CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF BRAND HATE IN THE SMARTPHONE INDUSTRY OF HUNGARY: A COMPARISON BETWEEN GENERATION Y AND GENERATION Z

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ABSTRACT

Brand hate is prevalent across industries, particularly in technological sectors, where companies face more brand hate and subsequent retaliatory behaviors than other sectors. Despite some studies focusing on the causes and effects of brand hate in various countries over the past decade, research on brand hate in the technological sector is limited. Notably, there is a lack of investigation into consumers' negative feelings in Hungary, and no research has explored the variations in antecedents and behavioral outcomes of brand aversion among different generations. This study examines the determinants and behavioral outcomes of brand aversion within the smartphone industry in Hungary. It also compares the causes and effects among Generation Y and Generation Z. Data were collected from 238 Hungarian smartphone brand haters using purposive sampling for descriptive analysis. Causes and effects vary between generations. This study identifies product failure, symbolic incongruence, and unethical behavior as the main drivers of brand hate. Generation Y is most affected by negative product experiences, while Generation Z is influenced more by symbolic incongruence and unethical brand actions, highlighting their deeper ethical concerns. Behavioral responses to brand hate differ significantly, with Generation Y leaning towards negative word-of-mouth and Generation Z preferring online complaining. Generation Z exhibits higher narcissism compared to Generation Y. The moderating effect of narcissism is also substantial in the adoption of aversive behaviors in Generation Z than in Generation Y. The findings have important implications for marketing strategies and brand management. Smartphone companies should focus on enhancing product quality, improving brand image, and ensuring ethical practices.

If you are a Hungarian, your basic state of mind is the feeling of betrayal. (Viktor Orbán, Hungary's Prime Minister, to an *Austrian Kleine Zeitung* interviewer, May 2019).

INTRODUCTION

Smartphone usage is rapidly increasing in both developed and developing nations. Between 2015 and 2020, the percentage of smartphone users in the European Union rose by 41%. In Hungary, the mobile phone market has expanded significantly since the launch of mobile services in 1994 (GSMA 2016). By 2022, 83% of Hungarians owned smartphones, a substantial increase. More than 7.46 million people used smartphones in 2023, with a prediction of 7.64 million by 2028, up from just 5% in 2010 (Statista study 2023). These devices have evolved beyond communication tools to become essential for work, play, and information access (Statista report 2023).

Smartphones have also revolutionized the financial industry, particularly in Fintech, providing numerous benefits for consumers and financial institutions (CGAP 2017). About two-thirds of Hungarians prefer using their mobile phones for payments over traditional credit cards (Budapest Business Journal 2019). In 2023, the revenue from Hungary's smartphone market was US$0.58 billion, significantly contributing to the country's GDP (Statistics 2023).

Research by the GSMA and the World Bank shows that a 1% increase in mobile penetration can boost GDP growth by up to 0.077% in high-income countries like Hungary (GSMA, 2016). Mobile services drive investment, innovation, and employment, enhancing Hungary's international competitiveness and living standards (GSMA, 2016).

The rapid growth and fierce competition in the mobile market pose challenges for organizations in retaining customers (Joshi, 2014). This growth has led to a more competitive landscape in the Hungarian smartphone market. Companies are increasingly vying for consumer attention and market share as the market becomes saturated with a wide range of smartphone brands and models. This heightened competition has the potential to lead to brand hate, where consumers develop negative attitudes toward certain brands due to perceived or actual shortcomings (Casalo et al., 2010).

Research on customer dissatisfaction and brand hate is increasing, with many respondents in previous studies identifying smartphone brands as the most hated (Pinto & Brandao, 2021). The smartphone industry is particularly prone to customer dissatisfaction and hate compared to other sectors (Hegner et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2021; Platania et al. 2017). Curina et al. (2021) also reported that technology brands tend to attract significant consumer hate. These findings highlight the unique challenges the smartphone industry faces in managing customer relationships and mitigating negative consumer emotions.

This study focuses on Hungary for two main reasons: first, there is, no existing research on brand hate in this country; second, Hungarian consumers are increasingly knowledgeable and demanding, driven by media and internet influences (Deák and Hajdu, 2013). Furthermore, individualistic cultures like Hungary's are more prone to revenge behaviors (Bechwati & Nasr, 2011). Kucuk (2018) highlighted the need to understand and manage consumer brand hate, and this study responds to that call. It compares the antecedents and behavioral outcomes of brand hate among Generation Y and Generation Z in Hungary's smartphone industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generations

This study will focus on consumers belonging to Generations Y and Z, guided by various reasons elucidated in prior research. Firstly, Generation Y and Z account for 100% of the total luxury market growth, a notable increase from 85% in 2017 (Bain and Company's Annual Luxury Study 17th ed). Secondly, in every surveyed country, the younger demographic exhibits significantly higher rates of smartphone ownership, internet accessibility, and social media usage. Across all advanced economies (including Hungary), a substantial majority of individuals below the age of 35 own smartphones (Pew Research Center 2019). Finally, Rodrigues et al. (2021) underscored the necessity for a comparative analysis that investigates disparities between the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts in the domain of branding. Another important reason to consider Gen Y and Z is that the construction of a narcissistic identity, characterized by an increasing "preoccupation with self-image," is mainly observed among younger generations (Lambert et al., 2014). Generation Y (Millennials) is characterized by higher levels of narcissism compared to previous generations. This is evidenced by traits such as self-confidence, entitlement, and a desire for admiration (Dingfelder, 2011). Generation Z is often portrayed as being even more narcissistic than Generation Y (Chatzoglou et al. 2020). Such an inquiry could prove valuable for enhancing comprehension of their distinctive characteristics (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Generation Y. First coined by Advertising Age in 1993, "Generation Y" or Millennials are those born in the 20th century, known for their technological savviness and strong presence on social media (Reisenwitz, 2021). This generation is more educated and ethnically diverse than its predecessors and values authenticity and immediate satisfaction, heavily utilizing social networks for communication and discussion (Berkup, 2014; US Census Bureau 2015; Williams

& Page, 2011). Millennials prefer brands that offer unique experiences and high-quality products and show a keen interest in community involvement and environmental sustainability (Samsung, 2020). They prioritize competitive pricing but also value prestige and customization, leading to high brand loyalty. Their purchasing decisions are greatly influenced by word-of-mouth (Art 2009), particularly through suggestions from social media and online reviews. Millennials are a significant part of the consumer-brand dynamic since they interact with brands extensively online, sharing experiences and finding products on social media (Dobre et al., 2021).

