relationships. While prior research highlights the role of brand pride in shaping loyalty, advocacy, and identity expression, limited work has examined the psychological and social mechanisms through which such brand pride develops. To address this gap, the study conducts 22 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with consumers and employs a rigorous thematic analysis, generating 143 initial codes that were consolidated into 18 sub-themes and subsequently synthesised into four overarching motive appraisals. These appraisals of self-esteem, social affiliation, actualisation, and transcendence represent distinct pathways through which consumers experience pride in brands. The findings demonstrate that brand pride is a multidimensional emotional experience grounded in consumers' self-concept and identity-related processes. By uncovering how specific motivational appraisals give rise to pride, the study advances theoretical understanding of consumer emotions in branding and offers practical implications for brand strategists seeking to cultivate meaningful, identity-relevant consumer engagement.

Keywords: Brand Pride, Consumer Pride, Consumer Brand Relationships, Consumer Emotions, Pride in Marketing, Qualitative

JEL Classification: M31 - Marketing

1. Introduction

Brand pride is “a positive, self-conscious emotion resulting from the appraisal that one is associated with a brand that is valuable” (Kaur & Verma, 2024). It is a self-relevant emotion-based construct that impacts brand-related consumption behaviour (Nandy *et al.*, 2024), perceived when consumers are associated with the brand (Helm *et al.*, 2016), and when the brand satisfies or exceeds consumer expectations (Verbeke *et al.*, 2004). Brand pride is associated with fulfilling specific consumer needs and motives, such as enhancing self-esteem and confidence or standing out amidst a crowd (Kaur and Verma, 2024). Consumers' brand pride experiences have been linked to positive outcomes for brands, including brand loyalty (Kaur & Verma, 2024; Nandy *et al.*, 2024), suggesting the relevance of brand pride for consumer brand relationships.

The construct of brand pride is developed upon the underlying emotion of pride. The appraisal theory

describes emotion elicitation in psychology research (Roseman *et al.*, 1996) and, thus, could be applied to emotion-based constructs in consumer brand relationships. The appraisal framework suggests the existence of motives whose fulfilment may lead to an emotional experience (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Many other constructs within the domain of consumer brand relationships are also based on emotions, e.g., brand love (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand happiness (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018), brand desire (Joshi & Yadav, 2020), etc. In order to understand an emotion-based construct, it may be helpful to understand the underlying motives that lead to the emotional experience. Specifically, studying the underlying motives of brand pride may enable a more functional understanding of the phenomenon. Past research on brand pride is scanty and does not identify such motives, although there is a suggestion that motives may be related to self-esteem (Kaur & Verma, 2024). These motives are unable to describe the experience of brand pride clearly. For example, could brand pride

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make one feel proud of themselves for being better than others in a social context or achieve a goal in a personal context? Motives underlying the emotion of pride have also not been discussed in past literature on emotions, besides the interplay of the dual motives of prestige and dominance (Witkower *et al.*, 2021). The study responds to this research gap by exploring consumer motives that may be linked to a brand pride experience.

The research objectives are to uncover consumer perceptions about their brand pride experiences and identify underlying consumer motives. A greater understanding of such motives linked to brand pride will enable theory development that allows the identification of factors that lead to brand pride and enable theorists to examine the associations and distinctions of the phenomenon with other similar constructs. Identifying motives will allow brand managers to make strategic choices that strengthen consumers' brand pride, leading to positive brand outcomes. Since the objective of this research is exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach may be best suited. The study utilises in-depth interviews and thematic analyses. The study contributes to the extant literature by first suggesting that brand pride may be experienced with the fulfilment of certain motives. Second, the study highlights the application of the appraisal framework to consumer brand relationships. Third, the study also furthers the psychological research on the emotion of pride by suggesting the motives behind a pride experience.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the theoretical foundations of the study. Section 3 describes the methodical approaches. Section 4 describes the findings of the study. Section 5 discusses the study's findings and includes theoretical and managerial contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Brand Pride

Brand pride is a positive construct in consumer brand relationships, which asserts that consumers may feel proud of certain brands. Past research shows that brands perceived to be integrated with the self will likely become sources of brand pride (Kaur & Verma, 2024; Nandy *et al.*, 2024; Helm *et al.*, 2016). Brand pride experiences may include both affective and cognitive aspects, wherein a consumer's positive feelings towards the brand are

complemented by a favourable self-related evaluation of the brand (Kaur & Verma, 2024). Such an evaluation may comprise benefits such as confidence and self-perception improvement (Kaur and Verma, 2024). Brand pride may be experienced in an individual or a social context (Nandy *et al.*, 2024). While research on brand pride is still scanty, the construct has been linked with positive outcomes for the brand such as brand loyalty (Kaur & Verma, 2024; Nandy *et al.*, 2024). Brand pride is also linked with positive organisational outcomes when studied in the context of internal branding (Helm *et al.*, 2016).

