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## **Master Thesis**

*“Out with the old, in with the new”.*  
*How does the corporate rebranding of a nationally attached organization influence a consumer’s brand perception?*

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## **Abstract**

Brands are an essential communication tool organisations utilise to develop their relationship with consumers. Some brands attempt to create a strong connection via attachment to nationality using nationally attached brand elements. However, when brands fail to generate desired bonds, they conduct the risky practice of rebranding. With the rise of rebranding and a noted trend of rebranding removing nationally attached brand elements, this became an area of interest to investigate further, considering the lack of agreement in rebranding literature and the lack of exploration of this topic. This study aims to explore the effects of rebranding nationally attached organizations on consumer brand perception and the role individual national attachment plays. Using a quantitative study built around a survey, the proposed conceptual model is tested utilizing a Paired T-Test, Chi-Square test of independence, and linear regression analysis to unearth if consumer perceptions are significantly more negative when nationally attached brand elements are removed and if this is moderated by an individual's attachment to nationality. The findings show no significant statistical evidence to support the removal of nationally attached brand elements are the main effect and no significant statistical for the moderation mentioned. However, the study does highlight the creation of more statistically significant negative perceptions for the new brand than the old. This study suggests national attachment is not found to have a significant role in rebranding, but notes rebranding is a risky practice for marketers to partake in.

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## 1. Introduction

An observation of the modern business world, particularly major fortune 500 companies, points to an obvious similarity, the possession of strong brands that communicate a clear set of values to key stakeholders. Brands are currently seen as incredibly valuable assets, where yearly, millions of dollars are invested in the marketing and creation of brands to communicate key values to consumers (Fortune 500, 2021). While some organizations stay content with their current brand strategy, others feel the need for change. Such change to brand identities and the set of values they communicate, considering the millions pumped into branding, is highly risky and a serious strategic decision that requires meticulous planning for a rebranding to be successful (Daly & Moloney, 2004). Despite the risk associated, rebranding continues to grow as a modern business phenomenon, regardless of industry. Their scale of change may differ. Some may opt for subtle changes. Take Google's altering of its typeface in 2015, aimed at rejuvenating the firm's brand identity to fit with its position as one of the world's most innovative companies (Low, 2015). Others result in drastic change, with Facebook's recent rebrand to Meta, to align with the firm's metaverse ambitions or as an attempt to distract from the heavy criticism the firm has faced as some critics suggest (Yohn, 2021). With some of the largest corporations modifying their brand identity via rebranding, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the true implications of such changes to allow marketers to make informed decisions around their brand strategies in the future.

The push for rebranding has also been observed in organizations that have nationally attached brands, where organizations can steer consumers into creating national associations via well-crafted brand elements. Such brand elements aim to incorporate region/nation names or symbols to become core parts of the brand identity. This is quite a common practice, particularly in the Scandinavian business ecosystem. Some are quite explicit in their national association. This is achieved to varying degrees, whether it be full incorporation of the countries name, such as Dale of Norway and Scandinavian Airlines Systems (Also known as SAS), or the incorporation of an abbreviated version, such as TeleNor. In other cases, we see more creative approaches to incorporating national symbols and meanings into brand elements. A brand synonymous with this, is the Swedish furniture retailer

IKEA. The firm explicitly states that “ it is no accident that the IKEA logo is blue and yellow. These are the colors of the Swedish Flag” (IKEA, n.d.).

*Figure 1.1: Nationally attached brands*



*Source: Dale of Norway (2022), SAS (2022) & Ikea (n.d.)*

Yet, with such associations established, brands have begun to look into divesting these associations. From the disaster that was The Royal Mail rebranding as Consignia in the UK, destroying a 350+ year strong brand with royal roots (Aamo, 2010), to Norges Statsbaner AS formally rebranding to Vygruppen AS (Vy, 2019), there are countless examples of this. Thus, it is intriguing to understand the dynamic of removing national association in rebranding and how this affects consumer brand perceptions. With this in mind, this research paper aims to answer the following research question:

*How does the corporate rebranding of a nationally attached organization influence a consumer’s brand perception?”*



## **2. Research purpose**

As the context of nationally attached brands in terms of rebranding has yet to be explored, the authors aim to broaden the scope of rebranding by exploring this area specifically. By assessing national associations through a case study, the authors aim to map out and further understand the implications these types of rebranding processes have on the organization in question and its consumers.

The purpose of this study is to dive deeper and investigate the relationship between rebranding of national attached brands and how this influences a consumer's brand perception. More specifically, it will look into whether the removal of nationally attached brand elements will lead to a greater dislike of a new brand compared to the old brand. Further on, it will investigate how individuals' national attachments to a nationality will moderate their perceptions of the brand. By exploring these dynamics, the study may provide valuable insights when national attached firms decide to undergo a rebranding process and provide managers insights into the rebranding process.

### 3. Literature review

#### 3.1 Theoretical and Research Background

At a general level, the topic of rebranding encompasses quite a broad spectrum, considering the renewal, refreshment, makeover, reinvention, renaming, and repositioning of a corporate brand (Merrilees & Miller, 2008). Academics have provided a wide range of definitions for rebranding. Daly & Moloney (2004) term rebranding as a continuum that ranges from four rebranding approaches: Interim/dual, substitution, prefix, and brand amalgamation. Contrary to this, rebranding has also been seen as a singular event involving the modification of brand elements (Keller et al. 2020). Thus, with varying definitions for this marketing phenomenon, it is important to get rid of the definition ambiguity. The authors will utilize the following definition for rebranding, stating it is *the practice of building a new brand representative of a differentiated position in the mind frame of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors* (Muzellec et al, 2003).

It is important to note that rebranding distinctly occurs at three levels of a hierarchy presented by Muzellec et al (2003). At the bottom of this hierarchy is rebranding at a product level, seeing individual products/services undergo fundamental brand changes. This is followed by rebranding at a business unit level, affecting a subsidiary or division brand. At the top of this is rebranding at a corporate level, where the entire corporation implements a new strategic direction/repositioning via rebranding. Thus, dependent on the organization's structure, marketers are faced with potentially three distinct rebranding opportunities. Such rebranding is usually triggered by a variety of events. Corporations may internally decide to rebrand. This is common, specifically in merger & acquisition (M&A) situations, where over 50% of the corporations undergo rebranding due to this (Muzellec et al, 2003). Rebranding may also be forced due to external changes out of the organization's control, such as when the competitive landscape shifts, forcing organizations to rebrand and reposition themselves to adjust their brand offering to appeal better to ever-changing consumer tastes (Merrilees & Miller, 2008). This externally forced rebrand accounts for roughly 17.5% of historic rebrands (Muzellec et al, 2003).

The process of rebranding demands corporations to carefully consider a variety of facets essential to rebranding success; repositioning, renaming, and redesigning (Muzellec et al, 2003). Communicating effectively why rebranding occurs with stakeholders, internally and externally, has also been deemed an essential antecedent to successful rebrands, particularly during the transition period (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004), as it establishes some connection between the old and new brand to generate higher acceptance and build awareness (Merilees & Miller, 2008).

A key observation in the literature around rebranding is the focus on the “what” and “how” aspects of the phenomenon (a full summary of rebranding literature can be found in Appendix 1). Authors generally agree on what is driving these organizations to engage in this marketing activity and various guides to what may lead to rebranding success. However, when investigating the effects of rebranding, particularly on external stakeholders such as consumers, not only is there a lack of research into the topic, but also a lack of agreement on how rebranding affects consumer perceptions. It is this lack of congruence which is interesting to explore further.