Generation Z. Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010, grew up fully immersed in technology, earning them names like the Technology Generation or iGeneration (Reisenwitz, 2021). This group, native to the digital world since the rise of the internet, is highly reliant on technology for information and connectivity, showing a keen awareness of current events and global issues (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). With advanced information processing skills and a heavy influence from online media and technology (Posnick-Goodwin, 2010), Generation Z values peer acceptance and actively engages in social media for extensive information sharing globally (Jamal, 2020). A deep digital connection marks them, thanks to limitless internet access and advancements in smartphones and social media (Djafarova & Foots, 2022).

As the most educated and open-minded generation to date (Pew Research Centre 2018), Generation Z prioritizes authenticity and has a sharp sense of ethical considerations (Williams & Page, 2011). They value social responsibility and the impact of their choices on society and the environment (Dabija & Pop, 2013). Generation Z prefers environmentally friendly brands and seeks genuine, respectful brand interactions online, often through influencer marketing (Jamal, 2020).

Notably concerned with self-image (Lambert et al. 2014), this generation believes in their ability to effect change (Matthews, 2008) and exhibits unique behaviors that indicate a shift in consumer dynamics (Priporas et al., 2017). They are vocal participants in online discussions, including debates on cancel culture, indicating a significant departure in behavior and values from previous generations (Cherian & Jacob, 2012).

BRAND HATE

Brand hate, a concept juxtaposed with brand love, encompasses consumer dissatisfaction (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), negative evaluations leading to criticism or purchase avoidance (Dalli et al., 2006), and intense negative emotions towards a brand (Kucuk 2016b, 2018). It manifests in actions such as anti-brand activities and is defined by Bryson et al. (2018, 2021) as an intense negative affect towards a brand, driving avoidance or rejection behaviors. According to Romani et al. (2012), this aversion signifies a deep-seated distaste, while Grégoire et al. (2009) view it as a mix of avoidance and revenge desires, often leading to negative actions like spreading bad word-of-mouth. Hegner et al. (2017) distinguish brand hate from mere dislike by its emotional intensity. Rodrigues et al. (2021) note that brand hate can evolve from immediate reactions to durable shifts in consumer-brand relationships. Kucuk (2016b) differentiates between "attitudinal brand hate," leading to silent brand avoidance, and "behavioral brand hate," characterized by overt retaliatory actions.

CAUSES OF BRAND HATE

Impact of Negative Past Experience on Brand Hate:

Product-related factors leading to brand hate stem from negative consumer experiences, such as product failures, dissatisfaction with the product or service, and unmet expectations (Johnson et al., 2011; Hegner et al., 2017; Powell et al. 2022). These negative experiences can include defective products, poor quality or performance, or failure to fulfill commitments, resulting in feelings of hate towards the brand (Salvatori, 2007; Lee et al., 2009). Technological

products, valued for their functionality, may particularly provoke negative emotions like brand hate when they fall short of expectations (Attiq et al., 2022). Negative past experiences are often the root cause of brand hatred (Costa & Azevedo, 2023), with such experiences being product-oriented and originating from unsatisfactory consumer interactions (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Additionally, negative experiences can evoke feelings of betrayal, especially in consumers with a previously established relationship with the brand (Jabeen et al. 2022). Consumers respond to unsatisfactory experiences with behaviors ranging from passive grudge-holding to active retaliation (Aron, 2016). So we propose that:

> **H1a:** *Negative past experience leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.*
> **H1b:** *Negative past experience leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.*

Impact of Symbolic Incongruence on Brand Hate:

Consumer-related factors primarily revolve around "symbolic incongruence" between a brand and the consumer, where the brand owns an unfavorable image in the consumer's perception. Individuals typically prefer not to be associated with a brand exhibiting a negative image (Hegner et al., 2017). Frequently, this incongruence stems from clashes between customer personalities and brand attributes, manifesting brand hate (Ali et al. 2020). Brand dislike often arises due to a pronounced emphasis on the brand's values and symbolic significance (Platania et al., 2017). According to Jamal (2021), smartphones' symbolic brand image positively influenced Hungarian students' behavioral intentions. Hence, we propose that:

> **H2a:** *Symbolic incongruence leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.*
> **H2b:** *Symbolic incongruence leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.*

Impact of Unethical Behavior of Brand-on-Brand Hate.