Understanding pride as the underlying emotion of brand pride may lead to insights for brand pride research. Several perspectives exist that classify pride into authentic and hubristic pride (Tracy *et al.*, 2010) or as (conspicuous, contagious, introspective and vicarious pride (Decrop & Derbaix, 2010). Pride has been shown to drive consumer behaviour in many domains such as sustainable consumption, luxury and services (Kaur & Verma, 2023). Pride is also experienced online and as a response to advertising stimuli (Kaur & Verma, 2023). Pride is posited to have a lasting influence on consumer attitudes and behaviour with positive outcomes that include higher satisfaction, preference, purchase intention and loyalty (Kaur & Verma, 2023). These positive outcomes of pride are also supported by research that suggests that pride is an evolutionary emotion and has shaped society and human growth across millennia (Beall & Tracy, 2020). Thus, the role of pride is immense in driving consumer behaviour, suggesting that brand pride may be a critical area to study for a comprehensive understanding of emotions in consumer brand relationships.

2.2 Emotion Appraisal and Motives Underlying Brand Pride

The emotion of pride underlies the phenomenon of brand pride. The elicitation of pride can be understood through the appraisal framework. The appraisal theory provides a widely accepted lens to look at emotions within marketing (Bagozzi *et al.*, 1999; Kaur & Verma, 2023; Watson & Spence, 2007) as well as in emotion sciences (Moors, 2009; Scherer, 2022). Several theories have been suggested with varied appraisals (e.g., Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Roseman *et al.*, 1996). These appraisal frameworks suggest that cognition underlies emotions, and the elicitation of emotions is based on how a person evaluates the circumstances and attributes associated with an event. Such an evaluation may be different for people based

on their individual appraisals. Thus, different people may experience different emotions as a response to the same event based on their motives. Generally speaking, motive-consistent events result in positive emotions, while motive-inconsistent events cause negative emotions (Roseman et al., 1996). Pride is a positive emotion caused by motive-consistent events (appraisal 1) linked to the self (appraisal 2) (Roseman et al., 1996).

Extending the appraisal logic to brand pride, it may be posited that brand pride should comprise, first, a motive-consistent appraisal and, second, an involvement of the self. Past studies support the latter assertion by demonstrating associations between brand pride, consumer brand integration (Kaur & Verma, 2024; Helm et al., 2016), and brand-self-congruence (Nandy et al., 2023; Helm, 2016). The former appraisal related to the motive consistent evaluation of events is more open-ended, wherein many motives could be associated with brand pride. Brand pride was linked with perceived brand individuality (Kaur & Verma, 2024), which could suggest a consumer's uniqueness-seeking intention. In the literature on the emotion of pride, pride has been linked with self-esteem motives pertaining to prestige and dominance, suggesting that pride experiences are connected with a self-enhancement motive. Pride is associated with behaviours that increase social rank (Mercadante et al., 2021) and achievement (Weidman et al., 2016). Both psychological research on pride and consumer-related research on brand pride are yet to formally explore the motives underlying pride and brand pride, respectively.

Uncovering the motive appraisal will enable an understanding of the circumstances that may likely trigger brand pride and pride in general. Motives are the "why" of behaviour (Ferguson, 1996) and may include aspects such as simply seeing oneself positively to believing that one's life is meaningful (Vignoles, 2011). Motives have been classified per different views, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Murrayan groups of motives (e.g., power, affiliation, intimacy), and self-related motives (Mayer et al., 2007). As pride lies in the domain of self-appraisal, self-related motives may be relevant to the present study. These motives include the influence of a desired self or feared self (Cesario, 2004) or the Maslowian needs of self-esteem, actualisation, etc. (Maslow, 1943; Mayer et al., 2007). In recent identity research, several theories have enabled the classification of identity motives. One such theory (Vignoles, 2011, 2016) identifies six identity motives of seeing oneself

positively (self-esteem), as competent (efficacy), accepted by those who matter (belonging), distinct from others (distinctiveness), connected with their past, present, and future (continuity), and having a meaningful life (meaning). A tripartite set of self-motives is also suggested, which includes the motives of communion, agency, and coherence (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Other motives about the self, such as self-enhancement, self-preservation, etc., are also suggested (Leary, 2007), but are not part of a cohesive theory. Studying any emotion-based phenomenon, such as brand pride, is on a shaky foundation if the underlying motives of the emotional experience are not uncovered and linked with the phenomenon. Thus, to truly understand brand pride, it is imperative to understand the motives underlying the motive-consistent appraisal of the causing event.