On the one hand, some academics have argued the results of rebranding may be able to generate positive changes in consumer perceptions of the organization. This is presented in studies such as that of Bolhuis et al (2015), which investigated the effects of rebranding, or what they term the creation of a new corporate visual identity (CVI). Utilizing ex post facto surveys across four case studies, significant and practically meaningful positive change was found across consumer brand appreciation and perception measures. For practitioners, this provides a compelling case to engage in a rebranding episode. This is supported by other academics, however only to some extent. Stuart & Muzellec (2004) noted the ability to positively influence perceptions, as firms are quick to attribute strong performance to their rebranding effort. Yet, they acknowledge rebranding exercises can be received with far less enthusiasm and a great deal of sarcasm from consumers. This “on the fence” stance in terms of rebranding’s effect on consumer perceptions is shared similarly in the work of Muzellec et al (2003) and Merilees & Miller (2008), who acknowledge a lack of understanding of how consumers generally respond to rebranding, noting positive results yet acknowledging limitations in their research.

On the other hand, academics have also deemed rebranding as quite a dangerous practice as a means of generating positive consumer behavior. Collange and Bonache (2015) sought to see whether consumers would resist or accept product rebrands. The study brought a new angle to rebranding literature, incorporating consumer psychological reactions to product rebranding for the first time. This provided what they claim was the first-ever comprehensive model of consumer attitudes toward rebranding practices. The results highlighted that 50% of consumers had generated negative opinions as a result of the rebranding, while the remaining 50% either were either neutral or generated positive, leading them to label it as an “extremely risky operation for the firm”. This added credence to a previous study by Collange (2015) that investigated consumer reactions to brand name changes in the service sector. Results highlighted the service evaluation declined considerably after the rebranding.

What one can ascertain from the literature is a lack of agreement on how rebranding would generally affect consumer perception. The acknowledgment of overwhelmingly positive and negative results in various studies suggests that further research into the effects of rebranding on consumer perception is required. This has been acknowledged by several academics. Collange (2015) notes a key limitation as the difficulty to generalize study results and thus the need to broaden the scope of research into other rebranding contexts. As a result of this inconclusiveness and the acknowledgment of the need for further research, this paper aims to fill a gap in rebranding literature by exploring a specific rebranding context and its results on consumer perceptions. This untouched context is the rebranding of national associated brands.

### **3.1.2 Nationally attachment brand and brand elements**

A context that has yet to be investigated in rebranding discourse surrounds cases where brands utilize what the authors term “nationally attached brands”. As stated earlier, the growing rebranding phenomenon in the modern business environment and the various cases of rebranding away from nationally attached brands merit this topic to be investigated further to fully understand its implications. While such brands have yet to be explored by academics, a fairly analogous area of research

termed Country of Origin branding helps provide the basis for understanding the mechanisms behind them and potential outcomes.

Country of Origin (COO) branding is defined as the place, region, or country to which the brand is perceived to belong to by its customers (Adina et al, 2015). The mechanisms behind Country of Origin Branding can be found in the crossroads of marketing and psychology academic literature. Brands have this innate ability to manifest deep emotional and cognitive connections with consumers via Brand Attachment and Brand Love.

Brand Attachment has been defined in multiple ways by academics over the last few decades. Mikulincer (1998) simply defines it as the strength of the bond connecting the focus brand and the self, while Bowlby (1979) reiterates the emotion-laden target-specific bond aspect of the attachment. Attachments vary in strength, ranging from non-existent, weak, and strong, with strong attachment associated with strong feelings of connection, affection, love, and passion (Thomson et al, 2005). In a similar vein, Brand Love is defined as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a customer has for a particular brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). The literature surrounding Brand Love is split between two perspectives, the first focusing on consumer love for the product, whilst the second puts light on the consumer-brand relationship (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2020), which this study will focus on. Aspects of Brand Love in consumer-brand relationships include a passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and declarations of love for the brand (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Thus, whilst Brand Love can be seen as an “intense” form of brand attachment, the two concepts are mutual. It is, however, important to distinguish them from brand liking, a very different concept due to the psychological mechanisms and interaction with the consumer’s identity that Brand Attachment and Brand Love achieve (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

The mechanisms behind brand attachment and brand love link to individual perceptions of themselves, otherwise known as the “self-concept”. The self-concept refers to the cognitive understanding of who and what one is, taking the form of the “actual self”, which this research paper will explicitly focus on, and the “ideal self” (Malär et al, 2011). Implicitly and explicitly, consumers engage in a form of

impression management, effectively guiding and governing their everyday decisions and actions in accordance with the type of person they are, wish to present themselves in a social setting, or wish to become in the near future (Malhotra, 1988). One can see this translate to consumer decisions around brands. In a world where branding is ever-present and one that possesses brands that convey a mix of attributes and personalities, consumers can utilize brands to simply be an expression or extension of themselves. This in essence an attempt to achieve self-congruency, in which the crux is that consumers simply prefer brands associated with a set of personality traits congruent with their own. This arises from consumer needs for consistency due to an inborn preference for things that are predictable, familiar, stable, and uncertainty reducing (Aaker, 1999). Brands are thus a medium for this. Consumers begin to incorporate the brand as part of the self, helping develop a sense of oneness, and creating cognitive, yet inherently emotional links that aid this connection (Park et al, 2010). Thus, brands become a vital vehicle for self-expression. This explains why we see such strong brand communities form and how such brand communities exhibit extreme levels of passion and love for brands, or in essence, an extension of themselves. Such sentiment is reflected in Country of Origin branding literature. An important aspect of identification within social groups is an attachment or identification with key group-defining elements. This is achieved via sentimental (affective) attachment, a perception that the group reflects individual identity and involves an emotional connection to the culture and symbols of the nation (Rothi et al, 2004). Focus is put on the affective nature of this attachment as Oberecker and Diamantopoulos (2011) demonstrate how country affinity is strictly an affect-based concept. A country's personality can thus act as a self-expressive attribute and allow for the fulfilment of self-esteem (Adina et al, 2015). Consumers feel connected to their nationality and thus when a brand is able to explicitly inform consumers of their association with that nationality, brands can establish connections with the consumer self that allow it to potentially improve the consumer-brand relationship.

When it comes to the effectiveness of attachments in generating positive brand perceptions and behaviors, the literature presents two contrasting opinions. One pool proposes the ability to induce positive brand perceptions due to psychological attachments being a key antecedent of desired consumer behavior. Schooler's (1965) study involving the simplest of manipulations demonstrated a consumer bias

towards their country of origin. His results indicated consumers provided lower evaluations of products made in foreign countries than of domestic products and explained the bias was related to a generally more negative attitude to those outside their home country, thus altering and affecting consumer opinions on products. His follow-up study attempted to test this bias on a broader scale and confirmed his original conclusions, finding significant differences in consumer attitudes towards products of foreign origin rather than domestic origin, observing a hierarchy of bias effect (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998). The work of Thomas et al (2005) highlights the stronger the attachment consumers feel, the more likely they are to maintain a relationship and proximity to the object in question. Carroll & Ahuvia's (2006) results provide empirical support for attachment being a meaningful mode of consumer satisfaction that is linked to desirable post-consumption behavior, such as brand loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion, thus advising managers to increase the intense emotional response in consumers to the marketable entity. Målar et al (2011), state that consumers' self-enhancement activities lead to a positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and emotional brand attachment, leading to the formation of more positive brand perceptions in consumers' minds.