Unethical behavior of the brand refers to moral wrongdoings, misleading communication, or discrepancies in the brand's values (Hegner et al., 2017), religious and political aspects (Khan et al., 2013), illegal, unethical and antisocial practices like polluting the environment, unethical recruitment procedures, labor laws violation, racist behavior of CEO, promoting an unhealthy lifestyle, false promises (Zarantonello et al., 2018). According to (Hegner et al., 2017) Ideological conflict is the strongest predictor of brand hate. If the brand begins acting in a socially irresponsible manner, customers will probably wish to punish it (Kucuk, 2018). Consumers may choose to boycott a brand due to conspicuous commercialism, disregard for the environment and human rights or unethical business conduct (Sandikci & Ekici, 2009) and they are inclined to reject such brand now and forever (Zarantonello et al., 2018). "Corporate social irresponsibility" motivates consumers to hate a brand and become part of anti-branding communities and websites (Powell et al., 2022). Based on the above literature, we propose that:

> **H3a:** *Brand unethical behavior leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.*
> **H3b:** *Brand unethical behavior leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.*

BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES OF CONSUMER BRAND HATE

Impact of Brand Hate on Brand Avoidance

Lee et al. (2009) defined brand avoidance as an anti-consumption phenomenon wherein consumers intentionally opt to refrain from or reject a brand. Brand avoidance refers to customers' inclination to disengage or withdraw from all kinds of interactions with a specific firm (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). Brand avoidance manifests as a consumer's reluctance to "let go and forgive brands." However, rejecting goods, services, and brands is a form of passive behavior that is more challenging for businesses to identify and address (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Consumers rejecting disliked options often emphasize the negatives of discarded choices (Machin, 2016). According to Hegner et al. (2017), brand hate leads customers toward brand avoidance; hence we propose that:

H4a*: Brand hate leads to consumer brand avoidance among Generation Y.*
H4b: *Brand hate leads to consumer brand avoidance among Generation Z.*

Impact of Brand Hate on Negative Word of Mouth:

Consumer Negative Word-of-Mouth (NWOM) serves as a retaliatory tool against companies (Platania et al., 2017). It is frequently observed among consumers who share their negative experiences with friends, family, and strangers in an attempt to harm the brand and alert others to the brand's behavior, potentially dissuading them from becoming customers (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). NWOM allows haters to manage emotions, reduce cognitive dissonance, and express intense attitudes (Costa & Azevedo, 2022; Hegner et al., 2017). NWOM often results from service failures (Arora, 2021). This behavior poses significant challenges for companies, as it falls beyond their direct control and operates externally, ultimately contributing to a negative brand image (Platania et al., 2017). Brand hate influences negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) in person (Curina et al., 2020; Hegner et al., 2017). So we propose that:

H5a: *Brand hate leads to negative word of mouth among Generation Y consumers.*
H5b: *Brand hate leads to negative word of mouth among Generation Z consumers.*

Impact of Brand Hate on Online Complaining:

In the digital era, consumer communication has evolved from traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and user-generated content, reflecting technological advancements in digital platforms (Naylor, 2016). Social media enables consumers to easily spread negative experiences and service reviews about brands, with a greater likelihood of sharing wrongdoings rather than positive encounters (Bapat & Williams, 2023). In European countries like Hungary, situational factors influence customer complaint behavior more (Blodgett et al., 2015). Social networking sites are considered reliable sources, with expressed opinions deemed genuine (Karakaya & Ganim Barnes, 2010). Additionally, as identified by Roy et al. (2022), social media self-efficacy influences perceived social media power—a crucial factor in predicting consumers' engagement in negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) behavior, primarily through interactions with brand hate. The phenomenon of online public complaining entails engaging in indirect revenge behavior aimed at generating negative publicity for a brand. Online complaining is defined as utilizing online platforms to alert the general public to a company's misbehavior (Grégoire et al., 2010), so we propose that:

H6a: *Brand hate leads to online complaints among Generation Y consumers.*
H6b: *Brand hate leads to online complaints among Generation Z consumers.*

Impact of Brand Hate on Protest:

Consumer protest behavior is a dangerous fallout from intense anti-brand sentiment (Zhang & Laroche, 2021). Brand ethical, moral, and legal misconduct and failure to meet symbolic identity expectations can result in negative perceptions and diminished value. According to Grappi et al. (2013), protest behaviors in the corporate context entail deliberate actions undertaken in response to perceived corporate misconduct, seeking to compel companies to desist from engaging in harmful practices. Such behaviors extend beyond mere direct boycotts and may involve activities such as blogging to express discontent, participating in picketing, making efforts to impede the sale of the company's products, pursuing legal recourse against corporations, registering complaints, and affiliating with collective movements aimed at opposing the firm. Brand hate is associated with consumer protest behavior (Zarantonello et al., 2016), so we propose that:

H7a: *Brand hate leads to consumer protest among Generation Y.*
H7b: *Brand hate leads to consumer protest among Generation Z.*

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF NARCISSISM ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF BRAND HATE AND BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES OF BRAND HATE.

The American Psychiatric Association (1994) defined narcissism as a recurring pattern of "self-focus," "grandiosity," and "self-importance." Narcissism is a multifaceted and dynamic system of self-regulatory processes, including social, cognitive, and affective aspects, characterized by a grandiose self-concept, a sense of entitlement, and dominant interpersonal behavior (Siamagka, 2023).

In the domain of consumer-brand interactions, individuals with narcissistic traits favor brands that enhance their self-image and positive self-views. They avoid brands that may undermine their perceived superiority (Campbell et al. 2020). Individuals with narcissistic personalities often experience a strong sense of "deservingness" and generally exhibit enthusiasm in their expectation to be treated fairly in most situations (Husnain et al., 2021). Narcissistic consumers expect exclusive privileges and personalized attention, displaying aggression, excessive negativity, hate, and anger when such treatment is not provided. This behavior indicates a propensity for confrontational interactions with brands, driven by a desire for revenge rooted in a profound sense of active hate primarily fueled by anger (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

Sternberg (2005) asserts that individuals with self-esteem or narcissistic issues tend to respond aggressively, leading to high brand hate, especially in cases of transgressions. Narcissistic individuals are prone to expressing offense and engaging in behaviors that seek perceived parity with a brand when experiencing dissatisfaction with a product or service (Ali et al. 2020). One strategy employed by narcissistic consumers to retaliate against a brand involves expressing brand dislike on social media (Kucuk, 2016). Drawing upon the literature discussed above, we posit that:

