

# **THE INFLUENCE OF SELECTED CONSUMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY ELEMENTS ON BRAND PREFERENCE AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS STORE BRANDS**



by

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2020

## DECLARATION

I, Vusimuzi Paulus Makhubela, declare that the contents of this dissertation (The Influence of Selected Consumer-based Brand Equity Elements on Brand Preference and Purchase Intentions Towards Store Brands) represents my own unaided work, except the quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged, and that this dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Vaal University of Technology.

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## ABSTRACT

**Key words:** Consumer-based brand equity elements, brand preference, purchase intention, store brands

Supermarket store brands are affordable alternatives towards the customers' intended brands. For many years, marketers and retailers of store brands have positioned this brand as a cheap or low-cost brand that could be afforded by most customers. This positioning has catapulted the popularity of store brands. However, on the downward side, most consumers associate cheap or low cost with low quality. The low-cost and low-quality association and perception has been a major impediment towards the real success of store brands. Store brands have long since moved from competing on price, to competing on quality. The shift of focus by marketers and retailers of store brands from price to quality puts store brands on an equal footing with national brands and, consequently, a fierce competitor.

This study investigated the influence of consumer-based brand equity elements, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality on brand preference and purchase intention of store brands. This study restricted its scope to the food brands. Investigating store brands within a South African context is particularly important since store brands are produced and owned by local retailers as opposed to national brands. The literature suggests that store brands are more profitable to retailers compared to their counterparts and serve as a point of differentiation from one retailer to another.

A quantitative research design was employed in this study and a non-probability convenience sampling technique was adopted. The target population comprised students from a tertiary institution within the Vaal triangle, namely Vaal University of Technology. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the participants, of which 361 participated in the study. To ensure reliability of the scales, pre-testing and piloting of the questionnaire preceded the main survey.

Results from correlation and regression analysis revealed that brand equity elements, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality explain 68.4 percent of the variance in brand preference. This result suggests that consumer-based brand equity elements significantly contribute towards building consumer brand preference towards the store brands. In addition, amongst all the variables, brand loyalty made the strongest contribution towards explaining brand preference ( $\beta = 0.342$ ). Moreover, brand preference explains 65.3 percent of the

variance in purchase intention. These results suggest that brand preference strongly contributes towards building purchase intention of store brands.

Based on the results of this study, recommendations for retailers of store brands are provided as follows:

- Retailers of store brands should implement greater awareness programmes for store brands and create positive word-of-mouth through superior product quality.
- Retailers of store brands should strengthen store brands' brand associations to improve the image of store brands.
- Retailers of store brands should pay special attention to creating brand loyalty of store brands through implementing store brands' loyalty programmes.

Limitations, future research opportunities and contributions of this study are discussed in the study.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A brand is a synthesis of identities such as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or mark with the intention to identify goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Du Toit & Erdis 2013:17). Mootee (2013:26) suggests that a brand is an intangible asset that resides in consumers' hearts and minds. The essence of this definition is found in consumers' expectations of the tangible and intangible attributes of the brand. For this study, the focus will be on store brands, which are defined by Laforet (2010:20) as brands that are owned and sold by the retailer. Store brands are also popularly known as private label brands.

The study is restricted to supermarket store brands. Based on the review of the literature, it was revealed that consumers who buy more store brands in many categories are more profitable for the supermarket than consumers who buy relatively more national brands (Sellers-Rubio & Nicolau-Gonzalbez 2015:113). Furthermore, according to Kremer and Voit (2012:528), store brands are known for generating high profit margins compared to national brands. This creates unique interests on the part of the researcher and further warrants investigation towards consumers' preference and purchase intention towards store brands. This study focused on food products within the entire range of store brands.

There are various reasons why supermarkets establish and grow store brands. These include higher consumer store loyalty and shifting of power from national brands to store brands (Ailawadi, Pauwels & Steenkamp 2008:19). Moreover, there are positive effects of store brands in relation to store image and higher store loyalty (Kasum, Ailawadi & Harlam 2004:149). In instances where store brands are positioned at the lower end of the price scale, they appear favourable to budget-constrained customers, thus increasing store loyalty (Glynn & Widjaja 2015:362). As a result, store brands potentially boost store loyalty and provide a point of differentiation from other supermarkets.

Spector (2013:389) states that the advantage of a supermarket having store brands is that they provide higher profits than national brands. Rossi, Borges and Bakpayev (2015:77) express similar views and affirm that store brands make a significant contribution towards the supermarket's profit margins, store traffic and consumer loyalty. Store brands strengthen the bargaining power of retailers when negotiating prices with manufacturers and thus allow supermarkets to negotiate

lower wholesale prices with manufacturers on national brands (Pauwels & Srinivasan 2004:366). Martos-Partal and Gonzalez-Benito (2011:298) attest that store brands may increase retailers' bargaining powers to obtain better contract conditions with suppliers.

This adopts Aaker's brand equity model to examine the effect of consumers' preference and purchase intention of store brands. Aaker (1991:15) defines brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". In the same vein Su and Tong (2015:125) attest that brand equity provides an added value with which a given brand embodies a product.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Although store brands are relatively cheaper than national brands, research has established that most consumers prefer to purchase the latter (Dawes & Nenycz-Thiel 2013:60). Consumers perceive the quality of national brands as being high as opposed to the quality of store brands (Beneke 2010:203; Mendez, Oubina & Rubio 2011:1230 & Beneke & Carter 2015:22). The spending behaviour of consumers and their prejudice against store brands creates an unfavourable situation for the retailer. According to Martenson (2007:545), store brands can increase profits by 80 percent in the best category and a decline of 1 percent in the worst category. In most instances, when all cost and revenue items are calculated, store brands emerge low in profits due to the simple observation that store brands are not bought in large quantities.

It is not yet clear whether consumers have a general appreciation for all store brands or only category-specific brands (Hansen, Singh & Chintagunta 2006:75). However, it is clear that store brands have the highest presence in product categories, relative to national brands (Sayman & Raju 2004:129). Category profits tend to rise if cross-price sensitivity or differential price between store brands and national brands is low and category profit tends to rise if there are a large number of national brands (Chintagunta, Bornfrer & Song 2002:1243). Given the overall perception of consumers towards store brands and the retailer's implementation of key success factors on store brands, it is important, therefore, to note that the aim and objective of store brands is to imitate the category leader or the national brand and present comparable quality at lower prices (Sayman, Honch & Raju 2002:379).

Despite increased attention given to the study of store brands, there is, however, paucity of research that examines store brands equity (Calvo-Porrall, Martínez-Fernández, Juanatey-Boga & Lévy-Mangín 2015:95). Therefore, the present study aims to contribute to the lack of research on

this topic by examining the influence of brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intention towards store brands.

### **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

To gain a better understanding of the study constructs, the theoretical background that informs this study draws from the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), social identity theory (SIT) and self-congruity theory.

#### **1.3.1 Underlying theories**

##### **1.3.1.1 Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)**

TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (referred to as TRA) (Son, Jin & George 2013:436). TPB implies that an intention to act is the best predictor of behaviour in that intention embodies motivational factors that influence behaviour (Halder, Pietarinen, Havu-Nuutinen, Pollanen & Pelkonen 2016:628). In this regard, intention is determined by three constructs, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Sommestad, Karlzen & Hallberg 2015:202). Attitude refers to an individual's evaluation of an object, issue, person or action (Sallam & Algamash 2016:510) while subjective norms is the perceived social pressure to engage in an activity or behaviour (Al-Swidi, Huque, Hafeez & Shariff 2014:1564) and perceived behavioural control relates to the perceived easiness or difficulty to perform an activity (Jafarkarimi, Saadatdoost, Sim & Hee 2016:546). This theory is employed in this study to provide a better understanding of a consumer's purchase intentions about regarding store brands.