2.3 Brand Pride as Distinct from Other Constructs

Brand Pride is distinct from other emotion-based relationship constructs, such as brand love, brand attachment as well as from other pride-based constructs such as consumer pride and pride of ownership (Kaur and Verma, 2024, 2023). The former is primarily justified using the appraisal framework of emotions (Roseman, 1991), which suggests that emotions differ in the mechanism relating to their underlying appraisals. Distinct emotions are experienced as consequences of the distinct appraisals and contexts in which they may be experienced. This difference between the emotions themselves may extend to the differences between their respective derived constructs (Kaur and Verma, 2024). Consequently, differing appraisals of emotions may indicate differing appraisal patterns of their corresponding emotion-based constructs. For example, love is distinct from pride in that love is experienced as an appraisal of the role of the other in the event, while pride is an experience when the appraisal is made of the role of the self. This may also be the underlying difference in the mechanisms of brand love and brand pride. It is, therefore, prudent to explore what could be distinctly driving the emotion of brand pride.

3. Method

The research aims to uncover consumer motives related to the phenomenon of brand pride. This includes an individual's perceptions and experiences of brand pride,

which can be analysed through qualitative, in-depth interviews (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted to collect data. Informed consent to participate was collected before the interview was conducted. An interview guide was developed with open-ended questions to guide the interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2002). Respondents were asked whether they felt pride towards any brands, followed by an enquiry into why they felt this way. Respondents were also asked to narrate particular moments where they experienced brand pride. Wherever possible and necessary, these questions were followed by probing questions such as “Why is this important to you?” or “How does this help you?” or “How did this make you feel?” to uncover deeper meanings and values. Interviews were conducted independently by the first author.

A call to participate in the academic study was circulated in the authors’ private and professional networks, in which 25 people showed an interest. The final sample comprised 22 respondents aged between 19 and 45 (45% female, 55% male). Respondents were informed that the contents of their interview would be used solely for academic purposes and that any identifying information would remain private. Informed consent was taken verbally during the interview (Allmark *et al.*, 2009). Data was collected in audio and video formats using the Google Meet platform, and suggested precautions were taken to ensure good quality of interviews (Saarijarvi & Bratt, 2021). Each interview was approximately between 20 and 60 minutes long, transcribed verbatim to ensure reliability (Foroudi *et al.*, 2014).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a data-driven inductive approach suitable for exploring complex, contextually grounded meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019). In the first stage, both authors independently conducted *in vivo* coding to allow codes to emerge organically from participants’ narratives rather than from pre-existing theoretical constructs. Each interview was analysed soon after completion, and codes were iteratively compared across transcripts. To enhance methodological transparency and minimise researcher bias, both authors compared their initial code lists, discussed discrepancies, and reached consensus through negotiated agreement (Armstrong *et al.*, 1997; O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). This reflexive and dialogic approach enhanced interpretive depth and ensured that themes were co-constructed

rather than imposed (Nowell *et al.*, 2017; Terry *et al.*, 2017). This process of conducting and analysing interviews was continued until no new codes were generated and saturation was achieved.

A total of 143 first-order codes were generated and subsequently analysed for conceptual similarity through constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These codes were clustered into 18 sub-themes, which were refined into four overarching themes that represented the patterned meanings across the dataset (Table 1). A thematic map was then developed to illustrate the analytical process from first-order codes to higher-order themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Throughout this process, reflexive discussions and iterative revisiting of data ensured that the resulting themes authentically represented participants’ lived experiences while maintaining awareness of the researchers’ interpretive role (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Finlay, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

4. Findings

The findings suggest that brands that evoke pride influence customers in layers. Respondents indicate that first, the brand influences their identity, self-esteem, and confidence; second, brands enable them to perceive affiliation via differentiation and belongingness with others; third, brands enable them to self-actualise by finding inspiration in life and identify growth opportunities; fourth, brands enable them to transcend and think beyond themselves and contribute to the preservation of the environment and growth of society through conscious consumption.

Additionally, it was worth noting that all interviewees reported having a brand in their life that they were proud of, and most could immediately mention brand names in response to this question. This ability to mention a brand name without hesitation may underline the significance of brand pride for consumer behaviour. Respondents spoke with positive undertones while discussing their chosen brands, suggesting brand pride is a positive experience. Each respondent also reported feeling at least one positive emotion, such as feeling good, pleasure, or happiness. Excitement, passion, and feelings of awe were implicit in the respondents’ discussion. Some excerpts are listed below.

“I had never had an experience like that before. When I went to receive my BMW from the showroom, I could not believe my eyes.”

Table 1. Thematic mapping of sub-themes and themes.