H8a: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and negative word of mouth among Generation Y.*
H8b: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and negative word of mouth among Generation Z.*

H9a*: Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and online complaining among Generation Y.*
H9b: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and online complaining among Generation Z.*

H10a: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and brand avoidance among Generation Y.*
H10b: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and brand avoidance among Generation Z.*

H11a: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and consumer protest among Generation Y.*
H11b: *Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and consumer protest among Generation Z.*

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework
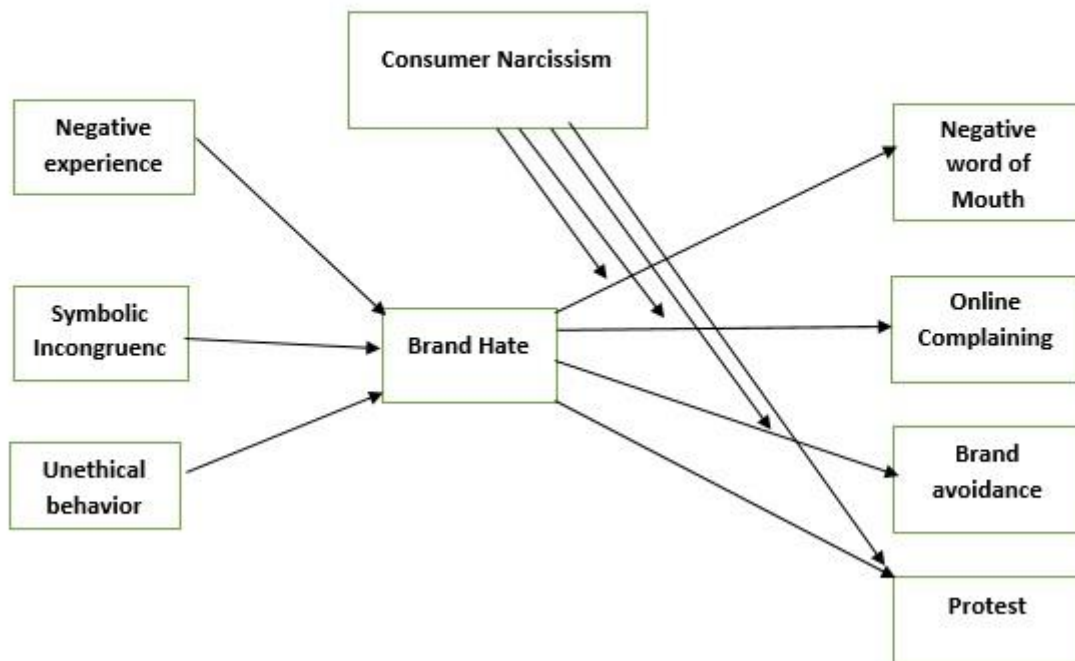
METHODOLOGY

Survey and Sampling

This study exclusively considered respondents with feelings of hate towards any smartphone brand because the study aims to know the reasons and behaviors of haters, which non-brand haters cannot explain. That is why this study employed purposive sampling for data collection. The survey was comprised of five sections. The first section consists of three

questions: (1) smartphone usage, (2) current smartphone brand use, and (3) hate towards any smartphone brand. The second section of the survey is related to consumer brand hate, the third and fourth sections include items related to antecedent outcomes of brand hate, respectively, and the fifth section covers items related to consumer narcissistic personality. Lastly, the survey concludes with a section collecting demographic information. This study used a seven-point Likert scale because Joshi et al. (2015) recommend using a seven-point rating scale because it has a higher association with observed significance levels than a five-point scale. Table 3 explains the items in the scale, studies from which they are adapted, and reliability values.

Data collection and analysis

The survey (both online and manual) was administered in English and conducted throughout cities in Hungary from June to December 2023. The survey participants were exclusively drawn from two generational cohorts, namely Generation Y and Generation Z. All participants reported the use of smartphones. The survey obtained responses from 324 participants in total. Of these, 84 respondents did not express aversion towards any smartphone brand. Therefore, the analysis considered only 238 questionnaires, aligning with the recommended minimum sample size of 200, as stipulated by Kline (2011).

To assess the adequacy of the sample, we computed both the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). To test our hypothesis, we analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, determined the reliability of the scale using Cronbach's alpha, analyzed the correlation among variables using Pearson product-moment correlations, compared Generation Z and Y using an independent samples t-test, and performed regression and moderation analyses using process analysis. The results of the analysis are given below.

RESULTS

Demographic analysis

The demographic information of Generation Y and Generation Z, comprising a total of 238 participants, is presented in Table 1. The 127 members of Generation Y consisted of 38 women, or 29.9% of the total, and 89 men, or 70.1% of the total. They varied in age from 29 to 43, a considerable span. A subset of 36 individuals (28.3% of the total) was classified as "Others" according to their academic background; of these, 45 (35.4% of the total) held bachelor's degrees, 14 (11.0%) held master's degrees, and 7 (5.5%) held doctorates. Thirteen members of Generation Y were unemployed (10.2%), nine were students (7.0%), 74 were employed (58.2%), and thirty-one (24.4%) were both students and employed. 64 (57.7%) of the 111 individuals categorized as Generation Z members were female, while 47 (42.3%) were male. The individuals' ages varied between eleven and twenty-eight years. A total of eleven participants (9.9%) possessed an undergraduate degree, thirty-one (27.9%) a master's degree, three (2.7%) a doctorate, and fourteen (12.6%) were classified as "Others" according to their academic credentials. A total of twenty-one members (18.9%) of Generation Z were enrolled in school, thirty-four were employed (30.6%), seven were unemployed (6.3%), and forty-one (44.1%) were juggling education and employment. This table contains all pertinent demographic information regarding the two generations.