##### **1.3.1.2 The social identity theory (SIT)**

SIT was developed by Tajfel in 1978 (Bernabe, Lisbona, Palaci & Martin-Aragon 2016:2). The central assumption of SIT is that members of the "in-group" will seek to find negative aspects of the "out-group" members (Stets & Burke 2000:225). Thus, social categories or groups play a role in an individual's social judgment and decisions (Norton, Darley & Vandello 2004:819). When the logic of SIT is taken to a micro-level research domain, brands can represent self-relevant social categories with which consumers can identify themselves (Lam, Ahearne, Hu & Schillewaert 2010:129). This is due to a relationship construed between brands and individuals. Furthermore, the extant marketing literature based on SIT argues that members of brand communities engage in collective behaviour to extol or to praise the virtues of their beloved brands (Lam *et al.* 2010:130). Therefore, this theory is used in this study to provide a better understanding of consumers' brand preferences.

### **1.3.1.3 Self-congruity theory**

Self-congruity theory studies cognitively matches and mismatches between self-concept and self-images that are triggered by cues, objects, persons, events and brands (Su & Reynolds 2017:3). With respect to this study, this theory refers to the match or mismatch between the consumer's perception of a brand's personality and their perception of their own personality (Liu, Li, Mizerski & Soh 2012:923). The study of self-congruity has been applied to a diverse range of products such as automobiles, travel destinations and clothing, among others (Randle & Dolnicar 2011:743). In relation to this study, self-congruity has been used as a means to understand several aspects of consumer behaviour, including brand loyalty, brand preference, brand choice, consumer satisfaction and store loyalty (Das & Khatwani 2018:286). According to this theory, consumers seek consistency and hence they will choose brands that possess a user image that is consistent with their own self-concept (Das & Khatwani 2018:286). In the same vein, Cheng-Xi Aw, Flynn and Chong (102:2019) mentions that consumers are attracted to brands that are deemed to be congruent to their self-identity, value and goals. Self-congruity theory is thus undertaken in this study with the aim of understanding the extent to which congruency between brand image and the consumer's self-concept has an impact towards customers purchase intentions of store brands.

### **1.3.2 Clarification of constructs**

#### **1.3.2.1 Consumer-based brand equity**

Brand equity can be divided into three elements, namely financial-based brand equity, product/market-based brand equity and customer-based brand equity (Huang & Sarigollu 2014:783; Tanveer & Lodhi 2016:43; Rodrigues & Martins 2016:508). This study will focus on consumer-based brand equity, which refers to the consumer's perception or feelings towards the brand-related associations (Shuv-Ami 2016:323). Aaker (1991) proposed the consumer-based brand equity model. Conceptualising brand equity from the customer's orientation provides both specific guidelines for marketing strategies and decision making for management (Maja, Mikulic & Gil-Saura 2016:1). According to Washburn and Plank (2002:47), customer-based brand equity elements can be grouped into five elements, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality and other proprietary assets such as patents and trademarks. In line with the study of Calvo-Porrall *et al.* (2015:96), the present study proposes a model formation of brand equity, which incorporates four dimensions, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality.

- **Brand awareness**

Brand awareness influences the consumer's decision-making by placing brands in the consideration set of the consumer (McDonald & Sharp 2000:5). Brand awareness refers to whether consumers can recall or recognise a brand or whether consumers know about the brand (Huang & Sarigollu 2012:92). Brand recall, on the one hand, is the consumer's ability to retrieve a brand from memory, either spontaneously or with a brand cue, interchangeably with brand familiarity (Krishnan, Sullivan, Groza & Aurand 2013:416). Brand recognition, on the other hand, is the consumer's ability to recognise a certain brand when multiple alternatives are presented (Valkenburg & Buijzen 2005:457). Brand awareness is likely to channel the behaviour of consumers to engage in repurchasing of the brand (Ayanwale, Alimi & Ayanbimipe 2005:10).

- **Brand association**

Brand association is the category of a brand's assets and liabilities that includes anything linked to a brand in the consumer's memory (Low & Lamb 2000:351). Positive association to a brand is the result of a positive attitude that will create beneficial attitudes and feelings and provide reasons to trigger a purchase (Till, Baack & Waterman 2011:93). In addition, brand association helps in brand evaluation, which leads to the selection of certain brands (Romaniuk & Gaillard 2007:267). O'Cass and Lim (2002:62) further assert that brand association plays an influential role towards brand preference.

- **Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty refers to a consumer's strong commitment towards a certain brand and the willingness to obtain that brand during a purchase transaction (Cataluña, Navarro & Phau 2006:436). To this end, consumers continue to buy a brand because it produces signals that are familiar and favourable and which result in consumers being comfortable with the purchase and believe that the brand will continually meet their expectations (Kim, Morris & Swait 2008:99). Loyalty is then is a driving force in consumers spending through attitude and behaviour (Lazarevic 2012:48). When consumers are loyal, it is likely that over time they will continue to use or prefer the same brand because they succeed in achieving the desired benefits from the brand (Berkowits, Bao & Allaway 2005:10).

- **Perceived quality**

Perceived quality refers to a subjective judgment that a consumer makes about the superiority of a product (Martinez-Carrasco, Brugarolas, Martinez-Poveda, Ruiz & Garcia-Martinez

2012:1414). From the consumer's point of view, perceived quality is observed as a combination of attributes that bring about utility to the consumer (Snoj, Korda & Mumel 2004:158). Perceived quality can also be seen as an assessment variable that could be used to explain behavioural intentions (Sanyal & Datta 2011:607). In addition, perceived quality assists consumers to form a subjective judgment on the overall product quality or service (Chi, Yeh & Yang 2009:135).

#### **1.3.2.2 Brand preference**

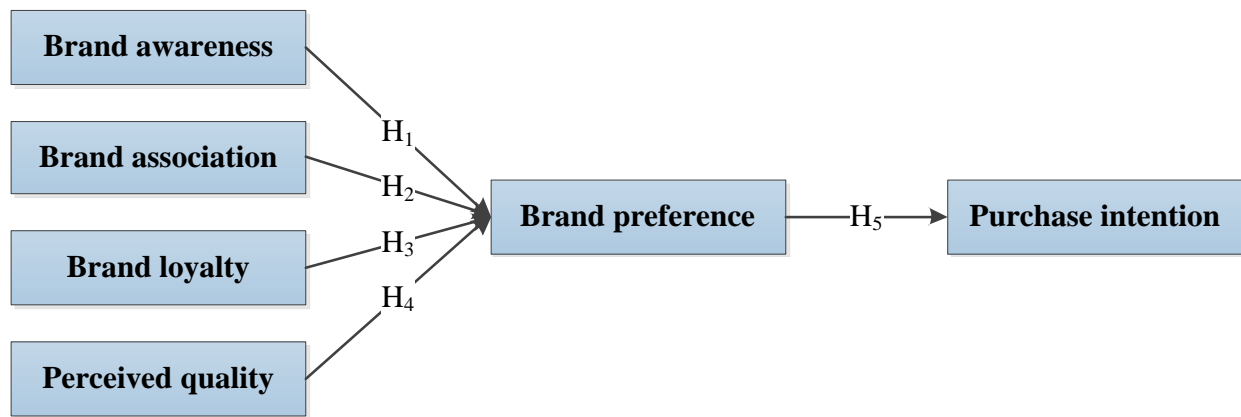
Brand preference is a measure of brand loyalty in which consumers will choose a brand in the presence of competing brands (Padmasani, Remya & Ishwarya 2014:247). In addition, Alamro and Rowley (2011:476) argue that brand preference is the extent to which a consumer favours the offerings of a certain brand in comparison to other brands. Brand preference is the consequence of the consumer's perception and the desired benefits that the consumer hopes to receive from the brand (Vijayalakshmi & Manimozhy 2015:186). Consequently, consumer perception about brand benefits leads to brand preference (Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani & Fan 2016:3). According to Vinh and Huy (2016:78), a higher equity brand creates a greater purchase intention. Brand equity has been considered as a condition for brand preference, and there it affects the consumers' willingness to purchase a certain product or brand in the future (Shas, Adeel, Hanif & Khan 2016:19).