Final Theme/Motive	Sub-Theme	Description
Self-Esteem	Self-Enhancement	Brands that make consumers feel confident, attractive, or better about themselves.
	Identity Alignment	Brands are perceived as part of the consumer's personal identity and personality.
	Trust and Reliability	Pride is evoked by brands that fulfil promises and are perceived as trustworthy.
	Long-Term Relationship / Nostalgia	Brands associated with personal memories and life experiences evoke nostalgia.
Social Affiliation: Belongingness and Differentiation	Family and Generational Continuity	Brands connecting consumers to family traditions or generational patterns.
	Role Model Association	Pride from emulating admired individuals through brand ownership.
	Brand Communities	Pride arising from belonging to communities or networks centred around a brand.
	National / Country Pride	Pride from brands representing the consumer's country and national achievements.
	Social Differentiation / Uniqueness	Pride in brands that distinguish the consumer from others, signalling uniqueness.
	Premium / Luxury Value	Pride in owning aspirational, high-end, or exclusive brands.
	Aspirational Ownership	Pride in brands that symbolise status or achievement, even if not yet owned.
Self-Actualization	Performance Enhancement	Brands that enable skill development, goal achievement, or improved performance.
	Freedom / Autonomy	Pride from brands offering a sense of liberation, independence, or personal control.
	Maverick Inspiration	Pride is inspired by brands that are innovative, independent, and extraordinary.
	Value-Based Inspiration	Pride from brands embodying ideals or breaking stereotypes, motivating self-growth.
Transcendence	Conscious Consumption (Environmental)	Pride from brands promoting environmental sustainability and eco-conscious behaviour.
	Conscious Consumption (Social Responsibility)	Pride from brands supporting social causes, stakeholder well-being, or philanthropy.
	Ethical / Value-Driven Business Practices	Pride from brands operating with integrity, ethics, and a "good heart."

"When I look at a brand like Zara, I feel 'oh my God!' As a kid, I used to feel that if I had such clothes, I'd be so happy (and now I do)."

"I am crazy about Balenciaga and the distinctive style it provides."

A discussion of the four themes of self-esteem, social affiliation, actualisation and transcendence is summarised in Table 1 and discussed below.

4.1 Self-Esteem

This first theme represents the nature of the association that respondents mentioned they had with brands. Brands that evoked pride were highlighted as enabling a positive sense of self. Respondents described brand pride towards brands that allow them to feel better about themselves, e.g., a respondent's (male, 43) mention of Onitsuka Tiger, a brand that he feels *"makes him look better and*

enhances his personality". Clothing and apparel brands that enable consumers to feel confident and comfortable with themselves were commonly identified as evoking brand pride (e.g., ETA by Westside, Nike, and Marks & Spencer). Sophistication and simplicity were cited as some characteristics of such brands. Consumers felt a connection with the brands, sometimes to the extent of identifying with the brand itself. Here, some respondents mentioned that the brand was part of their identity. It felt like a part of them, syncing with their identity and representing their personality. This is especially true for clothing brands that helped respondents feel like themselves, e.g., *"I think that Zara as a brand, it perfectly identifies with me. It suits my personality in many ways"* (female, 20). Note that the consumer has emphasised that the brand identifies with them and not vice versa, suggesting that the onus of adapting and changing is on the brand. Another respondent added that even her family identified her brand as a representative and an inherent part of her identity, e.g., *"I have been using Jockey since forever. I don't even remember when. And I cannot imagine using any other brand in place of it. It breaks my heart. My family teases me occasionally by commenting that I am a 'Jockey or nothing'"* (female, 19). Interestingly, while both these brands are clothing brands that consumers identify as an integral part of themselves, the former is worn conspicuously, although it has no visible branding. The latter is an undergarments brand mainly for inconspicuous use. Another respondent adds about a menstrual napkin brand, Sofy - *"I'm using their products daily, and I've been using their products for so long. I'm just comfortable with them. It's like my second skin. It's almost a part of me now. It doesn't feel foreign or uncomfortable"* (female, 19). Brand pride in these examples occurs solely for what the brands mean to the respondents, and the experience is not socially situated.

Besides identifying with the brand, brand-proud respondents could also trust the mentioned brands. Brand trust may be strengthened when a brand can fulfil its promise and achieve what it is communicating over several consumer-brand encounters. A consumer (male, 37), while expressing his thoughts about the safety of Volkswagen, said, *"Two years ago, I met with an accident. I feel it was only due to the high quality of material used in the body design of Volkswagen that I was saved from any injury."* Another consumer (female, 30) was proud of Garnier because she felt that the brand's products were consistent with the claims that the brand made. This trust

enables consumers to deposit their faith in such authentic brands, building brand pride due to this process.

Long-term usage was also a noteworthy ingredient in brand pride experiences. Excerpts shared in the preceding paragraphs imply long-term usage and developing a relationship with the brand. A respondent (male, 31) shared an interesting aspect: he had fond life memories with his motorbike, a Bajaj Pulsar. The bike was with him for many years and reminded him of several good phases of his life. Even today, when he is feeling low or dull, he picks up his bike and goes on drives. Thus, a consumer may feel pride towards a brand that has been a part of their life's journey and now evokes nostalgia and memories and reminds them of how far they have come. The brand here also functions as a friend, lending emotional support to the consumer, suggesting that he is not alone in his life journey.

4.2 Social Affiliation: Belongingness and Differentiation

Findings demonstrate how consumers construct social identities through pride brands. Consumers engage in a social context through two opposing forces: belongingness and differentiation. Brand pride was suggested to be experienced with fulfilling a desire to be associated with particular social groups. Consumers vie to obtain these group memberships by owning or intending to own specific brands, wherein these brands are a tool to experience and demonstrate their belongingness to social groups. This demonstration may be meant to satisfy the self and develop an appearance for others. The study suggests that brands become sources of pride if they enable consumers to build a self-image connected with family, role models, social classes, brand communities, or their chosen nation.