Reliability of the Scale

Table 2 demonstrates that the scales exhibit good to exceptional reliability. High reliability is indicated by scores of 0.82 on the Negative Past Experience scale, 0.80 on the Symbolic Incongruence scale, and 0.78 on the Brand Hate scale. The Online Complaining Scale and Brand Unethical Behavior scale both show high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha scores of 0.93 and 0.95, respectively. The Consumer Protest scale and Negative Word of Mouth scale

exhibit good reliability, with coefficients of 0.87 and 0.85, respectively. Brand Avoidance is also a reliable metric, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.76. Lastly, the Consumer Narcissism scale demonstrates excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.91. These high-reliability coefficients indicate that the scales effectively measure the intended constructs and exhibit internal consistency.

Table 1:
Generation Y and Generation Z Demographic Information (N= 238)

Generation Y (n=127)		Generation Z (n=111)	
Gender			
Male	89(70.1)	Male	47 (42.3)
Female	38 (29.9)	Female	64 (57.7)
Age of Participants			
Age	29-43years	Age	11-28years
Education level			
Less than Bachelors	14 (11.0)	Less than Bachelors	11 (9.9)
Bachelors	45 (35.4)	Bachelors	31 (27.9)
Masters	25 (19.6)	Masters	52 (46.8)
Ph.D.	7 (5.5)	Ph.D.	3 (2.7)
Others	36 (28.3)	Others	14 (12.6)
Current Status			
Unemployed	13 (10.2)	Unemployed	7 (6.3)
Student	09 (7.0)	Student	21 (18.9)
Employed	74 (58.2)	Employed	34 (30.6)
Employed+ Student	31 (24.4)	Employed+ Student	49 (44.1)

Demographic Information

Table 2:
Reliability of the Scale

Variable	Adopted/ adapted from	Scale	Cronbach Alpha
Brand Hate	Adapted from (Rodrigues et al., 2021)	I am disgusted by this smartphone brand. I do not tolerate the products of this smartphone brand. I do not tolerate this corporation. The world would be a better place without this smartphone brand. I am totally angry about this smartphone brand. This smartphone brand is awful. I hate this smartphone brand.	**0.78**

Negative product/service experience	Adapted from Hegner et al., (2017)	The performance of the products of this smartphone brand is poor. This brand of smartphones is inconvenient. My hate for this smartphone brand is linked to the bad performance of this product. I don't like this smartphone brand because I am dissatisfied with it.	**0.82**
Symbolic Incongruence	Adapted from Grappi et al., (2013)	The smartphones of this brand do not reflect who I am. The smartphones of this brand do not fit my personality. I do not want to be seen with this smartphone brand. This brand symbolizes the kind of person I would never want to be. The brand is linked to groups I cannot identify with.	**0.80**
Brand's unethical behavior	Adapted from Hegner et al., (2017)	This smartphone brand acts irresponsibly. I hate the exploitation and total lack of ethics that are behind every product of this brand. I really hate this brand because of its business practices. The company violates moral standards. The brand does not match my values and beliefs.	**0.95**
Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM)	Adapted from Hegner et al., 2017)	I spread negative word-of-mouth about this smartphone brand. I defame this smartphone brand to my friends. When my friends were buying smartphones, I told them not to buy from this brand. When my friends were buying smartphones, I told them not to buy from this brand. I try to influence a lot of people to not purchase this brand's smartphones. I try to spread my hate for this brand.	**0.85**
Consumer Protest	(Grappi et al., 2013)	I would participate in boycotting this brand. I would blog against this brand. I would participate in protesting against this brand. I would participate in actions of resistance against this brand (e.g., try to stop this brand from selling its products). I would support legal action against this brand. I would join collective movements against this brand. I would complain to the consumer service of this brand.	**0.87**
Brand avoidance	(Hegner et al., 2017)	I do not purchase products from this smartphone brand anymore. I reject products from this smartphone brand. I refrain from using the services of this brand. I avoid buying the products or services of this brand. I do not use products or services of this smartphone brand.	**0.76**
Online Complaining	(Grégoire et al., 2010)	I complained online to make the behaviors and practices of this smartphone public. I complained online to report my experience to other consumers. I complained online to spread the word about my misadventure.	**0.93**

Consumer Narcissism	Adopted from Shoukat et al., (2020)	I think I am a special person. Everybody likes to hear my stories. I insist upon getting the respect that is due me. I like having authority over people. I can make anybody believe anything I want them to. I like to be the center of attention. I always know what I am doing. I find it easy to manipulate people. People always seem to recognize my authority. I know that I am good because everybody keeps telling me so. I am more capable than other people.	**0.91**

Correlation analysis

Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlations for several variables based on a sample size of N = 238. The following variables were examined: The mean and standard deviation for negative past experience (NE) were 5.19 and 3.4. respectively. The variables in the study include Symbolic Incongruence (SI, with a correlation coefficient of .41 and a significance level of $p < 0.01$), Brand Hate (BH, with a correlation coefficient of 0.66 and a significance level of $p < 0.01$), Negative Word of Mouth (NWOM, with a correlation coefficient of 0.44 and a significance level of $p < 0.01$), Online Complaining (OC, with a correlation coefficient of 0.34), Brand Avoidance (BA, with a correlation coefficient of 0.53 and a significance level of $p < 0.05$), Protest (PT, with a correlation coefficient of 0.27), Consumer Narcissism (CN, with a correlation coefficient of -.53). Social incongruence (M = 7.11, SD = 2.15) is positively correlated with BH (r = .53), BA (r = .37), and CN (r = .42), and negatively correlated with OC (r = -.03, $p < .05$) and PT (r = .21, $p < .05$).