#### **1.3.2.3 Purchase intention**

Purchase intention refers to the possibility that the consumer will consider or be willing to purchase a certain product or service in the future (Wu, Yeh & Hsiao 2011:32). In line with this assertion, Yunus and Rashid (2016:344) suggest that purchase intention is the possibility of the consumer's willingness to purchase specific products. From the two definitions, willingness to purchase comes out as a dominant factor, hence the concept of purchase intention centres on consumers' willingness to make a transaction (Gillani 2012:324). Therefore, purchase intention is described as an antecedent towards a disposition and results in the likelihood of more purchases (Ramayah, Lee & Mohamad 2010:1421; Lee & Lee 2015:57).

### **1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Drawing from the literature review, a proposed conceptual framework (Figure 1.1) and research hypotheses were developed as a representation of the constructs and their relationship with each other. The selected elements of brand equity are the predictor variables, brand preference is the mediating variable while purchase intention is the outcome variable. The following figure provides a conceptual framework for the study.



**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for the study**

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were set.

- H1:** There is a positive relationship between brand awareness and brand preference.
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between brand association and brand preference.
- H3:** There is a positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference.
- H4:** There is a positive relationship between perceived quality and brand preference.
- H5:** There is a positive relationship between brand preference and purchase intention.

## 1.5 OBJECTIVES

### 1.5.1 Primary objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the consumer's perception of the influence of consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intentions within the major supermarkets store brands in Emfuleni Municipal District, in the Gauteng province, South Africa.

### 1.5.2 Theoretical objectives

To achieve the primary objective of the study, the following theoretical objectives were formulated for the study.

- To review the literature on the underlying theories of the constructs under investigation
- To develop a literature synthesis on the selected elements of brand equity
- To critically provide an analysis of brand preference

- To review the literature on purchase intentions.

### **1.5.3 Empirical objectives**

The following empirical objectives have been formulated to support both the theoretical and primary objectives of the study.

- To assess consumers perceptions of brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand preference and purchase intentions regarding supermarket store brands.
- To determine the association and influence of brand awareness on brand preference towards supermarket store brands.
- To determine the association and influence of brand association on brand preference towards supermarket store brands.
- To determine the association and influence of brand loyalty on brand preference towards supermarket store brands.
- To determine the association and influence of perceived quality on brand preference towards supermarket store brands.
- To examine the association and influence of brand preference on purchase intention towards supermarket store brands.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Research design is a framework or plan used in research for collecting and analysing data (Churchill, Brown & Suter 2010:78). The study used a descriptive and causal research design and a single cross-sectional survey. Two methods of research were undertaken, namely a literature review and an empirical study.

### **1.6.1 Literature review**

A literature review on selected brand equity elements, brand preference, purchase intention, store brands and the underlying theories to the constructs under investigation was conducted. The study utilised a vast range of materials, namely journal articles sourced through electronic database, textbooks, newspaper articles, magazines, Internet searches and conference reports to establish a conceptual background for the study.

### **1.6.2 Empirical study**

For this study, a quantitative approach was adopted. Quantitative research is mostly used in descriptive and causal research designs (Hair, Celsi, Ortinau & Bush 2013:79). The researcher selected a quantitative approach because results are easily quantifiable and the data collection instruments have a high potential degree of accuracy (Du Plessis & Rousseau 2007:21). The following steps, as suggested by Malhotra (2010:372), were followed in developing the sampling design procedure for the empirical study.

### **1.6.3 Target population**

Target population is defined as the totality of units that confirm to some designated specifications (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:282). Furthermore, Malhotra, Birks and Wills (2013:236) assert that the target population refers to the collection of elements or objects that possess the information required by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made. The target population for this study comprised both male and female students in a higher institution of learning located within the Sedibeng district, namely the Vaal University of Technology.

### **1.6.4 Sample frame**

According to Malhotra (2010:373) sampling frame is a representation of the elements of the target population, including a list or set of directions used to describe the target population. For this study, a list of all registered students for the academic year 2019 at the Vaal University of Technology served as a sample frame.

### **1.6.5 Sampling techniques**

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used in this study. Non-probability technique is defined as the use of the researcher's judgment or discretion to select the sample elements (Malhotra 2010:376) and refers to sample elements or units being selected purely by virtue of them being easily and readily available (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins, & Van Wyk 2010:346). A convenience sampling procedure was selected because it is cost-effective and allows a reasonably enough data to be collected within a relatively short period of time (Maree 2007:177).

### **1.6.6 Sample size**

Sample size refers to a selected number of elements from a group or population to which propositions can be made (Flick 2015:100). Sample size determination for this study was based on previous similar studies of De-Wulf, Odekerken-Schroder, Goedertier and Van-Ossel

(2005:226); Calvo-Porrall, *et al.* (2015:105); Rubio, Oubina and Villasenor (2014:292) and Glynn and Widjaja (2015:368). Table 1.1 depicts the said authors' scope of study and sizes used in their respective studies:

**Table 1.1: Sample size determination using the historical evidence approach**

Author	Scope of study	Sample size used
De-Wulf <i>et al.</i> (2005:226)	Consumer perceptions of store brands versus national brands	225
Calvo-Porrall, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga and Levy-Mangin (2015:105)	Measuring the influence of customer-based store brand equity in the purchase intention	362
Rubio <i>et al.</i> (2014:292)	Brand awareness-Brand quality inference and the consumer's risk perception in store brands of food products	877
Glynn and Widjaja (2015:368)	Private label personality: applying brand personality to private label brands	398
Beneke (2010:210)	Consumer perceptions of private label brands within the retail grocery sector of South Africa	341

Drawing upon the aforementioned consideration and the nature of analyses utilised in this study, a sample size of 400 was deemed appropriate for the study and is thus considered large enough to make a good representation of consumer perceptions towards store brands.

### **1.6.7 Data collection method**

Primary data were collected by means of a self-administered survey, which is a traditional paper questionnaire that allows participants to respond to the researcher's questions, by filling in the answers in the questionnaire (Tustin *et al.* 2010:184). According to Malhotra (2010:211), a questionnaire is simple to administer and data obtained are reliable because participants are limited to the alternatives stated. The researcher conducted fieldwork necessary for the study.

### **1.6.8 Measuring instruments**

Details of the questionnaire design and the various sections are alluded to in Chapter 3 (refer to Section 3.5.2).

## **1.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the composition of the sample and analyse the questionnaire responses into meaningful data (Awang, Muhammad & Sinnaduai 2012:42). To make inferences from the data collected, the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS), version 24.0, was used. Correlation and regression were computed to measure and confirm relationships among hypothesised variables.

## **1.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

For measurement scale assessment of this study, reliability and validity were computed. Reliability refers to the degree that a scale can produce consistent results when it is being administered repeatedly (Malhotra 2010:318). McDaniel and Gates (2010:251) further reiterate that reliability is the ability of an instrument to produce consistent results over time. Cronbach's alpha coefficient values employed as an internal-consistency reliability assessment. In Social Sciences, researchers consider scales exhibiting a Cronbach coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) above 0.80 as possessing excellent reliability, between 0.70 and 0.80 as possessing good reliability and between 0.60 and 0.70 as possessing fair reliability and below 0.60 as possessing poor reliability (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin 2013:302; Zikmund, & Babin 2013:257; Rekleiti, Souliotis, Sarafis, Kyriazis & Tsironi 2018:63). Further computation and reporting of the reliability values for the various study constructs are elucidated in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the study.

Validity of a scale may be viewed as the extent to which differences in score on the measurement scale reflect true difference among individuals, groups, or situations in the characteristics that they seek to measure (Tustin *et al.* 2010:296). For the study, content, construct, convergent and discriminant validities were ascertained.

Content validity was assessed through pretesting and piloting of the data collection instrument while construct validity was assessed through the computation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Convergent validity was assessed through correlation analysis and lastly, predictive validity was assessed through regression analysis. Multicollinearity is dealt with in (Chapter 3, Section 3.8.3.1) of this study.

## **1.9 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION**

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter provides a thorough literature review of the underlying theories of the study as well as the constructs under investigation. Moreover, an overview is provided regarding supermarket retailing in South Africa.