Pride brands enabled consumers to connect with and be a part of their families. In the case of a young girl and being the elder of two sisters, she believed that being able to buy a Maruti could allow her to be a part of the family tradition and continue the generational cycle: *"My family has had Maruti cars since forever. My dad used to have a Maruti; my grandfather always liked to have his Maruti. That's loyalty that comes to me as the next generation. So, for that, I feel a loyalty that I should also be able to afford a Maruti in the future"* (female, 19). This also has cultural significance as she belongs to a predominantly patriarchal family system, and by becoming a woman who is capable

of buying that particular brand preferred by successive male heads of the family, she may be able to prove her worth as a 'son'.

Brands evoking brand pride were also identified as being associated with people whom the respondents idealise and admire. These are the people the respondents want to emulate and become more like, and brands are the medium through which such an association may occur. A respondent said this about Cross pens, *"I first saw a Cross pen in the pocket of my Sr. Vice-President, and then I did some research. This is an expensive pen. Owning one signifies authority and success"* (male, 34). In this case, he developed brand pride towards Cross owing to its ownership by a workplace senior. A similar explanation was given for the brand Louis Phillipe (male, 45). He suggested that *"the brand is associated with people in his memory who were influential, stylish, and wealthy"*. Another respondent (male, 34) spoke about being proud of MRF Sports as their cricket bats were also owned by his favourite sports stars. Here, pride brands fulfil the consumer's motive of associating with role models and perhaps improving their self-image by bringing them closer to their ideal selves.

Some consumers emphasised the importance of being a part of specific brand communities, and this belongingness and connectedness with other members led them to experience brand pride. For instance, a respondent (male, 33) mentioned feeling proud of being associated with Nike. He particularly mentioned the Nike-Run community, where he can be amongst like-minded people who are enthusiastic about running. Similarly, a respondent (male, 34) who owns the Royal Enfield motorbike suggested that he is proud of the brand as he knows that wherever he goes, there will be other riders. The sense of belongingness that riders share due to the brand ensures that he is never alone in their travels, and fellow riders will come to their rescue if needed. This connection with the brand and camaraderie with other brand owners leads consumers to develop and strengthen their brand pride.

Consumers felt brand pride towards a brand that belonged to the respondent's country and had achieved some form of perceived success. This is reflected in the respondents' mention of brands such as TATA, Mahindra, and Amul. The fact that these brands are successful and are expanding into the world was essential to these consumers, e.g., *"With the acquisition of JLR group, TATA has made a name all over the world"* (male, 38);

"Mahindra makes world-class cars and has now put Indian cars into the world markets" (male, 41). Belonging to the same country as the brand's country of origin leads to a feeling of connection to these brands. When the world acknowledges brands from their country, the respondents also feel acknowledged and experience a sense of pride. Since the brand is instrumental in evoking this pride, the respondents identify it as an object of their brand pride. It was noteworthy that consumers who experienced brand pride owing to their country of origin did not necessarily own these brands.

The opposing force of dissociation works in parallel with the motive of association with others. Thus, while one may wish to become more like one's family, role models, and certain social classes, one may also seek to dissociate oneself from these same groups under certain circumstances. This need to be different from others is also among the primary identity motives (Vignoles *et al.*, 2000). The theory of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Lynn & Snyder, 2002) suggests that people differentiate themselves from others to maintain a positive self-concept. Owning certain brands may set them apart from the norms and be a part of a few or a distinct set of people. Such brands enable consumers to be seen by others as accomplished, unique, or even a centre of attraction. This social acknowledgement fuels their pride towards the brand. These brands are a symbol of success (association) and a source of envy in others (dissociation). Since these brands are considered aspirational, they are used conspicuously. Uniqueness and premiumness are two likely characteristics of such brands. A consumer (male, 34), while listing one of the reasons he is proud of the brand Asics, mentioned that *"the brand name is uncommon and unique in my peer group; it is different from regular brands that people wear"*. Since their choice of brands is unique, the consumers also see themselves as unique. Thus, a brand that makes consumers feel distinct leads them to experience brand pride. A premium or luxury experience that was a significant upgrade from other brands justified the higher price and provided perceived value for money despite the cost: *"I have spent a premium on this, but people immediately figure that it's a luxury to be living here"* (female, 35). Some respondents emphasised that the brand could not be afforded by everyone, allowing them to differentiate themselves as consumers, e.g., *"All my peers acknowledged that this laptop (ACER Predator) is something that we dream of owning or aspiring to own. That was a (proud) moment for me"* (male, 22). Brand pride

here was also cited to be felt for an aspirational brand not yet owned by the respondent, e.g., *“People just can’t buy a Rolls Royce. It just doesn’t give out its cars to anyone right. They look for entrepreneurs and next generation leaders” (male, 20).*

4.3 Actualisation

Brands may be instrumental in enabling consumers to grow and progress towards their goals. For example, Decathlon running shoes allow a consumer (male, 31) to *“perform better,”* and an MRF Sports Genius cricket bat enables another (male, 34) to pursue his passion for cricket while feeling connected with his sports icons who have used the same bat. A Harley Davidson owner (male, 35) suggested that the bike gives him *“a sense of freedom,”* enabling him to find a way to escape the monotony of life. These brands, by becoming an integral part of the process of self-actualisation, become a part of the consumer’s self-concept and evoke brand pride.