Table 3:
The Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Product
MomentCorrelations among Variables (N=238)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M(SD)
1. NE	-	.41*	.66*	.44**	.34	.53*	.27	-.53	5.19 (3.4)
2. SI		-	.53	-.03*	.37	.21*	.42	.61*	7.11 (2.15)
3. BH			-	.71**	.51*	.41*	.32*	.30	5.16 (0.58)
4. NWOM				-	.42*	.59*	.34*	.22**	5.34(3.32)
5. OC					-	.47*	.43*	.03	3.47 (2.10)
6. BA						-	.24*	.21	5.18 (2.16)
7. PT							-	.31	7.19 (3.21)
8. CN								-	3.43 (1.31)

Note: NE= Negative past experience, SI= Symbolic incongruence, BH= Brand hate, NWOM= negative word of mouth, OC= online complaining, BA= brand avoidance, PT= protest, CN= consumer narcissism.

There are significant correlations between brand hate (mean = 5.16, standard deviation = 0.58) and OC (correlation coefficient = 0.51, p-value < 0.05), BA (correlation coefficient = 0.41, p-value < 0.05), PT (correlation coefficient = 0.32, p-value < 0.05), and NWOM (correlation coefficient = 0.71, p-value < 0.01). The results indicate significant correlations between NWOM and OC (r = .42, $p < .05$), BA (r = .59, $p < .05$), PT (r = .34, $p < .05$), and CN (r = .22, $p < .01$). Additionally, the mean (M) for NWOM is 5.34 with a standard deviation (SD) of 3.32.

There is a statistically significant link between Online Complaining (mean = 3.47, standard deviation = 2.10) and BA (correlation coefficient = 0.47, p-value < 0.05), PT (correlation coefficient = 0.43, p-value < 0.05), and CN (correlation coefficient = 0.03). The connection between BA (M = 5.18, SD = 2.16) and CN and PT is .21 (r =.24, p <.05). The association between PT and CN is r = 0.31, with a mean (M) of 7.19 and a standard deviation (SD) of 3.21. The variable CN has a standard deviation of 1.31 and a mean of 3.43.

Independent Sample T-Test

The Independent Sample t-test was utilized in Table 4 of the research study to compare Generation Y (n=127) and Generation Z (n=111) on various characteristics. The results of this comparison revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the two generations. These are the statistical findings that were obtained: According to the findings of the research, Generation Z (mean = 1.54, standard deviation = 1.21) experienced a substantially higher number of bad experiences in the past compared to Generation Y (mean = 2.64, standard deviation = 0.54); t (236) = 3.62, p =.023, 95% confidence interval [.54, .21].

In terms of Symbolic Incongruence (SI), the mean score for Generation Y is 2.42, with a standard deviation of 1.65. On the other hand, the mean score for Generation Z is 3.21, with a standard deviation of 1.74. After doing a t-test to compare the two groups, the results showed that the t-value was 4.52, and the p-value was 0.037. The range of values that constitute the confidence interval for the difference in means is [.21, .74].

Table 4:
Independent Sample T-Test

Variables	Generation Y (n=127)		Generation Z (n=111)		Sig-value	t-value	95% CI	
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**				
1. NPE	2.64	.54	1.54	1.21	.023	3.62	.54	.21
2. SI	2.42	1.65	3.21	1.74	.037	4.52	.21	.74
3. BH	2.43	1.65	3.21	1.76	.042	2.04	.21	.76
4. NWOM	2.87	0.78	1.43	1.96	.001	2.65	.43	.96
5. OC	2.84	1.43	3.54	1.86	.021	2.78	.54	.86
6. BA	3.65	1.70	1.45	2.54	.013	4.65	.45	.54
7. PT	5.48	0.54	3.32	1.76	.016	6.43	.32	.76
8. CN	1.65	0.92	4.56	1.45	.001	3.54	.56	.45

Direct Effects via Regression

Generation Y has a mean of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 1.65, whereas Generation Z has a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 1.76. Additionally, the amount of brand hatred varies across the two generations. There is a statistically significant difference, as demonstrated by a t-test with 238 participants (t = 2.04, p =.042, 95% confidence interval [.21,.76]). "

The negative word of mouth (NWOM) scores of Generation Y (mean = 2.87, standard deviation = 0.78) and Generation Z (mean = 1.43, standard deviation = 1.96) were compared. The results of the t-test (t = 2.65, p =.001, 95% confidence interval [.43, 1.96]) indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups.

For Generation Y, the average score for online complaints is 2.84, with a standard deviation of 1.43, whereas for Generation Z, the average score is 3.54, with a standard deviation of 1.86. The p-value is .021, which is based on the fact that the t-value is 2.78 and there are 236 degrees of freedom. [.54,.86] is the range of the confidence interval for 95%.

Brand Avoidance (BA) was substantially higher in Generation Z (mean = 3.65, standard deviation = 1.70). This compared to Generation Y (mean = 1.45, standard deviation = 2.54); t (236) = 4.65, p =.013, 95% confidence interval [.45,.54] was determined by comparing the mean values of the different generations.

A t-test was used to compare the protest scores of Generation Y (mean = 2.48, standard deviation = 0.54) and Generation Z (mean = 5.32, standard deviation = 1.76). The mean score for Youth was 2.48, and the standard deviation was 0.54. Based on the fact that there were 236 degrees of freedom, the t-value was 6.43, which led to a p-value of.016. When it came to the difference in means, the confidence interval for 95% went from.32 to.76 all the way up to.

Consumer Narcissism (CN) was found to be considerably lower in Generation Y (mean = 2.65, standard deviation = 0.92) compared to Generation Z (mean = 3.56, standard deviation = 1.45); t (236) = 3.54, p =.001, 95% confidence range [.56,.45]. This was determined by comparing the mean values of individuals in each generation. The findings indicate that there are statistically significant differences between Generation Y and Generation Z in terms of the views and behaviors both generations have regarding consumerism.