### **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

This chapter provides the clarification of design and methods of research utilised in the study as well as the target population, sample frame, sampling technique, sample size and data collection method. Reliability and validity of the measuring instruments are also discussed.

### **Chapter 4: Analysis and interpretation of research findings**

This chapter focuses on the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of research findings.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations of the study**

This chapter provides a conclusion as well as recommendations emanating from the study. Limitations and implications for further research are also highlighted.

## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided the introduction and background of the study, clarified the problem statement, provided the theoretical underpinnings of the study, provided the conceptual framework of the study and hypothesis. This chapter stated the objectives of the study. The research design and methodology were briefly outlined, the statistical analysis procedure of this study was discussed, reliability and validity procedure were discussed and the ethical steps adhered to in this study were also discussed. The following chapter covers the literature review of this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter (Chapter 1) provided a background to the study, problem statement, theoretical framework underpinning the study, proposed research model, research hypotheses, research objectives and research methodology. Issues of reliability, validity and ethical consideration were briefly discussed.

This chapter provides an overview of major supermarkets, store brands and their emergence within major supermarkets. It also provides a detailed discussion on the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, namely TPB, SIT and self-congruity theory. Furthermore, this chapter provides a theoretical background of key variables, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand preference and purchase intention as an outcome of the study.

#### **2.2 SUPERMARKET RETAILING: AN INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW**

“A supermarket is popularly recognised as a large multiproduct retail space with a primary focus on food” (Hill, Edwards & Levermore 2014:171). Supermarkets serve as a bridge between consumers and the food system, with their marketing techniques acknowledged as an important influence on food choices and consumer purchasing behaviours (Charlton, Kahkonen, Sacks & Cameron 2015:168). Supermarkets started in the United States of America (USA) in the 1920s and 1930s and become dominant in the late 1950s (Reardon & Gulati 2008:2). Supermarkets in USA controlled around 42 percent of the market, while the other 58 percent could be attributed to other independent and small food retailers (Richards, Lawrence & Burch 2011:30).

The start of supermarkets in other developed countries was not the same. In the Netherlands, supermarkets made their appearance in 1946 when the brothers Van Woerkom opened their first self-service shop of the country in the city of Nijmegen (De Waal, Van Nierop & Sloot 2017:57-58). Furthermore, the authors De Waal *et al.* (2017:57) assert that before then, most groceries in Netherland were sold mainly through small grocery shops, bakers, butchers, greengrocers (retailer of fruits and vegetable) and milkmen.

The Australian supermarket sector which started in the 1950s and gradually gained traction in the 1960s (Merrilees & Miller 2001:6; Keith 2012:58), is highly concentrated and dominated by two major chains, namely Coles and Woolworths and together they comprise around three-quarters of the dry grocery market share and around 50 percent share of the food-liquor groceries (Price 2016:920). The two chains have long since dominated the Australian market with Coles commanding 21.2 percent share of the market and Woolworth commanding 37.7 percent share of the market (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser 2002:283). Australia's larger supermarkets, Woolworth and Coles, continue to dominate the market in terms of revenue, however, smaller players are finding it hard to remain competitive. As a result, 10.6 percent of smaller supermarkets and grocery stores with less than 20 employees exited the market in 2016 (Bankwest Future Business 2018:4).

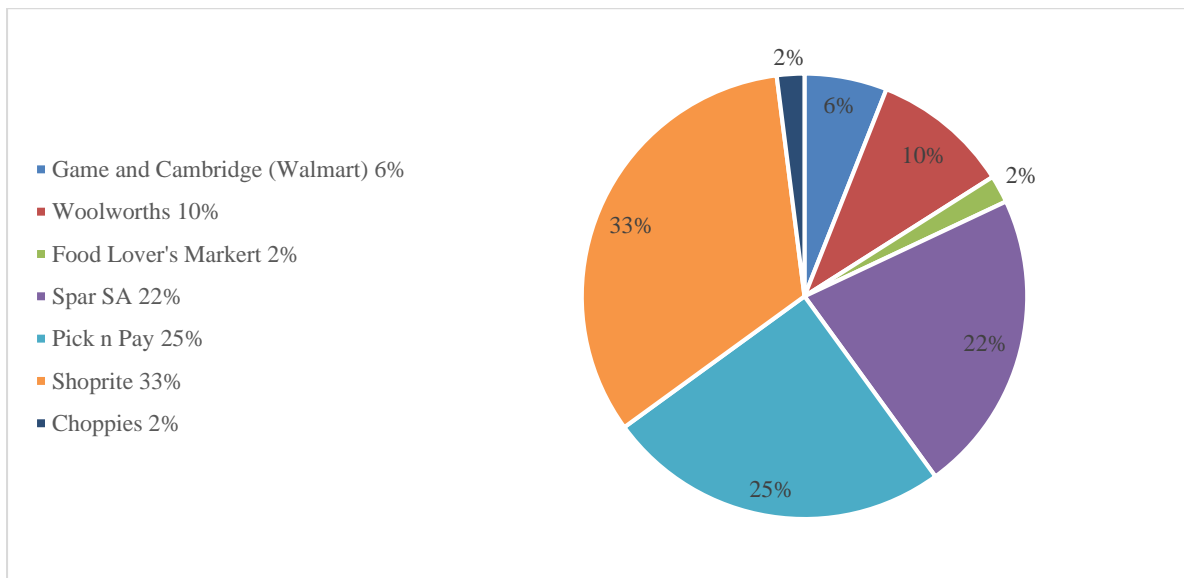
In Hong Kong, supermarkets kicked off in the 1950s and their market share has significantly grown (Bougoure & Lee 2009:71). Supermarkets in Hong Kong have adopted the Western style format and continue improvements such as opening mega stores while fresh food sections assist supermarkets in Hong Kong to expand in terms of volume and reach (Bougoure & Lee 2009:71). The appearance of supermarkets in China began in the late 1990s, more than a decade after the initial liberalisation of the state-operated urban food retail system (Si, Scott & McCordic 2019:81). Si *et al.* (2018:5) further assert that when China started to relax its restrictions of foreign direct investment in the retail sector, the grocery market started to witness an influx of multinational corporations such as Carrefour, Walmart and Metro who have since become top food retails in China alongside other Chinese supermarket chains.

From the early 1990s, and accelerating in the later part of the decade, supermarkets and hypermarkets which are defined as a one-stop-shopping retail store over 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> (Chang & Luan 2010:515) and selling basic households necessities such as food, vegetables, kitchen materials and cleaning materials (Hassan, Sade & Rahman 2013:585). Began to challenge and in some cases replace the "traditional" retail sectors consisting of wet markets, family run or mom and pops store shops (Kelly, Seubsman, Banwell, Dixon & Sleigh 2014:1181). Furthermore, Kelly *et al.* (2018:1181) assert that these changes have been driven by both demand and supply side factors, urbanisation, rising incomes and globally connected lifestyles are increasing the demand for novel foods supplied by modern forms of retail. South Africa is also one of the countries that went through retail development. The next section focuses on supermarkets within the South African context.

South Africa boasts itself with several major supermarkets such as Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Woolworths and Spar. The rise of supermarkets in South Africa is thought to be around the mid-1990s (Battersby & Peyton 2014:155), thus today these major supermarkets can be seen across the country. The most widely used definition of a supermarket is that of a store with a selling area of 400 m<sup>2</sup> and 2.500 m<sup>2</sup> selling at least 70 percent of its merchandise, comprising foodstuff and everyday commodities (Padhye & Sangvikar 2016:48). “Consumers prefer to shop at supermarkets due to the reliability of the food sold, the ambience and the convenient personal inspection, which is allowed in big stores” (Sanlier & Karakus 2010:140).