Another means of self-improvement is through observation and assimilation of abilities and values demonstrated by others. In this vein, it was seen that respondents were closely following the growth trajectory and strategies of certain brands. The descriptions of such brands described them as what this study calls “mavericks”. Merriam-Webster defines a maverick as “an independent individual who does not go along with a group or party”. Maverick brands are independent thinkers who set their own paths by identifying unique market niches, marketing strategies, or process innovations. These brands sometimes achieve what many business thinkers and consumers say is unachievable and, therefore, extraordinary. See excerpt: *“The growth story of Tata Motors is beyond parallel. The fact that they have taken over Jaguar and Land Rover is unthinkable” (male, 38).* Another respondent (female, 31) said, *“Nykaa started with beauty products and has now diversified into the fashion segment while simultaneously becoming a luxury brand. Many other brands tried to copy but were unable to achieve much”.* Such maverick brands often also had founders who had the respect and admiration of their consumers. A respondent (female, 33) said: *“Amazon has come a long way from selling just books. Under the leadership of Jeff Bezos, they have focused on all aspects of the chain and have become a giant that will be unbeatable for at least the next decade. Today, they lead e-commerce, and the company beats Google in many aspects.”* The

respondents saw these maverick brands as inspiring. These brands were described as leaders and role models who paved the way for change in the world. Respondents were aware of these brands’ journey, evolution, and current trajectory and acknowledged the roadblocks and hardships they had overcome. They appreciated the brand’s work in meeting its challenges and thriving in the competitive landscape while maintaining its values. These journeys and embedded brand values were a source of inspiration for the respondents. For example, *“You would think that clothes that are great to wear and look good will not always be comfortable. Zara breaks that stereotype. Subway, too, demonstrates that healthy food can be tasty as well. This makes me feel that I don’t have to do what other people might say is the norm. I can set my standards” (female, 21).* Thus, a brand that inspired people to thrive in their own lives by ‘living an example life’ was a brand that evoked pride.

4.4 Transcendence

The findings suggest that consumers’ desire for improvement (previous theme) may sometimes transcend the self to consider the well-being of others. Maslow had identified this in a work published after his death as selfless actualisation or transcendence. Such consumers connect with brands that have a conscience or a “good heart”. These are brands that run their business with ethics and chosen values. Some consumers believe that profit-making is not the sole objective of these brands and believe in causes other than money. Many respondents identified brands like TATA as evoking brand pride due to their values and organisational culture. On deeper analysis, two aspects of conscience were identified to evoke brand pride. The businesses that a) enable conscious consumption and b) care for stakeholders.

Brands that enable conscious consumption, whether environmentally friendly, mindful, cost-saving, or long-lasting, were cited as objects of brand pride. Brands associated with environmentally conscious activity allow consumers to feel they are contributing to the environment by associating with a responsible brand and, in effect, seeing themselves as somebody who cares for the environment. Environmental consciousness is reflected in consumers’ preferences for brands. When one cannot contribute to sustainable activities through other means, consumers choose brands that enable them to feel that they have contributed, even a little. These are brands

that include elements of sustainability in their behaviour and communications. For example, a respondent (female, 29) said this about Neeman: *“Neeman is emerging as the pioneer of sustainable footwear in India. Using wool and recycled PET bottles, Neeman is finding a sustainable solution and delivering the quality of international standards. I feel proud that they are finding sustainability in a widely used category and are not generating more waste.”* Similarly, another aspect of conscious consumption includes the avoidance of businesses criticised for their increasing focus on profit-making, often at the cost of society and employees. In this scenario, a company that emphasises the well-being of its stakeholders, employees, and society is meant to be seen positively and appreciated by all. These thoughts are reflected in the excerpts: *“Amul has ensured job creation of many dairy farmers over the years”* (male, 34), and *“Tata is a brand with a philanthropic approach. It has become one of the world’s top companies without compromising on its humanitarian value, high investment on R and D, employee training and higher CSR”* (female, 30). Associating with such conscious brands allows consumers to better about themselves and their consumption behaviour, enabling brand pride in the process.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on brand pride by exploring consumers’ narratives of their experiences with brand pride. While prior literature has defined brand pride as being linked with a positive self-related evaluation of the brand, it was unclear what these evaluations could encompass. Using the appraisal framework as a foundation, the present research uncovers the motives whose fulfilment may lead to a positive self-related evaluation of the brand, making it worthy of brand pride. The self-esteem motive suggests that consumers experience brand pride when they feel a brand gives them a sense of self and confidence. The motive of social connection suggests that consumers experience brand pride when a brand enables them to either associate or dissociate with others in a social context. The motive of actualisation leads to brand pride when a brand enables consumers to become better versions of themselves. The motive of transcendence is fulfilled when a brand enables a consumer to think beyond oneself and care for their

larger ecosystem. Overall, the findings suggest that brand pride may be experienced when the range of motives related to the self and identity is fulfilled, indicating the prevalence of brand pride in consumption.