In contrast, there is an explanation that such attachment may not be needed at all and can actually be detrimental to brand perceptions. Literature explicitly exploring these negative effects is quite limited, with Hegner et al (2017) noting how the lack of studies into negative brand relationships, specifically in the consumer behavior field, was surprising. Yet the studies in this field paint a strong picture of how attachment can lead to negative perception creation or what is termed "anti-brand behavior". This can result in loving relationships quickly turning into hatred, mimicking the reality of relationships as deterioration and dissolution can occur in every day stable and close relationships (Japutra et al, 2018). These negative perceptions can arise from symbolic incongruency. When a brand may begin to represent an undesired image to the consumer, congruence turns into incongruence between the brand and self, leading to the creation of negative emotions towards the brand (Hegner et al, 2017). This can arise via various conditions, most notably symbolic cultural objects. Thus, if there is a disparity between personal national values and the national value the brand interprets/portrays, a result of the brand poorly representing one culture, consumers can be seen to express negative feelings towards brands that are not expressive of one of the specific stereotypes/social

groups they want to be a part of (Romani et al, 2018). Thus, consumers then portray negative behaviors, such as negative perceptions, to those who feel betrayed after investing a considerable amount of their resources. Therefore, in terms of attachment, it is key to understand how by removing the symbol/element that allows for attachment, are consumers more favorable or harsh if they are attached. This gap in literature requires further research which this study aims to fill. In addition, the attachment concept has yet to be explored in the rebranding context. Studies have only considered brands at a single point in time. Take Schooler's (1965) initial study which focused on a brand at a single point in time and failed to consider any adjustments to the brand that may result in altered brand-consumer attachment. This goes the same for literature surrounding brand attachment, which lacks exploration into the breaking of associations and implications on the new brand identity. Furthermore, Country Of Origin literature, while focusing on the importance of nationality, does not explicitly investigate the impact of specific impact brand element association may have on creating consumer attachment to their country/nationality. These noted gaps in illustrating how this cause/effect relationship in a changing context, particularly a rebranding context where a foundation for creating the association (nationality) is removed, has led to the generation of this study. This study will thus aim to expand this literature to explore the concept of attachment in a rebranding context.



## 4. Conceptual framework

Based on the literature review, this study aims to develop a theoretical framework incorporating national associated branding and rebranding literature in order to answer the core research question: “How does the corporate rebranding of nationally attached organizations influence consumer’s brand perception?”. The framework below (Figure 4.1) illustrates the evolution of consumer relationships during rebranding moderated by a consumer's national attachment. The intended framework aims to help marketers in nationally attached brands make effective decisions surrounding whether to undergo complete rebranding.

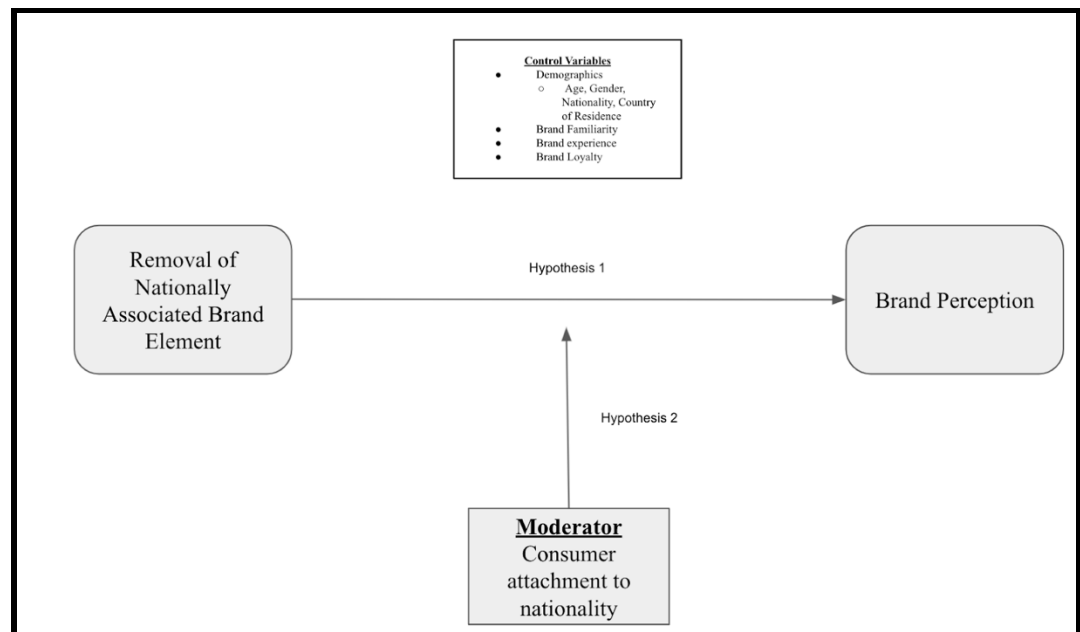


Figure 4.1 - conceptual framework

Various studies present contrasting results in relation to the results of rebranding. Bolhuis et al (2015) were able to present evidence that a change in corporate visual identity (CVI) was able to produce positive perceptions. However, a prerequisite to this was the consideration of the quality of the process and the quality implementation of the new CVI. While able to present evidence that may shine a positive light on rebranding, the literature leans toward observed challenges to its effectiveness. Consumers may find the process destabilizing, unsettling, and disruptive to their current status quo (Collange & Bonache, 2015), thus resulting in an inevitable decline in the evaluation of the product/service, and thus brand overall (Collange, 2015). This may warrant a resulting change of behavior if consumer-

brand bonds are broken, decreasing their perceptions of the new brand. Thus, the following sub-question and corresponding hypothesis are formulated:

**SQ1** - Does the removal of nationally attached brand elements leads to a greater dislike of the new brand than the old brand.

**H1** - The rebranding results in more unfavorable perceptions of the new brand than the old one.

Understanding how individuals' connections to nationality affect their perception has yet to be explored in a rebranding context. The attachment discourse presents contrasting opinions on the effectiveness of attachment in consumer brand perceptions. On one hand, we may see stronger national attachment create more positive feelings for the unattached brand. This is a result of the decreased chance to create brand hate. As the brand represents the country less, there is less likelihood of symbolic incongruence, when the brand begins to represent an undesired image of the country and creates a disparity between the self and the brand, and therefore the creation of strong negative emotions toward the brand (Hegner et al, 2017). Consumers are less critical as the brand means less to them and therefore are more positive to the new brand. In contrast, we may see the opposite effect where it generates more negative perceptions of the new brand. Suggested consumer preference for predictability and familiarity (Aaker, 1999) governs their personal decisions and actions in accordance with the type of person they are and identify as (Malhotra, 1988). This generates a bias toward brands from their own country (Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998) and perceives them more favorably as they represent their nationality. These two contrasting moderator effects must be tested in order to fully understand the direction in the effect of how attachment may affect consumer perceptions. The following sub-questions and hypotheses are formulated:

**SQ2** – How does individual attachment to nationality moderate their perceptions of the brand?

**H2** – There is a significant moderator effect of individual national attachment on consumer perception of the brands

## 5. Methodology

Based on previous research and the growth of rebranding in the global business environment, this research aims to examine the effects of removing national associated brand elements on customer perceptions and how this is moderated by individual attachment to nationality. To test the aforementioned hypotheses, the following study has been developed

### 5.1 Overall study design

An online survey based on a case study was conducted due to resources and time constraints of the authors. Such an overall design would still be effective in collecting the necessary primary data for assessing the changes in brand perception and the aforementioned hypothesis. Respondents would be distributed via Social Media platforms in order to reach the target population of Norwegian Residents. During the survey, participants will be assessed on their attachment to Norway before being presented with the case study and answering questions regarding both the old brand and the new brand. The only key independent variable manipulated was the brand being assessed in this section, keeping all other factors constant for the assessment of the brand.