Since liberalisation in the early 1990s, supermarket chain stores have been a growing phenomenon in the urban landscape within southern Africa (Das Nair 2019:30) and they have been predominantly situated in suburban areas, traditionally catering for the needs of (white) middle- to higher-income consumers (De Bruyn & Freathy 2010:542). However, with time, supermarkets have become a place to shop, not only for the upper-income families, but also for the lower- to middle-income earners (D’Haese & Van Huylenbroeck 2005:98). Supermarkets are typically seen as providing a wide range of choices at the most competitive prices, with lower and affordable prices than any local store, fast food restaurants, or gas stations in the area (Peyton, Moseley & Battersby 2015:38). Supermarkets draw thousands of customers, pushing large trolleys through long alleys in seemingly never-ending food shelves (Marx & Erasmus 2006:57). Moreover, South African supermarkets have adopted many of the strategies of their western counterparts, making use of western-style layouts to establish a ubiquitous supermarket format (Peyton *et al.* 2015:39). Nonetheless, for customers, supermarkets provide a one-stop shopping experience, a wide range of products and an overall shopping experience that is a package of more than just physical products (Das Nair 2018:316).

The reasons for the success of large or major supermarkets are clear: they offer a great selection of food; prices of food products are often low in supermarkets compared with the smaller local shops especially for processed food products such as maize and bread (D’Haese & Van Huylenbroeck 2005:98). The combined market share of South African major supermarkets tends to fluctuate between 90 percent and 92 percent (D’Haese & Van Huylenbroeck 2005:98). Figure 2.1 depicts the share of the market held by four major supermarkets in South Africa, namely Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Spar and Woolworths.



**Figure 2.1: Market share of formal supermarket chains in South Africa**

Source: Das Nair (2019:34)

The four major supermarkets account for 90 percent of sales within the South African formal food retail sector, where Shoprite controls 33 percent, followed by Pick n Pay at 25 percent, Spar SA with 22 percent and, lastly, Woolworths with 10 percent (Das Nair 2019:34). The combined number of outlets of major supermarkets in South Africa has, over the years, increased exponentially to a staggering 3 838 outlets, with Shoprite at 1 284, Pick n Pay at 1 280, Woolworths at 382 and Spar at 890 outlets (Das Nair 2018:322). The trend in the supermarket share of retail food sales is clearer; over the past few years, the four major supermarkets have increased their number of stores and total retail space and have recorded turnover growth above the consumer price index and food inflation, as well as population growth (Van Der Heijden & Vink 2013:77).

With the population growth, supermarket chains have spread from the urban areas to peri-urban and rural areas (Das Nair 2019:34). This expansion has made it easier and much more convenient for individuals living in peri-urban and rural areas to have routine access to supermarkets and to have access to store brands, which are sold by major supermarkets.

The next section provides an overview of brands.





## 2.4 BRANDS

### 2.4.1 Branding

A brand is defined as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of these, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of (the) competition” (Laforet 2010:1). Likewise, Hunt (2019:408-409) defines a brand as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller’s goods or services as peculiar from those of other sellers. Sammut-Bonnici (2014:1) defines a brand as a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed and orchestrated to create awareness and identity and build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organisation. The common thread among these definitions is the creation of a unique brand for differentiation within the market place.

Companies use branding to differentiate themselves in crowded, competitive, multi-national markets and moreover to enhance customer loyalty (Raj Devasagayam, Buff, Aurand, Judson 2010:210). Branding is an essential and fundamental tool in marketing strategy (Kemp, Childers & Williams 2012:508). Kemp *et al.* (2012:508) further assert that building strong brand perception is high on the agenda of successful firms, wherein these firms attract and maintain customers by promoting value, image and prestige through their branding efforts. Therefore, the objective for branding strategy is to create brands that are differentiated from the competition, thereby decreasing the number of substitutes in the market place (Sammut-Bonnici 2014:1). Creating a strong brand offers the firm intangible values that are difficult for competitors to imitate (So, Parsons & Yap 2013:405). Table 2.1 depicts a list of the world’s most powerful brands.

**Table 2.1: The world’s most powerful brands**

Rank	Brand	Brand value (\$bil)	Consumer perception rank	Brand revenue (\$bil)	Company advertising (\$mil)	Industry
	Apple	87.1	11	108.2	933	Technology
	Microsoft	54.7	1	73.7	1600	Technology
	Coca-Cola	50.2	29	22.8	3256	Beverages
	IBM	48.5	20	106.9	1373	Technology

**Table 2.1: The world's most powerful brands (continued ...)**

Rank	Brand	Brand value (\$bil)	Consumer perception rank	Brand revenue (\$bil)	Company advertising (\$mil)	Industry
	<b>Google</b>	37.6	7	36.5	1544	Technology
	<b>Intel</b>	32.3	6	54	2100	Technology
	<b>McDonald's</b>	37.4	85	85.9	769	Restaurants
	<b>General Electric</b>	33.7	49	124.7	-	Diversified
	<b>BMW</b>	26.3	5	73.7	-	Automotive
	Cisco	26.3	15	46.1	325	Technology

Source: Sammut-Bonnici (2014:2)

## 2.4.2 Supermarket brands

The supermarket retail assortment comprises typically of manufacture's brand (or national brand) and store brand (Dos Santos, Martins, Ferreira, Ramalho & Seixas 2016:184). Manufacture's brand is owned by a company that is independent of the distribution network (Dos Santos *et al.* 2016:184). Whereas, store brand (private-label brand, house brand, own-label brand) is defined as "a brand of product(s) that is exclusively manufactured by a contract or third party manufacture, according to retailer specifications" (Trade Intelligence 2017:2) and which bears the name or brand of the retailer to which it is sold through (Loureiro 2017:1095). Furthermore, store brands are exclusively sold through the retailer or supermarket chain (Kremer & Voit 2012:528).

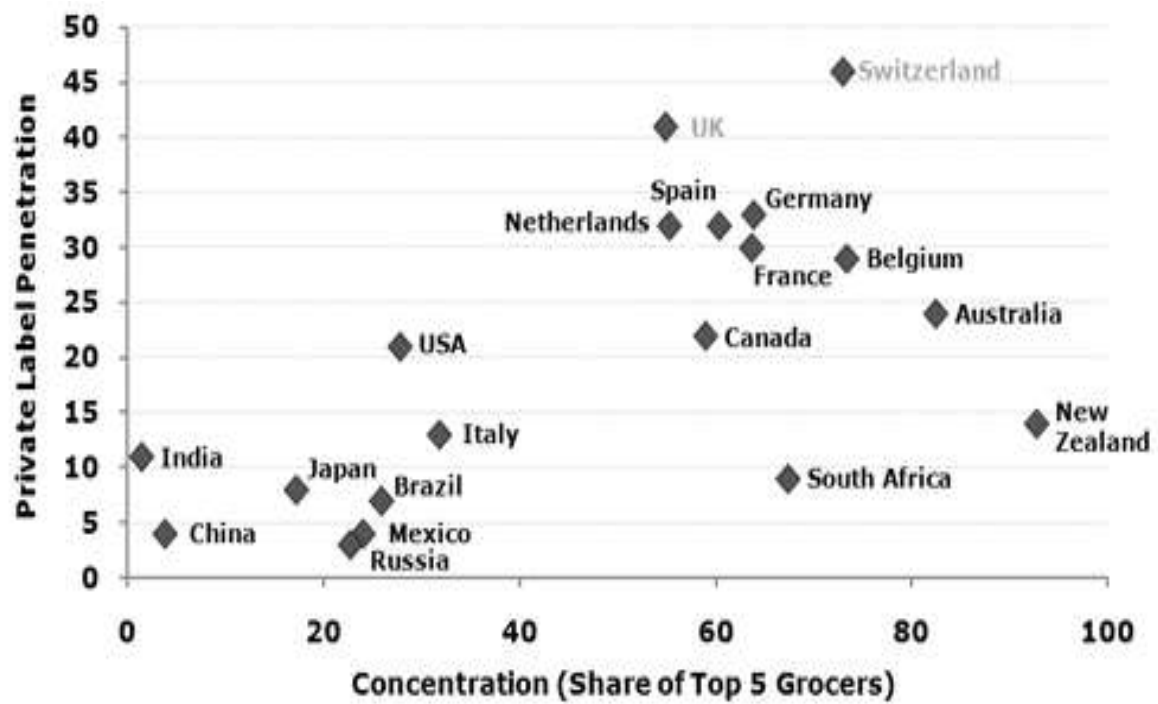
According to Dos Santos *et al.* (2016:184) there are three types of store brands, namely economy store brands, premium store brands and mimetic store brands. Economy brands usually do not exhibit the name of the retailer on the packaging, have lower perceived and intrinsic quality and are marked with prices lower than the prices of national brands. Premium brands have quality equal to national brands but, as a common characteristic with all retail brands, are priced slightly lower than national brands. Lastly, mimetic brands do not bear the name of the retailer nor its corporate identification elements like colours, wording, font or other graphical aspects, however, they are placed strategically by the retailer to mimic the national brands (Dos Santos *et al.*

2016:185). Whether a store brand carries the name of the retailer or is part of a wholesaler's private label programme, store brands give retailers a way to differentiate themselves from the competition (Pepe, Abratt & Dion 2011:27).