The research demonstrates the contexts within which brand pride may be experienced. First, brand pride may be experienced even when no purchase or physical ownership is involved. Past research supports this through studies on brand pride in consumption (Kaur & Verma, 2024) and the organisation context (Helm *et al.*, 2016). Second, brand pride is experienced even without explicit social approval, i.e., in the personal sphere of mindful consumption or self-improvement. This differs from pride in emotion research, which suggests that a pride experience may include social comparison (Ahn *et al.*, 2021; Feng *et al.*, 2021; Paramita *et al.*, 2020; Septianto & Garg, 2021). Third, while brand pride has been studied earlier in the generic consumption context (Kaur & Verma, 2024; Nandy *et al.*, 2023), brand communities (Sierra *et al.*, 2017; Taute *et al.*, 2017), and organisations (Helm *et al.*, 2016), the current study reveals other applicable domains. While supporting the initial conceptual assertions of brand pride being associated with the self, the self-esteem motive demonstrates that brand pride may be experienced for inconspicuous consumption and personal well-being. The second motive of social affiliation includes belongingness and differentiation, demonstrating that brand pride may be experienced in the social context for conspicuous consumption, such as establishing social class or group memberships. The third motive of actualisation is linked with consumers aiming to become better versions of themselves, for which they seek brands as sources of inspiration. This suggests that brand pride may be linked with constructs of brand purpose, brand values, brand promise, etc. The fourth motive of transcendence encourages consumers to think beyond themselves and become better citizens of the world, and brands linked with enabling transcendence are worthy of brand pride. This may be found in brands associated with sustainable, environmental consumption or brands that may be inclusive in their philosophy. The emotion of pride has been studied in multiple contexts, and the study of brand pride in these contexts can reveal insights relevant to consumer-brand relationships.

This research adds to research on pride in the context of consumption and pride in emotion research by providing additional evidence that pride is related to identity-related motives. Pride in ownership and consumer pride

have been linked with the motives of social connection and personal self-esteem in prior qualitative work, which this research also concludes. Two additional motives uncovered by the present study - actualisation and transcendence - demonstrate that pride is experienced in instances that allow one to become a better version of oneself in local and global contexts. Surprisingly, emotional research on pride has yet to explore the linkages between identity research and pride, which this study and prior studies on pride in marketing have explored. Current knowledge supports the motives of prestige and dominance for authentic and hubristic pride, respectively. The present study suggests that, besides status, motives of esteem, affiliation, actualisation, and transcendence may also be associated with pride. Pride is associated with becoming better versions of ourselves and moving towards the evolution of society (Tracy *et al.*, 2010). This study suggests that pride may also be felt when one is satisfied with one's circumstances and proud of oneself. In fact, the study of pride in emotion research suffers from a shortage of qualitative studies on this emotion, and this research may provide insights into brand pride that may apply to emotion research in pride as well.

Overall, the study supports the applicability of the appraisal theory to brand pride and, by extension, to consumer-brand relationships. Consumers connect the experience of brand pride to underlying motives that they can articulate. There may be further subconscious motives underlying the brand pride phenomenon as well. The appraisal theory has been used to conceptualise some consumer brand relationship phenomena, but has had no data-driven support. Further, such research does not attempt to understand the consumer motives behind the experience of the phenomenon. The current study's findings contribute to the study of consumer brand relationships by providing support for applying an appraisal-driven elicitation of an emotion-based case-based reasoning construct and, second, by suggesting motives that may evoke such a phenomenon.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The study shows how consumers may develop pride towards particular brands and experience brand pride. Strong brands appeal to consumers' actual and ideal selves, so brand pride is an automatic outcome for many brands. Brand owners looking to build strong brands and sustain brand strength over time may find systematically looking at and triggering brand pride beneficial for their success.

Brand pride is linked with identity-related motives of self-esteem, affiliation, actualisation, and transcendence, which deeply enmesh the target brands with the consumers' sense of self. Each of these motives carries different strategic relevance for brand-building. Recognising these underlying motives can, thus, help managers design interventions that go beyond satisfaction or loyalty to nurture long-term emotional investment in the brand. These are described below.