### 5.2 Case study

NSB, known as Norges Statsbaner (Norwegian State Railways) was the government-owned and run railway entity, by the Samferdselsdepartementet (Royal Norwegian Ministry of Transportation) in Norway. Founded in 1883, NSB was responsible for the operation of the majority of passenger rail services across Norway. Furthermore, the company is the largest land-based transport group in the Nordic region, operating a mix of passenger and freight trains, in addition to a variety of bus services (*About Us | Information about the Vy Group | Vision | vy.No*, n.d.). The NSB brand is one steeped in deep history and can be traced all the way back to 1883. The red logo and trains had become a staple in Norwegian transport and throughout the years, the NSB branding had become synonymous with Norwegian culture and identity (*Hjem Til Jul NSB - YouTube*, n.d.).

*Figure 5.1: NSB trains and logo before corporate rebranding*



*Source: Vy (2022)*

In 2019, the decision was made for NSB to undergo a rebranding process to transform into Vy. Justification stemmed with the need to brand all operations under a single brand name that was representation of all the organization's operations. The new brand name allowed for a shared identity between the train and bus services, highlighting to customers that NSB had evolved into something new. The word Vy itself translated to “outlook”, “overview prospects”, “a picture of”, and can also be used to mean having ambitions for the future announced (*NSB Skifter Navn Til Vy - Tu.No, n.d.*).

*Figure 5.2: Vy trains and logo after corporate rebranding*



*Source: Vy (2022)*

The corporate rebranding of NSB to Vy faced harsh criticism, by the Norwegian population, political parties, the Norsk Språkråd (Norwegian language council), and garnered strong media attention when plans were announced (*NSB Skifter Navn Til Vy - Tu.No, n.d.*). From a brand viewpoint, the new brand appears to have disassociated itself from Norwegian national brand elements, such as eliminating the word *Norges* (Norwegian in English) from the corporate name. Furthermore, the colors of the trains were also eliminated. This replaced the traditional red and

white of NSB, two of the three colors of the Norwegian national flag, for ambiguous green. Norsk Språkråd (Norwegian Language Council) advised NSB not to undergo the rebranding as the new brand did not illustrate in an adequate way of what industry the company operates in. The Norwegian language council further stated that it is important for publicly owned companies to possess a name that clearly states or is representative of what industry they operate in (*Språkrådet Oppgitt over at NSB Bytter Navn Til Vy – Dagsavisen*, n.d.).

This particular case had been chosen as the rebranding had occurred three years ago. This would give ample opportunity for consumers' perceptions of the new brand to develop and consolidate. In addition, it would help minimize any potential bias that may arise from negative media coverage or controversy during the rebranding episode.

### **5.3 Target population**

The intended research looks at how corporate rebranding of a nationally attached organization influences a consumer's brand perception. The company chosen for the case study is Vy, which as mentioned above is owned by the Norwegian government. The company predominantly operates in Norway and this is where the major source of revenue comes from (Vy. Finansielle resultater for Vygruppen | Årsrapport, 2021). Due to their operations predominantly taking place in one country, the target population will thus focus on the home market of Vy, Norway, mainly Norwegian residents. This includes both Norwegian nationals and foreigners residing in Norway as to reflect the demographic mix of the Norwegian population. Given the nature of the research question, the study will look at all nationals with no respect to income, social status or educational level.

### **5.4 Survey**

#### **5.4.1 Type of survey**

A quantitative method was chosen for this study, reflecting similar quantitative methods utilized by prior research in both rebranding and brand association fields (Peterson et al, 2015; Yi, 1990; Collange & Bonache, 2015; Park et al, 2010). A quantitative method would also allow for higher amounts of data collection, necessary to assess the impacts and significance of the effects in question. In order

to collect the necessary quantitative data, a survey was conducted to collect primary data that would be easily comparable between participant responses. This would specifically be done online for distribution purposes. Specifically, a within-subject survey design would be used, where participants would be asked to reflect on both the old brand and the new rebranded brand in retrospect. This was chosen to specifically measure how participants' perceptions of both brands had changed over time and were thus more adequate than a between-subject design.

#### **5.4.2 Measurement variables and items**

The measurement scales utilised in this survey have been adapted from a variety of studies pertaining to appropriate literature. Such studies have previously conducted studies related to (or are related to) three key topic dimensions: National Attachment, Rebranding, and Consumer Perceptions. Each variable and measurement scale was then adjusted accordingly to best fit this study's goals. While established measures were used when available, others required development to best fit this research. A full summary of these measures is found in Table 5.3.

A key consideration will be control variables. Standard demographic variables will be collected for control purposes. These include age, gender, nationality, and country of residence. Particular importance on the country of residence and nationality as the case study utilised is a Norwegian case and thus must ensure respondents are from the country (or reside) where it occurred (or at least have relation to the country by being Norwegian). In addition, brand familiarity and experience are needed for control purposes, particularly as the survey will ask participants to self-report, and thus ensure consumers are still familiar with the old brand in question. Brand familiarity and experience measures can be easily adapted from the work of Peterson et al (2015). Their measures around brand involvement and familiarity revolve around a seven-point semantic differential scale, where higher scores equate to greater brand familiarity and experience. Thus these measures will be adopted to understand consumers' understanding and experience with the brands. Brand loyalty was considered as a potential control variable, however, due to the monopolistic nature of NSB/Vys operation in Norway, it was deemed inappropriate to utilize this as a control variable.

As previously mentioned in the literature review, literature on “National Attachment” is rather limited or non-existent. Thus, the authors turned to brand attachment literature due to the inherent similarities in the mechanisms and concepts between brand attachment and national attachment, with the target of the attachment simply differing. Park et al (2010, p.5) developed five indicators of attachment between the brand and the self, utilising an 11-point scale anchored by “not at all” (0) and “completely” (10). To adapt these indicators to this study, minor changes were made to swap out the reference to “brand” with “nationality”, allowing for the measurement of a consumer's attachment to one's nationality. For example, the item “To what extent is (enter brand name) part of you and who you are?” (Park et al, 2010, p.6) was adapted to “To what extent is (enter nationality) part of you and who you are?”.

In terms of variables and scales concerning consumer perceptions towards corporate rebranding, it is essential that we utilize variables that can both measure the corporate rebranding before- and after the rebranding took place. The variables selected stems from Peterson et al (2015), where the researchers measured change in attitudes towards a new rebranding design, and from Yi (1990) where the author measured different consumer attitudes between old and new logos of a corporate rebranding. Similarly to brand familiarity and experience, a semantic differential scale will be employed, in line with previous studies such as Peterson et al (2015). Similar survey questions were also adopted from Collange & Bonache (2015), in which their measures allowed for the assessment of attitudes towards a brand before and after the rebranding episode This will be consistently applied on a seven-point scale where higher scores equate to more positive brand perceptions and attitudes.