The impressive growth of store brands has been an issue of interest to both academicians and industry players, scholars initially focused on the effects of store brands on market structure and from profiling private label prone customers, to now emphasising on the strategic roles of store brands to retailers (Tan & Cadeaux 2012:415). The introduction of store brands brought along drastic changes within the retail market, wherein supermarkets are now able to exercise market power by directly competing with manufacturer brands through their owned store brands that generate more returns for the supermarket as opposed to manufacturer brands (Kremer & Viot 2012:528). Karray and Martin-Herran (2019:635) assert that the success of store brands has painted these brands as a formidable competitor and as such has been a source of concern for national brand manufacturers who have witnessed their markets shrink in favour of store brands.

The emergence of store brands was first observed in Europe, while in South Africa store brands made their entry in 1956 when Pick n Pay introduced their own no-frills store brand under the name of "Pick n Pay No Name" (Beneke 2010:203). The presence and market share of store brands have increased significantly, with 90 percent penetration in the customer packaged goods (CPG) sectors (Cuneo, Lopez & Yague 2012:429; Lamey, Deleersnyder, Steenkamp & Dekimpe 2012:2). Store brands' penetration and presence in supermarkets brings in fierce competition to manufacturer brands as they appear in almost every product category (Sellers-Rubio & Nicolau-Gonzalez 2015:113). The literature addresses the issue of store brand penetration by stating that when a small number of relatively large supermarkets (or grocery chains) dominate the market, there is usually an expectation to see store brands penetration receive a stimulus (Beneke & Carter 2015:62).

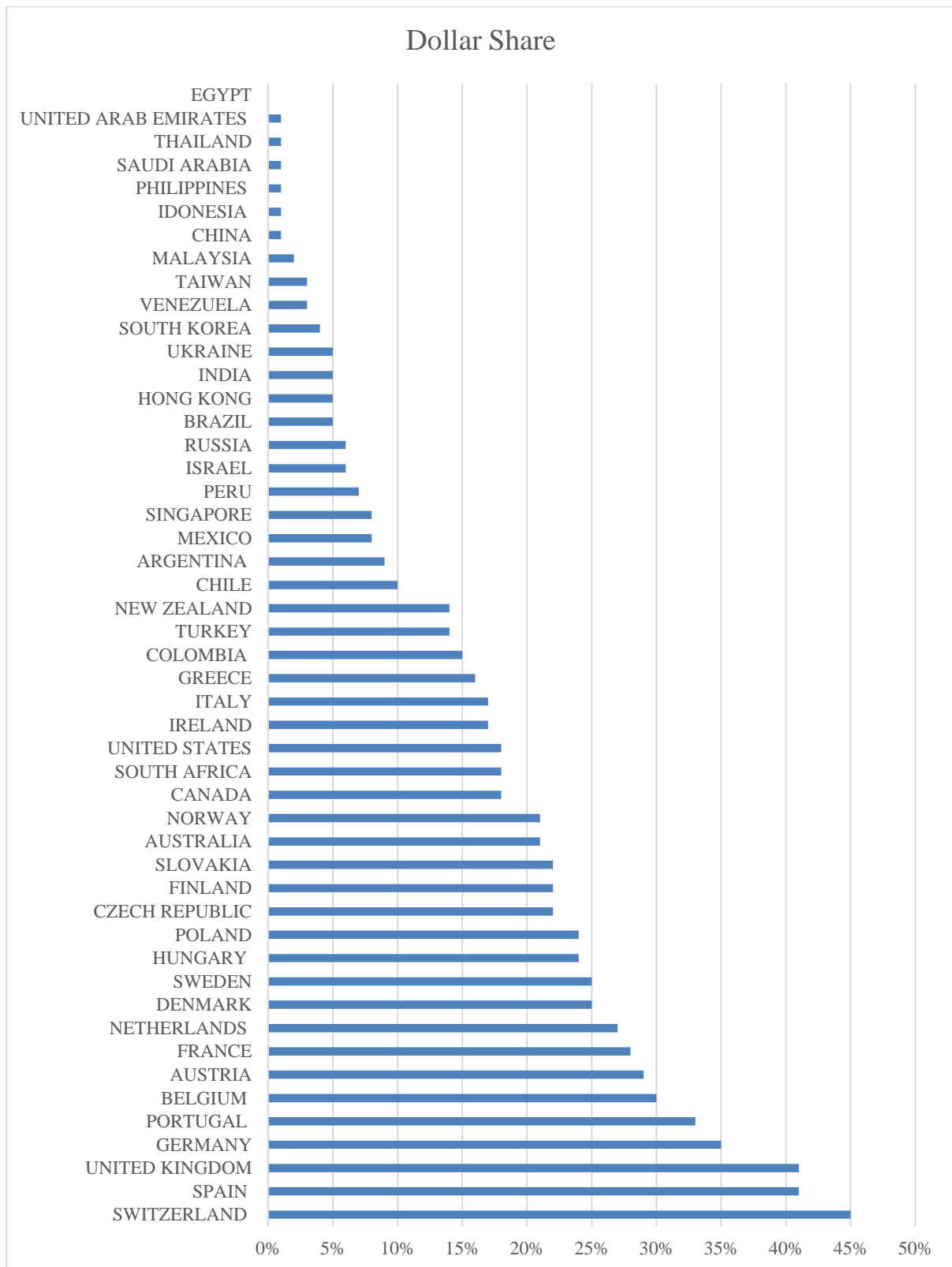
Dominance (or concentration) refers to the number of large supermarkets that dominate the market. Despite a high concentration held by four major supermarkets in South Africa, store brands have not yet achieved a high level of success compared to their global counterparts (Beneke & Carter 2015:62-63). Figure 2.2 depicts the relation between high retail concentration and store brands penetration



**Figure 2.2: Store brands penetration versus concentration (2010)**

Source: (Beneke & Carter 2015:63)

Figure 2.3 depicts the store brands' dollar share by country. The weighted global average of store brands is 16.5 percent (Nielsen Corporation 2014:6).



**Figure 2.3: Dollar share by country**

Source: (Nielsen Corporation 2014:6)

Based from figure 2.2 and 2.3, the South African market for store brands is a promising one with a potential to increase its presence. Sales growth and market share for retailers are spin-off effects

from having store brands in their supermarkets. The retailer's objective for selling store brands is to establish differentiation based on innovation, placing emphasis on building the supermarket as a brand (Collins, Cronin, Burt & George 2015:895).

### **2.4.3 Benefits of having strong brands**

Brands are strong if a fairly large number of consumers are familiar with the brand and hold strong favourable associations that are exclusive to the brand in the product category (Muhlbacher, Raies, Grohs & Koll 2016:2774). Furthermore, "consumers perceive brands that have developed associations with desirable attributes to be strong brands" (Li, Li, Chiu & Peng 2019:117). Against this backdrop, Keller (2009:140) stipulates benefits that can emanate from having a strong brand and documents these benefits as follows:

- Improved perceptions of product performance;
- Greater customer loyalty;
- Less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and marketing crises;
- Large margins;
- More elastic customer response to price decreases and inelastic customer response to price increases;
- Greater trade or intermediary cooperation and support;
- Increased marketing communication effectiveness; and
- Additional licensing and brand extension opportunities.