First, brands can enhance self-esteem by acting as tools of self-expression. Managers can strengthen this motive by developing brands that not just meet consumer expectations but also become a source of identity development. Communication that validates individuality, such as "be yourself" narratives, may reinforce consumers' sense of identity and consequently pride towards the brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Sirgy, 1982). This self-esteem-based pride is built on trust and long-term usage; managers must maintain brand reliability and authenticity over time.

Second, consumers' need for belongingness and differentiation is reflected in social-affiliation-based brand pride. Managers can foster a sense of belongingness by encouraging consumer engagement through brand communities, online forums, and social initiatives that allow one to feel part of a shared identity (Stokburger-Sauer *et al.*, 2012). Heritage and national brands can highlight their cultural legacy or collective achievement, respectively, to enhance this sense of connection. At the same time, opportunities for differentiation and standing out must also be ensured. This aligns with consumers' desire to belong to a larger group while still maintaining their unique self-concept (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

Third, actualisation-based brand pride suggests that brands can become a source of personal growth that enables consumers to feel competent and self-fulfilled. Brands may demonstrate how they enable creativity, achievement, or skill development in order to highlight how they support consumers' self-growth journeys. Additionally, talking about the brand's journey or its founders' vision and entrepreneurialism can help consumers recognise and imbibe the brand's drive for excellence as their own, deepening brand pride (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Finally, transcendence-based brand pride emphasises the moral aspects of consumer brand relationships, suggesting that consumers experience brand pride when associated with brands that act responsibly, treat

stakeholders with respect, and contribute positively to society or the environment. Brand managers may align their brand communication with such corporate values and initiatives. This will enable their customers to experience brand pride that emerges from a transcendence of personal benefit towards collective well-being.

Overall, managers should view brand pride as a strategic emotional resource that can function as an identity-linked emotion, sustaining consumer-brand relationships even amid market turbulence. By designing experiences that tap into self, social affiliation, actualisation, transcendence motives, brands can cultivate brand pride that enhances loyalty and advocacy and also strengthens their long-term brand equity and brand resonance.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The identified themes of self-esteem, social affiliation, actualisation, and transcendence represent four core motives underlying consumers' experiences of brand pride and contribute to an understanding of brand pride as both an affective and identity-relevant construct. Thus, while the current research sheds light on the nature of brand pride experiences, many avenues exist to explore and understand the phenomenon of brand pride better.

While care was taken to ensure methodological rigour, the inherent nature of qualitative enquiry is interpretative in nature and may suffer from researcher bias (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Further research may

replicate this analysis to enhance the generalisability of the findings and increase relevance for distinct demographics and contexts. Prior research suggests that people from independent versus interdependent cultures (Bagozzi *et al.*, 2016) or genders (Kemp *et al.*, 2013; Kraemer & Gouthier, 2014) may experience pride differently. Future qualitative research may uncover whether brand pride experiences differ across cultures, genders, and age groups. Brand pride may also have varying causes and effects based on the contextual domain of the phenomenon. Past research suggests that the mechanism of how pride regulates behaviour differs between sustainable and luxury product categories (Septianto *et al.*, 2021). Thus, future qualitative research may focus on specific consumption contexts to reveal additional insights into brand pride.

The present research may also provide insights to develop conceptual models for quantitatively determining the extent of associations of brand pride with other constructs (Table 2). For instance, the motive of self-esteem highlights the connection between brand pride and the self. This suggests linkages with concepts such as self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) and self-brand integration (Stokburger-Sauer *et al.*, 2012). Longitudinal studies on brand pride may help us uncover the temporal dynamics and long-term nature of brand pride and understand how the intensity of brand pride experiences changes over time to impact a consumer's relationships with the brand.

Overall, this study underscores the significance of brand pride as a meaningful and multifaceted consumer experience. By highlighting the connection between brand

Table 2. Brand pride motives and key research questions.

Brand Pride Motive	Key Research Questions	Suggested Theoretical Links
Esteem	How does brand pride enhance consumers' self-concept clarity and perceived competence?	Future studies can test the relationship between brand pride and constructs such as self-brand connection (Escalas & Bettman, 2005), self-congruence (Sirgy, 1982), and psychological ownership (Pierce <i>et al.</i> , 2001). Does brand pride predict brand advocacy or long-term loyalty?
Social Affiliation	How does brand pride function in social or cultural identity signalling?	Comparative studies can reveal whether affiliation-based brand pride differs between symbolic and functional brands, or between different kinds of communities.
Actualisation	Can brand pride act as a motivational driver toward consumer growth?	Future research could explore the links between brand pride and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) or goal-directed consumer behaviour. Longitudinal studies may track how brand pride evolves as consumers' life goals or self-views change.
Transcendence	What role does brand pride play in purpose-led or ethical consumption?	Further work can explore how brands emphasising sustainability, social justice, or ethics in their moral code evoke transcendence-based brand pride.

pride, identity and relationships, it points to the potential for brands to inspire, engage, and create lasting emotional bonds. These insights encourage both researchers and practitioners to explore the rich possibilities of cultivating brand pride.

6. References

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