Table 5.3: Variables and Items of NSB/Vy Rebranding Survey

Variable Measured (Purpose)	Items	Adapted from
Demographics (Control Variables)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender (M/F)</li> <li>• Age (Age Groups Based on generations, e.g. GenZ...)</li> <li>• Nationality</li> <li>• Country of Residence</li> </ul>	
Brand Familiarity & Experience of NSB & VY (Control Variables)	<p><b>Brand Familiarity (7 -point-scale)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How familiar are you with (enter brand) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not knowledgeable/Knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Inexperienced/experienced</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Brand Experience (7 -point-scale)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe your use of this brands products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Never/Extremely regular</li> <li>○ Unnecessary/Necessary</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Peterson et al (2015)
National Attachment (Measures SQ2)	<p><b>(11-point scale)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is being “Norwegian” part of you and who you are?</li> <li>• To what extent do you feel personally connected to Norway?</li> <li>• To what extent do you feel emotionally bonded to Norway?</li> </ul>	Park et al (2010)
Brand Perception of NSB & VY  *Questions are asked twice for each brand (with national association and without)  (Measures SQ1)	<p><b>Brand Perception (7 -point-scale)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you rate the importance of the brand to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Irrelevant/relevant</li> <li>○ Unimportant/important</li> <li>○ Non-essential/essential</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How would you rate your attitude towards this brand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unappealing/Appealing</li> <li>○ Dislike/Like</li> <li>○ Bad/Good</li> <li>○ Unpleasant/Pleasant</li> <li>○ Hate/Love</li> <li>○ Non-Norwegian / Norwegian</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Peterson et al (2015)  Yi, (1990)  Collange & Bonache (2015)



Overall, for each variable, a single score would be calculated from the various items. This will be calculated with the following equation:

$$\text{Variable}_x = (\text{item}_1 + \text{item}_2 + \dots + \text{item}_n) / n .$$

To ensure consistency in item scores representing the same construct, items will be tested for internal consistency reliability by Cronbach Alpha (explored further in section 6.0).

### 5.4.3 Survey design

The survey begins by collecting demographic information about the participants. This is then followed by a section focusing on the moderator effect. Questions regarding the respondent's personal attachment to their nationality are presented, assessing one's attachment level to the country. These questions are measured on a 11-point Likert scale in line with previous research, where a lower score equates to lower attachment to the country. This is then followed by a short brief about the rebranding case that briefly outlines the old brand, what the organization does, the rebranding, and the vision behind it. Respondents then answer two question blocks, the first pertaining to the old brand, the second to the new brand. The questions are identical and utilize the same 7-point Likert scale to allow for comparison in data analysis, with the higher score equating to more positive perceptions of the brand (see Appendix 2 for a complete overview of the survey).

The case study was particularly chosen due to the relative recency of the case and the researchers residing in the same country. The survey was presented to all respondents in the local language (Norwegian), as to fit the local needs and be more accessible in the target population, and was carefully translated by the authors, both of whom speak English and the local language, to avoid any mistranslations or lost in meanings.

## 5.5 Distribution/data collection

In order to distribute the survey across Norway, an online survey was chosen for speed and effective reach. The survey was created and distributed via Qualtrics. Responses were collected via convenience sampling, due to time constraints, via social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Ideally, given a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a target population of 5.4 million people (SSB population, 2022), an ideal sample size of 384 was calculated.

## 6. Validity and reliability

### 6.1 internal validity

Due to the nature of data collection and construct measure, it is necessary to conduct an internal consistency reliability test of item scores representing the same construct. Thus all variables with multiple items were tested. Utilizing Cronbach's alpha is deemed appropriate as all items, in their respective variables, were measured on the same scale. Table 6.1 illustrates the results of the Cronbach Alpha test. It clearly shows that all constructs show high internal consistency as  $\alpha < 0.8$ , in line with recommendations by academics such as Cortina (1993).

*Table 6.1 - Results of Cronbach Alpha Test for Internal Consistency*

<b>Construct Name</b>	<b># of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
National Attachment	3	0,850
Brand Familiarity (Attached)	2	0,855
Brand Familiarity (Dettached)	2	0,899
Brand Experience (Attached)	2	0,817
Brand Experience (Dettached)	2	0,845
Brand Perceptions (Attached)	9	0,924
Brand Perceptions (Dettached)	9	0,919

## 6.2 External validity

With regard to external validity, this study was conducted within the context of the Norwegian transportation market. This might lead to the study not being entirely representative of the general population. In addition, the survey is built around a single case study and the authors acknowledge that the findings from this case may not be transferable to all other rebranding cases.

## 7. Data analysis and results

### 7.1 Sample profile

Over the course of a month, a total of 309 responses were collected. However, due to respondents dropping out during the survey and data cleaning “invalid”/clear straightlining by respondents, the final valid data set totalled 218 responses.

Table 7.1 and 7.2 shows descriptive statistics of the sample. The sample constituted a fairly even split of male and female respondents (53.2% for male and 46.8% for female). This is fairly reflective of the gender distribution of Norway, which currently sits at 50.5% male and 49.5% female according to the latest World Bank Statistics (World Bank, 2022) . In terms of age, the mean age group was 26 to 41 years old (Millennials). This also represents the largest respondent age group, 44% of the sample. This is followed by Gen Z (aged 10 to 25) at 28.9% and Gen X (aged 42 to 57) at 18.3%.

*Table 7.1: Demographics (Gender & Age)*

Variable	Gender		Age						
	Male (1)	Female (2)	0 to 9 (1)	10 to 25 (2)	26 to 41 (3)	42 to 57 (4)	58 to 67 (5)	68 to 76 (6)	77+ (7)
Frequency	116	102	0	63	96	40	12	5	2
%	53.20 %	46.80 %	0.00 %	28.90 %	44.04 %	18.35 %	5.50 %	2.29 %	0.92 %
Mean	1.47		3.11						
Std. Deviation	0.5		1.019						
Variance	0.25		1.038361						
Min	1		1						
Max	2		7						

It comes as no surprise that the overwhelming majority of survey respondents were recorded as Norwegian nationals, totalling 203 respondents or 93.1% of the sample, with foreigners totalling 15 or 6.9% of the sample. Finally, the vast majority of respondents were located in the “Oslo og Innlandet” and Viken region, making up 42.2% (N = 92) and 24.3% (N=53) respectively.

Table 7.2: Demographics (Nationality & Region)

Variable	Nationality		Region											
	Label	Norsk (1)	Other (2)	Troms og Fimmark	Nordland	Trøndelag	Møre og Romsdal	Vestland	Rogaland	Agder	Vestfold og Telemark	Viken	Oslo og innlandet	Utenfor Norge
Freq		203	15	1	3	13	16	19	6	5	8	53	92	2
%		93.12	6.88	0.46	1.38	5.96	7.34	8.72	2.75	2.29	3.67	24.31	42.2	0.92
Mean		1.07		8.07										
Std. Dev		0.254		2.518										
Variance		0.0645		6.340324										
Min		1		1										
Max		2		11										

## 7.2 Changes in brand perception with removal of national association

To investigate H1, a Paired T-Test was conducted to analyze if any statistically significant difference between Brand Perception means before and after rebranding were present.

### 7.2.1 Overall findings of paired T-test

Table 7.3 illustrates the mean differences overall and individual items that comprise the variable “Brand Perception”. There is a mean difference (MD) in favour of the attached brand (MD= 0.8527, where MD =  $\bar{X}$ (attached) -  $\bar{y}$ (detached)). Utilising a 95% confidence interval, this relationship is shown to be significant (p<0.001). Such significant mean difference between these two variables, in favour of the attached brand, highlights the lack of probability such difference was obtained by chance, alluding to a potential effect in play. Thus the overall brand perceptions of the detached brand are significantly more negative than the perceptions of the attached brand.

Regarding individual items that make up the variable “Brand Perception”, all measures were shown to have significantly ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) more negative perceptions for the detached brand than the attached brand. The largest mean difference was for the item “Non-Norwegian/Norwegian” where  $MD(\text{norwegian}) = 1.555$ , while the smallest mean difference was for the item “Non-essential/Essential” where  $MD(\text{essential}) = 0.427$ .