Strong brands have higher brand equity or the capacity to help their firms acquire better financial and marketing outcomes (Li *et al.* 2019:117). In the same way, Chu (2013:284) describes a strong brand as having four brand equity dimensions: awareness, association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. In a globalised economy where products abound and choices for consumers seem endless, brands have become an important management tool for differentiation and cognitive anchors for consumers' decision making (Muhlbacher *et al.* 2016:2274). According to Tavassoli, Sorescu and Chandy (2014:676), customers' increased purchase intention, their willingness to pay premium prices and/or their adoption of products and consequent increases in market share and cash flow are indicative of consumers' perceiving the firms' brand as a strong brand. Supermarkets that build and maintain strong brands within a market may have a greater propensity to generate higher sales revenue. Strong brands do not only generate higher returns but also decrease risks compared to weak brands (Chu 2013:284).

## **2.5 BRAND EQUITY**

### **2.5.1 Defining brand equity**

Aaker (1991:15) defines brand equity as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”. Keller (1993:1) defines brand equity in terms of the marketing effects on consumer response uniquely attributable to the brand. According to Aaker (1991:16), brand equity is formed by five dimensions, namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, perceived quality and other proprietary assets (patents, trademarks, channel relationship, etc.). Brand equity is considered an important part of brand building, as such every marketing activity works, successfully or unsuccessfully to build, manage and exploit brand equity (Su 2016:46). Brand equity empowers companies to negotiate lower costs of distribution, increased effectiveness in marketing communication and amplified growth opportunities from brand extensions and licences (Rios & Riquelme 2008:719).

However, little consensus exists about the meaning, definition and measurement of brand equity (Ahmad & Butt 2012:308; Ioannou & Rusu 2012:344; Rambocas, Kirpalani & Simms 2014:302; Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015:35). A re-occurring theme in the literature suggests that brand equity can broadly be divided into three perspectives, namely financial base, customer base and company or firm perspective (Rios & Riquelme 2010:215; Broyles, Leingpibul, Ross & Foster 2010:160; Hakala, Svensson & Vincze 2012:440; Wang & Li 2012:149; Shuv-Ami 2016:707; Brochado & Oliveira 2018:4 & Kumar, Anand & Nim 2018:112).

#### **2.5.1.1 Financial-based brand equity**

Financial brand equity refers to the overall value of a brand, which is a separable asset when it is sold or included in the balance sheet (King & Grace 2010:940). Whereas, Buil, Martinez and De Chernatony (2013:63) define financial brand equity as the commercial value of a brand to the firm. Moreover, Rios and Riquelme (2010:215) define financial brand equity as the added value to the firm, business, the trade, or the consumer with which a given brand endows a product. The financial brand equity perspective represents the end results, which Keller (2003) as cited by Shuv-Ami (2016:326), coined as “brand value chain”. The first stage of the brand value chain is the company’s investments into marketing communications of the firm that affect the second stage of customers’ attitudinal mind-sets towards the brand. The third stage is the customers’ performance that represents brand attachment and brand purchase intentions and the last stage translates the previous stages into brand worth or the value of the brand in the financial market (Shuv-Ami

2016:707). In this perspective, brand equity is viewed in terms of the incremental discounted future cash flows from the revenue a branded offering possesses, as opposed to the revenue of the same unbranded offering (Ioannou & Rusu 2012:345).

The central idea of the financial perspective is built around the value of the brand towards the company (Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015:35). The financial value of a brand is, however, the final outcome of the customer response to brands and as such the previous literature on equity has tended to focus on the consumer perspective (Buil, Martinez & De Chernatony 2013:63). Veloutsou, Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2013:238) assert that to achieve impressive financial performance companies need to secure positive customer perceptions and attitudes. The financial value of store brands lies in customers' acceptance and response towards store brands.

### **2.5.1.2 Consumer-based brand equity**

Consumer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing communication of the brand (Jillapalli & Jillapalli 2014:23) and it consists of four dimensions, namely brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty (French & Smith 2010:463; Buil *et al.* 2013:63; Su 2016:466). Customer-based brand equity involves the set of memory-based associations to a brand that exist in the minds of consumers (Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple & Ellinger 2011:190). It reflects the consumer's beliefs, perceptions and attitude towards a product, as compared to if it were unbranded (Broyles *et al.* 2010:160). Furthermore, Allaway *et al.* (2011:191) posit that customer-based brand equity involves a shortcut in the minds of consumers that recalls from memory the most salient positive elements of satisfaction with past shopping experience and goods purchase, which influences future patronage and minimises the potential influence of competitor efforts.

Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some positive, strong and unique brand associations in memory (Su 2016:466). A strong brand enjoys a high level of consumer awareness and loyalty and it forms the basis for building strong and profitable customer relationships (Pinar, Trapp, Girard & Boyt 2014:619). The perspective of customer-based brand equity is sometimes referred to as "value for customers" and lies in consumers being able to assign responsibility to a manufacturer, distributor or seller, thereby simplifying decision making and reducing risks (Hakala *et al.* 2012:439). Likewise, brand equity is the value that consumers associate with the brand; therefore, the power of the brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, heard and responded to the brand and brand communication over time (Pinar *et al.* 2014:619). High brand equity implies that customers are aware of a brand, they have positive associations related to this brand, they perceive the brand as high quality, they are

loyal to the brand, therefore, by enhancing certain dimensions, brand equity can be maintained and expanded (Brochado & Oliveira 2018:5).

## **2.6 THEORIES UNDERLYING BRAND EQUITY**

### **2.6.1 Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)**

The TPB contends that the best predictor of a person's actual behaviour is the person's intention to perform the behaviour (Lee, Geiger-Brown & Beck 2016:114). Furthermore, Lee *et al.* (2016:114) assert that behavioural intention indicates a person's motivation as shown by how much of an effort the person is willing and planning to exert to perform the behaviour. According to TPB, behaviour originates from the individual's intention, which in turn is determined by three psychological constructs: attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Borges, Tauer & Lansink 2016:194).

Attitude refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation towards executing a particular behaviour (Isaid & Faisal 2015:597). Attitude is a function of beliefs and these beliefs are termed behavioural beliefs, which refer to the perceived positive or negative consequences of engaging in the behaviour and evaluations of these consequences (Ajzen 2015:125). Subjective norm is "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour" (Lee *et al.* 2016:114). Subjective norms are also a function of beliefs and these beliefs are termed normative beliefs, which refer to an individual's motivation to comply with the advice of the relevant others or salient referents (Jalilvand & Samiei 2012:596).

Perceived behavioural control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behaviour and how confidently an individual can perform such a behaviour (Chin, Choong, Alwi & Mohammed 2016:430). Behavioural control adds a finishing touch to the reasoned action model, in a sense that if an individual has a positive attitude towards a behaviour and perceives that friends and colleagues want him or her to execute a behaviour and, furthermore, feels capable of performing the behaviour, he/she will have a higher intention to execute the behaviour (Gronhoj, Bech-Larsen, Chan & Tsang 2012:6).

The TPB was developed by Ajzen (1991) (Borges *et al.* 2016:194; Yoon 2011:405 & Shin & Kim 2015:290). TPB is an extension of TRA as proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) (Jafarkarimi *et al.* 2016:546). TPB has been applied in numerous studies regarding consumers in different purchase situation, such as consumers' intention towards purchasing green food in Qingdao, China (Qi & Ploeger 2019), consumers' purchase intention for energy-efficient household appliance in Malaysia (Tan, Ooi & Goh 2017), consumers' intention to purchase green products (Choi &

Johnson 2019), consumer behaviour in halal food purchasing (Alam & Sayuti 2011) and consumer behaviour regarding luxury fashion goods in India (Jain, Khan & Mishra 2017). TPB finds its relevance in this study in that it assists the researcher in understanding consumers' intention towards purchasing store brands.