Analysis of Variables' Direct Effects via Regression

Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis. There is a strong relationship between previous negative experiences and consumer brand hate in Generation Y (β =.53, R2 =.263, p =.01). Nevertheless, when it comes to Generation Z, this association is not as strong and does not meet the criteria for statistical significance (β =.19, R^2 =.031, p =.055).

Table 5:
Analysis of Variables' Direct Effects via Regression

Direct Variable	β	R^2	SE	t	p
H1a	53.**	.263	.04	9.65	.01
H1b	.19	.031	.16	1.75	.055
H2a	.21*	.17	.08	1.43	0.53
H2b	.43*	.24	.19	4.32	.001
H3a	.04*	.02	.01	2.95	.031
H3b	.24*	.15	.7	4.53	.001
H4a	.12*	.05	.04	1.65	0.64
H4b	.34**	.17	.13	5.32	.043
H5a	.54*	.23	.10	2.65	.001
H5b	.16	.25	.21	2.81	.021
H6a	.11	.15	.04	2.65	.03
H6b	.33**	.14	.65	4.52	.001
H7a	.19	.83	.41	2.61	.026
H7b	.31*	.16	.08	3.89	.01

Direct Effects via Regression

In the case of Generation Z, the influence of symbolic incongruence on brand hate is moderate and statistically significant (β =.43, R^2 =.24, p =.001). On the other hand, the effect is less pronounced and not statistically significant for Generation Y (β =.21, R^2 =.17, p = 0.53). The degree of brand hate among members of Generation Y (β =.04, R^2 =.02, p =.031) and

Generation Z (β =.24, R² =.15, p =.001) was found to be strongly influenced by unethical brand activity, with Generation Z exhibiting a more pronounced impact than Generation Y.

Whereas the influence is not significant in Generation Y (β =.12, R² =.05, p = 0.64), brand hatred has a stronger and more significant effect on consumer brand avoidance in Generation Z (β =.34, R² =.17, p =.043). This is in contrast to the situation in Generation Y, where the influence is not significant.

Brand hatred has a strong impact on unfavorable word of mouth from customers, particularly among members of Generation Y (β =.54, R² =.23, p =.001) and to a lesser extent among members of Generation Z (β =.16, R² =.25, p =.021). There is a considerable impact of brand hatred on the online complaints of consumers of all generations; however, Generation Z is more likely to get involved in OC than Generation Y (β =.11, R2 =.15, p =.03), (β =.33, R2 =.14, p =.001). Although brand hatred significantly impacts consumer protest in both Generation Z and Generation Y, it is more prevalent in Generation Z than in Generation Y (β =.19, R2 =.83, p =.026). Brand hatred is negatively correlated with consumer protest. The influence of Gene Z is far greater.

Moderation Interactive Effect

According to (Table 6) consumer narcissism does not moderate the relationship between negative word of mouth and Generation Y consumers' hate towards brands, according to the analysis. At 0.05, the beta coefficient of 0.13 is not statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.061. The correlation between brand hate and negative word of mouth remains largely unaffected by the elevated level of consumer narcissism observed among members of Generation Y. Among Generation Z consumers, consumer narcissism significantly mitigates negative word-of-mouth and brand animosity. With a p-value of 0.040, the beta coefficient of 0.49** is extremely significant. Greater narcissism among Generation Z consumers is positively correlated with increased brand hate and negative word-of-mouth; this correlation has a more pronounced impact.

Table 6:
Moderation Interactive Effect

Interactive variables	Beta	Standard Error	t	P	LL/UL
H8a	.13	.11	1.52	.061	.31/-.10
H8b	.49**	.166	7.42	.040	.17/-.09
H9a	.08*	.04	2.74	.021	.052/-.04
H9b	.27**	.19	4.85	.001	.04/.19
H10a	.12	.07	1.08	.56	.031/.04
H10b	.53*	.24	5.32	.032	.07/1.53
H11a	.31*	.14	3.21	0.029	.16/.31
H11b	.63**	.37	4.93	.001	.23/.04

Moderation interactive effect

The narcissism of Generation Y consumers marginally but statistically moderates online complaints and brand hate. The beta coefficient of 0.08* is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance and with a p-value of 0.021. This observation implies that the narcissism of Generation Y consumers slightly contributes to an increase in brand hatred and online complaints. On the other hand, the correlation between brand hatred and online complaints is significantly moderated by the narcissism of Generation Z consumers. Higher-narcissistic Generation Z consumers exhibit a stronger correlation between brand hatred and online

complaints, as indicated by the statistically significant beta coefficient of 0.27 at the alpha level of 0.001.

Consumer narcissism mitigates brand avoidance and disfavor to some degree among Generation Y. Our 0.12 beta coefficient is not statistically significant (p = 0.56), indicating that consumer narcissism does not significantly influence Generation Y's hate and avoidance of brands. Consumer narcissism moderates brand avoidance and hatred among Generation Z. The beta coefficient of 0.53, which is statistically significant at the 0.032 alpha level, suggests that brand avoidance and brand hate are significantly exacerbated by narcissism among Generation Z consumers. Customer narcissism among Generation Y statistically moderates the relationship between brand hate and customer protest. The correlation between customer protest and brand hate is reinforced by elevated narcissism levels among Generation Y consumers, as evidenced by the statistically significant beta coefficient of 0.31* (0.029).