Table 7.3: Overall results from Paired T-Test of Brand Perceptions

Pair (Old to New)	Mean Difference (MD)	Std. Dev	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Two-Sided P
			Lower	Upper			
<b>Overall Paired Differences</b>							
Overall Brand perception	0.8527	1.7817 4	0.614 86	1.090 55	7.07	21 7	<,001
<b>Individual items that comprise brand perception Variable</b>							
Irrelevant/Relevant	0.495	2.198	0.202	0.789	3.33	21 7	0.001
Unimportant/Important	0.546	2.164	0.257	0.835	3.73	21 7	<,001
Non-Essential/Essential	0.427	2.22	0.13	0.723	2.84	21 7	0.005
Unappealing/Appealing	1.046	2.304	0.738	1.353	6.70	21 7	<,001
Dislike/Like	1.17	2.254	0.869	1.471	7.66	21 7	<,001
Bad/Good	0.936	2.054	0.662	1.21	6.73	21 7	<,001
Unpleasant/Pleasant	0.739	1.879	0.488	0.989	5.80	21 7	<,001
Hate/Love	0.761	1.733	0.53	0.993	6.49	21 7	<,001
Non-Norwegian/Norwegian	1.555	2.237	1.256	1.854	10.2 6	21 7	<,001

### 7.2.2 Difference in demographics in paired T-test

When analysing the mean difference depending on various demographics, various trends can be observed. This is shown in Table 7.4. In terms of gender, females generated stronger significant negative perceptions of the detached brand than men, with  $MD(\text{female}) = 0.80939$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) and  $MD(\text{male}) = 0.90196$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). This was also observed when sorting for nationality, where  $MD(\text{Norwegian}) = 0.93213$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) and  $MD(\text{Other}) = -0.22222$  ( $p = 0.609$ ). This highlights locals attitudes

to a nationality detached brand are significantly negative than those of brands attached to their nationality. However, MD(Other) was found to be insignificant and with N(other) = 15, the lack of sample size for this segment potentially contributed to this.

With age, a trend of increasingly negative perceptions towards the detached brand can be seen as age increased from the 10 to 25 category to 68 to 76, all proving to be significant differences (p<0.05). Similar to before, we must be aware of the low N figures for some age groups, particularly from the category “58 to 67” and up, thus questioning the reliability of these findings.

Table 7.4 - Results from Paired T-Test of Brand Perceptions based on Demographics

Pair (Old to New)	Label	N	Mean Difference (MD)	Std. Dev	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Two-Sided P	
					Lower	Upper				
<b>Gender</b>										
Overall BA	Male	116	0.80939	1.91195	0.45775	1.1610 2	4.559	11 5	<.001	
	Female	102	0.90196	1.62904	0.58199	1.2219 4	5.592	10 1	<.001	
	<b>Nationality</b>									
	Norsk	203	0.93213	1.76934	0.68727	1.1769 9	7.506	20 2	<.001	
	Other	15	-0.22222	1.64537	-1.1334	0.6889 5	-	0.523	14	0.609
	<b>Age</b>									
	0 to 9	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	10 to 25	63	0.26279	1.24119	-0.0498	0.5753 8	1.68	62	0.098	
	26 to 41	96	0.55903	1.85122	0.18394	0.9341 2	2.959	95	0.004	
	42 to 57	40	1.73611	1.56381	1.23598	2.2362 4	7.021	39	<.001	
58 to 67	12	1.98148	1.7704	0.8524	3.1105 6	3.110 56	11	0.003		
68 to 76	5	3.0222	2.18779	0.30572	5.7387 2	3.089	4	0.037		
77+	2	3.66667	1.57135	-	10.4513 4	17.784 67	3.3	1	0.187	
<b>Region</b>										
Troms of Finmark	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Nordland	3	1.92593	1.56084	1.95141	-	5.8032 6	2.137	2	0.166	
Trøndelag	13	1.24786	1.92405	0.08517	2.4105 5	2.338	12	0.037		
Møre og Romsdal	16	0.27778	1.77917	0.67027	-	1.2258 3	0.625	15	0.542	
Vestland	19	1.20468	1.75575	0.35843	2.0509 2	2.991	18	0.008		
Goaland	6	1.27778	1.69931	0.50554	-	3.0610 9	1.842	5	0.125	

Agder	5	1.68886	2.25038	1.10532	4.4831	1.678	4	0.169
Vestfold og Telemark	8	0.58333	1.00572	0.25747	1.4241 3	1.641	7	0.145
Viken	53	1.06709	1.75565	0.58317	1.551	4.425	52	<.001
Oslo og Innlandet	92	0.63647	1.8192	0.25973	1.0132 2	3.356	91	0.001
Utenfor Norge	2	1	1.88562	15.9416 1	17.941 61	0.75	1	0.59

### 7.2.3 Chi-Square test of categorical variables

To investigate gender and age further, a Chi-square test is performed to assess if the categorical variables are independent or not. Data was converted to a data set outlining the demographic categorical variables and the difference in perception score difference based on intervals. The full results can be found in Appendix 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Due to 50% of cells having expected counts less than 5 when conducting the Chi-Square Test for age, this violates an assumption of this test (McHugh, 2013) and thus cannot be conducted on Age. For gender, this assumption is met with 0% of cells having an expected count less than 5, thus we can further analyse these results. Gender was found to have an asymptotic significance of .340. Utilizing a 95% confidence interval, it can be concluded that this is statistically insignificant and there is no association found between gender and difference in perception.

## 7.3 Main effect and moderation investigation

To investigate H1 further and H2, a regression analysis is conducted to assess the removal of nationality attached brand elements as a main effect and individual national attachment as a moderation of this.

### 7.3.1 Attachment to Nationality – Descriptives

When assessing individual attachment to nationality, Norway in this research case, the three questions regarding individual attachment were added and averaged out to produce a single variable labelled “National Attachment”. Table 7.5 reflects the descriptives of this variable “National Attachment” and is important to note scores are grouped in these descriptives for simplicity (scores are rounded up, thus an 8.1

would be classified as a 9). Scored against a 11-point Likert scale, the mean attachment to nationality was recorded as 8.7599. This indicates our sample, in general, had a strong attachment to nationality, evident further as 65.2% of the sample scored between 9 and 11 in their national attachment score.

When broken down between Norwegians and Non-Norwegians, there is a noted difference in nationality score, with a difference of 1.35 between the means. However, we must question the significance of this difference in mean due to the low number of respondents that were Non-Norwegian (N=15).

*Table 7.5 - National Attachment Descriptives & Frequencies*

<b>Overall Descriptives For National Attachment</b>				
<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>
218	2	11	8.7599	1.67966
<b>Norwegian Attachment Frequencies</b>				
<b>Score</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	
2	1	0.5	0.5	
3	0	0	0.5	
4	1	0.5	1	
5	3	1.5	2.5	
6	8	3.9	6.4	
7	17	8.4	14.8	
8	34	16.7	31.5	
9	50	24.6	56.2	
10	31	15.3	71.4	
11	58	28.6	100	
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100</b>		
<b>Non-Norwegian Attachment Frequencies</b>				
<b>Score</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	
5	1	6.7	6.7	
6	2	13.3	20	
7	1	6.7	26.7	
8	8	53.3	80	
9	2	13.3	93.3	
10	0	0	93.3	
11	1	6.7	100	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>		



### 7.3.2 Regression results

The following regression equation is utilized for this analysis:

$$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Age + \beta_2 Gender + \beta_3 Nationality + \beta_4 BF + \beta_5 BE + \beta_6 NB + \beta_7 AN + \beta_8 AN * NB + \epsilon$$

BP = Brand Perception

BF = Brand Familiarity (Control Variable)

BE = Brand Perception (Control Variable)

NB = Dummy for removing nationally attached brand element

AN = Attachment to Nationality

The reference category for the dummy regression is “Brand with nationally attached brand element” ( $NB = 0$ ), with  $NB = 1$  representing “Brand without nationality associated brand elements removed”. The results of this regression analysis are illustrated in Appendix 7, 8, & 9.

As Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.284$ , only 28.4% of variation in Brand Perception can be attributed to this model, thus not a strong predictor of Brand Perception. However, the regression model is significant ( $p = <0.001$ ), hinting at a linear relationship between variables. In terms of control variables, the only significant variables ( $p < 0.05$ ) found were Brand Familiarity ( $p = 0.007$ ) and Brand Experience ( $p = 0.001$ ).

Noting the variable Dummy, representing removing nationally attached brand elements, we can see that the removal of nationally attached brands does lead to more negative perceptions for the brand in question ( $\beta = -0.585$ ). However, this variable is shown to insignificant ( $p = 0,291$ ). Thus there is no significant effect of removing nationally attached brand elements on brand perception.

When it comes to the significance of attachment to nationality (AN) and its moderator effect (AN\*NB), we can clearly see that both the variable and interaction are insignificant ( $p = 0.305$  &  $0.628$  respectively), thus highlighting there is no moderation effect of national attachment on brand perception present.

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As a result, we do not reject the null hypothesis for H1 & H2, highlighting the removal of nationally attached brand elements is not responsible for greater dislike of the new brand than the old brand and individual attachment to nationality does not moderate their brand perception.

## **8. Discussion**

This section outlines the findings regarding the rebranding of a nationally attached brand and the importance of individual attachment to national attachment. The outcome of these findings are laid out and reasoned.

The overall aim of this study was to contribute to rebranding literature and explore a niche with particular focus on nationally attached brands and the potential mechanisms in play for such brands. In particular, the study aimed to uncover a main effect and moderation. Table 8 gives an overview of the hypothesis findings and key observations for each.

### **8.1 Discussion on Perception Change with Rebranding of Nationality Attached Brands**

H1 proposed that rebranding results in more unfavourable perceptions towards the new brand than the old brand. The results of the regression analysis highlight the removal of nationally attached brand elements as an insignificant variable in determining brand perception. This comes as a surprise to the authors due to the current discourse on national brand attachment effectiveness. While studies such as Schooler's (1965) highlight a bias towards country of origin, this may not extend fully to brand element attachment to a country. Thus, one can conclude that national brand elements may not play a key role in brand perception formation during the rebranding process.

Whilst this study was unable to extract a main effect, there was a noticeable and significant result from the Paired T-Test. This highlighted a significantly different mean between the brand before and after rebranding, in favour of the old brand. Thus significant negative perception change was observed. These results provide more concrete evidence towards the direction in which consumer brand perception moves towards when companies undergo rebranding. In particular, it helps reinforce the literature pool/viewpoint that labels rebranding as a dangerous practice as a means of generating positive consumer behavior, views that are portrayed in the results of the work by Collange (2014) and Collange & Bonache (2015). It underlines the bond breaking properties of a rebranding, destabilizing a customer's status quo and resulting in what Collange terms as an inevitable decline

in the evaluation of the brand overall (Collange & Bonache, 2015). Consumers may have formed an overall attachment to the NSB brand and thus see it destroyed as a result of rebranding, destroying brand equity with the customer.

The results of Paired T-Test conducted by sort for demographic variables also brought intriguing results. With regard to age, the mean difference in brand perception dramatically increased as age increased. This suggest that brand familiarity and experience, key control variables, played a significant role as older individuals were more likely exposed to the brand for longer periods of time, considering NSB was founded in 1883 (*About Us | Information about the Vy Group | Vision | vy.No*, n.d.), thus forming stronger bonds and connections with the old brand elements than younger generations. As a result, when rebranding occurs, stronger associations and bonds, that have taken longer to manifest and consolidate, are harder to replace or recuperate with the new brand in comparison to younger individuals less exposed to the brand time wise. However, a Chi-squared test could not be conducted on this assumption, thus this claim cannot be confirmed. Whilst there was an observed difference in brand perception between Nationals of the brands home country and foreigners, these results were insignificant and may be largely due to the lack of sample size in the foreigner category.

## **8.2 Discussion on Individual National Attachment Moderation**

In terms of individual national attachment as a moderator, no significant moderation effect was observed. Similar to findings of the main effect this came as a surprise as literature into country-of-origin branding and attachment discourse provided an adamant picture of the importance of the strength of attachment to brands (Thomas et al, 2005; Carroll & Ahuivia , 2006). Thus we can conclude that attachment may not fully extend to one's nationality or the nationality attached brand elements specifically.

*Table 8: Overview of study findings and comparisons to literature*

<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Findings of thesis study</b>	<b>Findings from literature</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>H1</b>	Significant Negative difference in brand perception for newer brand, but not explained by removal of nationally attached brand elements	Inconclusive if rebranding was to produce more negative or positive perceptions overall	Collange (2014) Collange & Bonache (2015)	Yes/No
<b>H2</b>	Insignificant moderator effect of individual national attachment on consumer perceptions.	Consumers with high attachment to country of origin demonstrate a bias toward products made in foreign countries and tend to provide lower evaluations than those made from their home country.	Schooler (1965) Thomas et al (2005) Carroll & Ahuvia (2006)	No

## **9.0 Conclusion**

### **9.1 Theoretical & Managerial Implications**

This research project provides several insights to the academic area of rebranding and national attachment. In terms of rebranding, the results of this study help consolidate knowledge on the overall results of rebranding. Pointing towards the development of more negative perceptions of the new brand, this helps add to the arguments put forward by Collange (2014) and Collange & Bonache (2015) concerning the direction of brand perception change in rebranding episodes. In addition, as this study was based on real life examples, the results help show the true effect of rebranding in an active business environment, improving on the artificial/fictitious experiments, such as that by Walsh et al (2010).

In terms of national attachment, this research helps close the door on this niche area of literature. The lack of significant main effect or moderation caused by nationally attached brand elements and individual attachment to nationality helps prove the insignificance of this issue in rebranding. In addition, it also helps question the significance and modern relevance of discourse surrounding national attachment, particularly the importance of national attachment to brand perception. It may point to a need to re-explore the field in an ever globalised world where borders are broken down, cultures are more easily exported/intertwined and thus people are no longer citizens of their country but the world. Academics must truly consider if our national identity really still holds weight in such a society.

For managers, various implications can be drawn from this research. For one, managers must truly consider if rebranding is the right course of action to take, especially given the scale of which corporations are conducting rebranding. Given the more negative perceptions generated by rebranding, such marketing tactic should be utilised carefully and as a last resort option, only if the firm is unable to reverse continuing declining negative perceptions and is unable to find alternative marketing initiatives to turn it around. The risk associated with unessential rebranding may be too high to warrant pursuing such activity.

In terms of nationally attached branding, there are strong learnings here for both current managers of nationally attached brands and prospective managers/entrepreneurs wanting to create their own brand. It seems like having brand elements explicitly attach themselves to a nationality does not have an added effect to generating positive brand perceptions, as their removal had no significant effect on brand perception in the study. Of course, there may be ulterior motives for such attachment (such as associating with certain core values of a country that are in line with the organisations for example), but if the primary goal is to help generate more positive perception and connection between brand and consumer, this may not be the most effective and thus managers should look into other brand element/communication tactics to better connect with their target consumer.

## **9.2 Limitations & Recommendation for Future Research**

There are several limitations the authors would like to acknowledge with this research. Firstly, this study was conducted utilising convenience sampling due to resource and time constraints. This led to limitations with the sample size and representation, such as a lack of respondents of foreign background and a skewness towards younger aged respondents. This has adverse implications when it came to conducting certain analysis that meant results could not be fully trusted and valid. It is thus recommended that future research attempt to obtain far larger and more representative samples that allow for more thorough analysis and thus alleviate certain limitations of this study.

Moreover, improvements to data collection and analysis can be made for future research. This study collected data at a single point in time, roughly three years after the rebranding episode. Thus, this study relied on respondents recalling their brand perception of the old brand after a substantial period of time. Future research should aim to collect data over the course of the rebranding, including before, during and after the rebranding to allow for more accurate brand perception readings for each time period. In terms of analysis, as the data collected corresponded to a within subject design and thus measurements for brand perception for both brands came from the same respondent, there may have been random effects at play with the results. Thus, future research could utilise a panel data regression to help alleviate the concerns for random effect with this current methodology.

Transferability and external validity is also a key limitation in this study. This research was built around a specific rebranding case in a highly specific business context, the Norwegian transport market. Whilst this may be applicable to similar business and societal cultures, such as the Scandics, it may not be applicable to a global context. Thus, future research should explore cases in other countries to explore the transferability of results to a wider global context.

Finally, with this specific case, while brand perception difference was found between the old and new brand, no main effect was observed from our key variables. Thus, future research could potentially explore what is the main effect in this case and help VY understand why exactly their rebranding produced such results. This could be conducted via more in-depth methodology such as experiments and interviews to gain more qualitative data to complement quantitative data collected in this study.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Literature review summary table: Rebranding

Author(s)	Purpose of study	Findings
Muzellec et al. (2003)	An exploratory review of rebranding phenomenon.	Various descriptive statistics on reasons for rebranding, types of name change, geographic and industry spread.
Daly, A. & Moloney, D. (2004)	Managing corporate rebranding.	Viewed rebranding as a continuum. Developed a theoretical framework with four different approaches to corporate rebranding: Interim/dual, substitution, prefix, and brand amalgamation.
Merrilees, B. & Miller, D. (2008)	Principles of corporate rebranding.	Authors proposed and verified 6 principles of corporate rebranding theory, focusing on the need for maintaining core values and cultivating the brand. Linking existing with revised brand, good communication and stakeholders' acceptance.
Collange, V. & Bonache, A. (2015)	Overcoming resistance to product rebranding.	Specific variables influence how consumers evaluate product rebranding: surprise, incomprehension, emotions, and trust.
Collange, V. (2015)	Consumer reaction to service rebranding.	Consumers overall evaluation of a service decreases significantly after its rebranding. Proximity between new brand and service leads to smaller decrease. Stronger image of new brand has a positive impact, and consumer attachment to the service plays a positive role.
Bolhuis et al (2015)	Corporate rebranding: effects of corporate visual identity changes on employees and consumers.	Evidence of positive perceptions from employees and consumers. Such effects are only attainable when CVI change is well considered, designed, and implemented.

## Appendix 2 – Complete overview of survey



Ranger følgende utsagn

	0 (Ikke i det hele tatt)	1	2	3	4	5 (Verken Eller)	6	7	8	9	10 (Veldig)
Til hvilken grad er det å være "Norsk" en del av deg og hvem du er?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Til hvilken grad føler du deg personlig tilknyttet til Norge?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Til hvilken grad føler du deg emosjonelt tilknyttet til Norge?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Norges Statsbaner (NSB) var et norsk transportkonsern som eies av den norske stat. Selskapet driver primært med tog- og godstrafikk på jernbane og persontransport med buss. I 2019 bestemte transportkonsernet om å omprofilere selskapet til Vy. Det nye navnet, Vy betyr utsikt og oversyn og brukes om å ha ambisjoner - Store Vyer.



NB: Vennligst vurder NSB før omprofileringen til Vy fant sted



Hvor godt kjenner du til NSB

	1	2	3	4 (Verken Eller)	5	6	7	
Ukjent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Kjent
Uerfaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Erfaren

Hvordan vil du rangere bruken din av NSB sine tjenester?

	1	2	3	4 (Verken Eller)	5	6	7	
Aldri Brukt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Regelmessig
Unødvendig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Nødvendig

Hvordan vil du rangere viktigheten av merkevaren NSB for deg?

	1	2	3	4 (Verken Eller)	5	6	7	
Ikke Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Relevant
Uviktig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Viktig
Ikke Essensielt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Essensielt

Hvordan vil du rangere oppfatningen din til merkevaren NSB?

	1	2	3	4 (Verken Eller)	5	6	7	
Lite Tiltalende	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Tiltalende
Misliker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Liker
Veldig Dårlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Bra
Ubehagelig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Behagelig
Hater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Elsker
Ikke Norsk merkevare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Norsk merkevare





NB: Vennligst vurder Vy etter omprofileringen fra NSB fant sted



Hvor godt kjenner du til Vy

				4					
	1	2	3	(Verken Eller)	5	6	7		
Ukjent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Kjent
Uerfaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Erfaren

Hvordan vil du rangere bruken din av Vy sine tjenester?

				4					
	1	2	3	(Verken Eller)	5	6	7		
Aldri Brukt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Regelmessig
Unødvendig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Nødvendig

Hvordan vil du rangere viktigheten av merkevaren Vy for deg?

				4					
	1	2	3	(Verken Eller)	5	6	7		
Ikke Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Relevant
Uviktig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Viktig
Ikke Essensielt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Essensielt

Hvordan vil du rangere oppfatningen din til merkevaren Vy?

				4					
	1	2	3	(Verken Eller)	5	6	7		
Lite Tiltalende	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Tiltalende
Misliker	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Liker
Veldig Dårlig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Veldig Bra
Ubehagelig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Behagelig
Hater	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Elsker
Ikke Norsk merkevare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Norsk merkevare



### Appendix 3 – Chi Square Test of Independence (Gender)

#### Gender \* Perception\_Diff Crosstabulation

		Perception_Diff			Total
		Negative	No Change	Positive	
Kjønn	Mann	41	8	67	116
	Kvinne	28	11	63	102
Total		69	19	130	218

### Appendix 4: Chi Square test (Gender)

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.156 <sup>a</sup>	2	.340
Likelihood Ratio	2.163	2	.339
Linear-by-Linear Association	.917	1	.338
N of Valid Cases	218		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.89.

### Appendix 5 – Chi-Square Test of Independence (Age)

#### Age \* Perception\_Diff Crosstabulation

		Perception_Diff			Total
		Negative	No Change	Positive	
Alder	10 - 25	28	11	24	63
	26 - 41	37	6	53	96
	42 - 57	4	0	36	40
	58 - 67	0	2	10	12
	68 - 76	0	0	5	5
	77+	0	0	2	2
Total		69	19	130	218

**Appendix 6 - Chi-Square test (Age)**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.244 <sup>a</sup>	10	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	52.139	10	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	27.655	1	<.001
N of Valid Cases	218		

a. 9 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

**Appendix 7 - Regression ANOVA**

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
<b>Regression</b>	211,880	8	26,485	22,574	<.001

**Appendix 8 - Regression analysis model summary**

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.545	0.297	0.284	1.08317

## Appendix 9 - Regression coefficients

	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig
<b>Constant</b>	1.667	0.564		2.957	0.003
<b>Age</b>	-0.009	0.053	-0.008	-0.18	0.858
<b>Gender</b>	0.132	0.106	0.052	1.248	0.213
<b>Nationality</b>	0.227	0.212	0.045	1.036	0.286
<b>BF</b>	0.15	0.055	0.151	2.711	0.007
<b>BE</b>	0.293	0.051	0.314	5.695	<.001
<b>Dummy</b>	-0.585	0.554	-0.229	1.057	0.291
<b>AN</b>	0.046	0.045	0.06	1.027	0.305
<b>Interaction (AN*NB)</b>	-0.03	0.062	-0.107	-0.485	0.628