Brand hate and protest significantly elevated the narcissistic tendencies exhibited by consumers of Generation Z. Greater levels of consumer narcissism are associated with a stronger correlation between brand hatred and consumer protest (beta coefficient = 0.63**, p = 0.001). According to the moderation study, consumer narcissism influences the Y and Z generations and has behavioral repercussions such as negative word-of-mouth, online complaints, brand avoidance, and online protests. The narcissism exhibited by Generation Z consumers moderates online complaints, negative word-of-mouth, brand avoidance, and consumer protest to a greater extent than that of Generation Y consumers. Table 7 summarises the results of the hypotheses testing.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research aims to analyze the causes and effects of brand aversion within Hungary's smartphone industry, focusing on differences between Generation Y and Generation Z and examining narcissism's moderating role on brand aversion outcomes. It identifies product failure, symbolic incongruence, and unethical behavior as the main drivers of brand hate, consistent with prior studies (Hegner et al., 2017; Pinto & Brandao, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2021). The study finds generational differences in response to these factors and behaviors, with Generation Y most affected by negative product experiences and Generation Z by symbolic incongruence and unethical brand actions, highlighting Generation Z's deeper ethical concerns (Dabija & Pop, 2013).

Behavioral responses to brand hate, including brand avoidance, negative word-of-mouth, online complaints, and protest behaviors, differ between generations. Generation Y leans more towards negative word-of-mouth, whereas Generation Z prefers online complaining, reflecting their respective media influences and engagement strategies (Posnick-Goodwin, 2010). The study also explores narcissism's effect, finding Generation Z more narcissistic and influenced by this trait in their responses to brand aversion.

This research fills a gap in understanding brand hate in Hungary's smartphone market, offering new insights into generational differences and the impact of narcissism on brand hate behaviors. However, its contributions extend well beyond Hungary. Our findings significantly add to the theory of brand hate by highlighting the nuanced ways generations interact with brands and respond to dissatisfaction. This research contributes substantially to the broader discourse on consumer-brand relationships in the context of technology products, enhancing our theoretical understanding of these dynamics.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the study's findings, a negative product experience is the main reason for brand hate among Generation Y customers, while symbolic mismatch leads Generation Z towards brand aversion. Unethical brand behavior emerges as the most important factor

Table 7:
Summary of Hypotheses

Number	Hypotheses	Accepted/Rejected
H1a	Negative past experience leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.	Accepted
H1b	Negative past experience leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.	Rejected
H2a	Symbolic incongruence leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.	Rejected
H2b	Symbolic incongruence leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.	Accepted
H3a	Brand unethical behavior leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Y.	Accepted
H3b	Brand unethical behavior leads to consumer brand hate among Generation Z.	Accepted
H4a	Brand hate leads to consumer brand avoidance among Generation Y.	Rejected
H4b	Brand hate leads to consumer brand avoidance among Generation Z.	Accepted
H5a	Brand hate leads to consumer negative word of mouth among Generation Y.	Accepted
H5b	Brand hate leads to consumer negative word of mouth among Generation Z.	Accepted
H6a	Brand hate leads to consumer online complaining among Generation Y.	Accepted
H6b	Brand hate leads to consumer online complaining among Generation Z	Accpted
H7a	Brand hate leads to consumer protest among Generation Y.	Accepted
H7b	Brand hate leads to consumer protest among Generation Z.	Accepted
H8a	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and negative word of mouth among Generation Y.	Rejected
H8b:	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and negative word of mouth among Generation Z.	Accepted
H9a:	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and online complaining among Generation Y.	Accepted
H9b	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and online complaining among Generation Z.	Accepted
H10a	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and brand avoidance among Generation Y.	Rejected
H10b	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and brand avoidance among Generation Z.	Accepted
H11a:	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and consumer protest among Generation Y.	Accepted
H11b	Consumer narcissism moderates the relationship between consumer brand hate and consumer protest among Generation Z.	Accepted

influencing negative feelings in both generations. The research suggests that smartphone companies should enhance product quality, improve the overall brand image, and pay particular attention to their practices to ensure alignment with the social, moral, and legal values of customers. Additionally, the study sheds light on the behavioral outcomes of brand hate in both generations. Generation Y tends to engage in negative word-of-mouth, while Generation Z

adopts online complaining and brand avoidance. Protest is a strategy adopted by both generations. The study recommends smartphone brand managers design apology or compensation strategies tailored to the behaviors of each generation. The study by Burnham (2020) recommends that companies use consumer feedback for improvements, noting that consumers often conceive twice as many suggestions as they share, indicating a potential for smartphone firms to promote more active sharing to enhance services and customer relationships. The cause of brand hate varies among both generations, so this study suggests smartphone brands focus on product quality, address negative word-of-mouth through active management, and enhance customer service to improve brand perception to deal with Gen Y and emphasize ethical practices, align brand messaging with values to address symbolic incongruence, and leverage online platforms for transparent and prompt complaint resolution to handle Gen Z. Furthermore, the research analyzes the effect of consumer narcissistic personality and reveals that this trait is more prevalent in Generation Z consumers, motivating them to adopt hateful behaviors more strongly. This finding informs smartphone brands that a significant portion of their current and future customers may exhibit narcissistic tendencies, emphasizing the need to consider this factor in their operations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study has several limitations that could guide future research. Firstly, while brand aversion is prevalent in various industries, it was specifically examined within the smartphone industry in this study. Therefore, the findings may not be universally applicable across all industries in Hungary, highlighting the need to further explore brand hate in different sectors.

Secondly, due to data accessibility constraints, this study focused only on Generations Y and Z. Future research could enrich insights by including comparisons across all generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, and others, to understand how different age groups perceive and respond to brand hate.

Thirdly, the study utilized cross-sectional data. Future studies could benefit from longitudinal approaches to observe the evolution of negative consumer sentiments over time, tracking shifts from initial feelings to more entrenched negative attitudes and behaviors.

Lastly, this study employed quantitative research methods. Future research could complement these findings with qualitative approaches to delve deeper into consumer perspectives and explore potential solutions to effectively mitigate brand hate attitudes and behaviors.

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