### **2.6.2 Social identity theory (SIT)**

SIT postulates that people in the same social group are more likely to behave in accordance with their in-group members and to differ from out-group members (Jiang, Zhao, Sun, Zhang, Zheng & Qu 2016:755). This is largely because of the perceived social pressure whereby the opinions of others play an important role in decision making (Yadav & Pathak 2016:733). Perceived social pressure, also described as subjective norms, refers to the perceived social pressure to execute or not to execute the behaviour (Silva, Figueiredo, Hogg & Sottomayor 2014:835). This behaviour is displayed when consumers choose brands because brands represent an extension of their identity (Langner, Hennings & Wiedmann 2013:32).

Individual identity refers to the set of beliefs and evaluations people hold about who and what they are (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity), their capabilities, values, histories, roles, social relationship and what they possess (Black & Veloutsou 2017:417). These identities are long serving often because people are motivated to maintain and improve their identity and distinctiveness (Maseko 2015:22). Consequently, consumers will choose brands that they believe are aligned with enhancing their identity. Brands aid in constructing the consumer's identity (Hwang & Kandampully 2012:100) and this informs the formation of brand communities where consumers identify with a brand and engage in collective behaviours that extol their brand attributes (Orth & Rose 2017:306). Furthermore, Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati and Schillewaert (2013:234) assert that brands have increasingly become sources of symbols and social cues, which help customers to pursue identity projects. Individuals express their desired identity and try to develop their own reputation in the minds of others through direct interaction and relationship with brands (Black & Veloutsou 2017:418).

Based on the foregoing literature, it is evident that consumers identify themselves with brands (Lam *et al.*: 2012:308). Therefore, choosing brands is a useful medium that consumers utilise to express themselves and perhaps to communicate with others (Angle & Forehand 2016:184). The others refer to the consumer's in-group. Langner *et al.* (2013:32) state that a consumer's engagement with products or brands may deliberately be a reminder of the consumer's ideal position in society or another social identity related self-image. Furthermore, Langner *et al.*

(2013:32) suggest that self-identification with specific social groups or in-groups assists the customer in choosing brands or products that exhibit desired social identities.

The review of the literature on SIT in the current study, allows researchers to understand the intricate connection between the identity and consumption of products or brands (Starr 2004:295). Thompson and Loveland (2015:237) consider that the consumer's consumption does not cease with an acquired identity, as consumers continue to consume as such their identity keeps altering and, in turn, affects their purchase intention.

### **2.6.3 Self-congruity theory**

Self-congruity is defined as the match or congruency between a product/brand image and a consumer's self-concept (Rojas-Mendez, Papadopoulos & Alwan 2015:19). Furthermore, Usakli and Baloglu (2011:116) assert that the basic hypothesis in the self-congruity theory is that a consumer tends to select or purchase products or brands that correspond to one's self-concept. This idea proposes that the greater the degree of congruency or match, the higher the probability of intention to purchase (Usakli & Baloglu 2011:116). Traditional self-concept theory indicates that individuals naturally strive to minimise discrepancies between their self-concept and their self-image (Su & Reynolds 2017:4). Whereby, in a consumption context, consumers are able to strengthen their own self-concept by means of buying and owning, or being associated with brands whose symbolic images tend to be congruent or parallel with the most relevant aspects of their own selves (Rojas-Mendez *et al.* 2015:19).

Congruity of self-concept and brand images provide a significant perspective on the understanding of consumer decision making (Ibrahim & Najjar 2008:209). Consumers are predisposed to have a set of beliefs and values that express their self-concepts and will act in ways, including liking and using products or brands that are consistent with these self-concepts (Phua & Kim 2018:1525). Phua and Kim (2018:1525) further assert that when consumers purchase products or brands that are consistent with their self-image, they are able to reinforce these personal identities, thereby achieving internal self-consistency. Consumers attribute symbolic value to products or brands and by consuming these brands, they reinforce their own self-concept and gain social recognition with reference groups important to them (Randle & Dolnicar 2011:742).

According to Castro and Marquez (2017:44), self-concept is a multidimensional construct comprising four major components, namely actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, social self-concept and ideal social self-concept. Actual self-concept refers to how a person perceives himself or herself (who and what I think I am now), whereas the ideal self-concept refers to how a person

would like to perceive himself or herself (Su & Reynolds 2017:3). Social self-concept refers to how an individual believes others perceive him or her, whereas ideal social self-concept represents the way the individual wishes to be perceived by others (Usakli & Baloglu 2011:116). Furthermore, Astakhova, Swimberghe and Wooldridge (2017:664), states that the actual self-concept in relation to brands can be operationalised as the individual's perception of the match (or congruency) between a brand's personality and how he/she actually is, whereas ideal self-congruence is the individuals perception of the match (or congruency) between a brand's personality and how he/she would like to be.

In line with the current study, self-congruity theory has been applied in numerous studies assessing consumers' purchase decisions. Studies such as self-congruity and purchase intention of fashion retail brands (Das 2015), self-congruity towards prediction of local food purchase (Shin, Hancer & Song 2016), self-congruity on consumers' apparel brand towards luxury vs. non-luxury (Kumagai & Nagasawa 2017) and self-congruity on purchase intention for cosmetic merchandise (Khalid, Wel, Mokhtaruddin & Alam 2018). Drawing from the literature about self-congruity theory, it can be deduced that the greater the congruency between store brands image and consumers' self-concept, the higher the probability of intention to purchase (Usakli & Baloglu 2011:116).

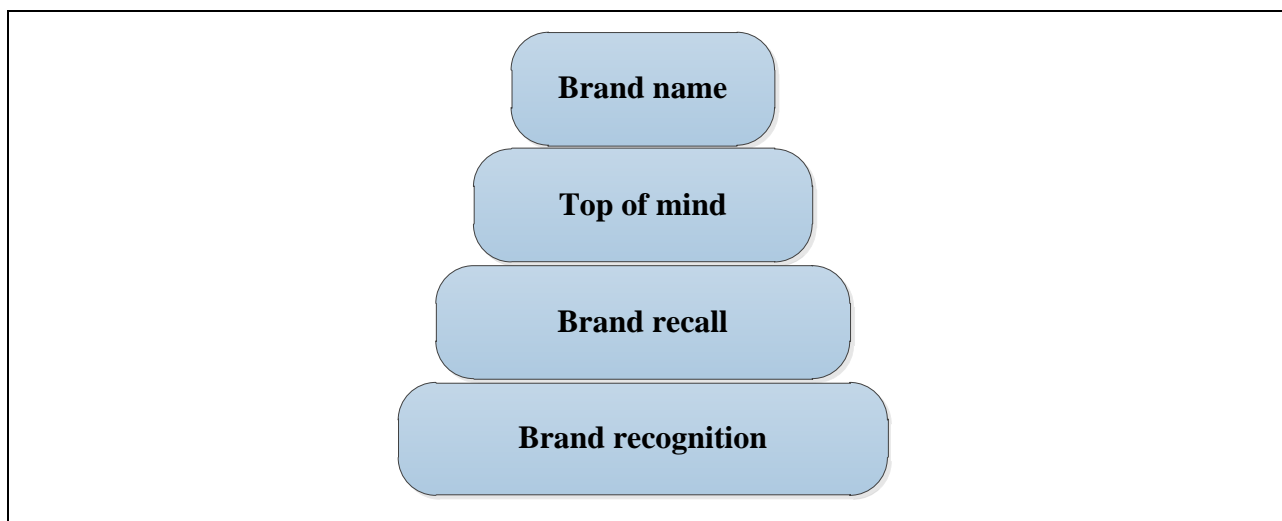
## **2.7 CONSUMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY ELEMENTS**

### **2.7.1 Brand awareness**

Aaker defines brand awareness as a customer's ability to recognise or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker 1991:61). In the same token, Chi, Yeh and Yang (2009:135) define brand awareness as the ability of a potential buyer to recognise and recall a brand in different situations. Furthermore, Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair and Okumus (2015:600) view brand awareness as a means through which customers become informed and accustomed to a brand name and recall and recognise the brand. However, Rossiter (2014:534) defines brand awareness as the customer's ability to identify the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase. Dew and Kwon (2010:5) attest that brand awareness reflects the strength of the brand's presence in the buyer's mind. For this study, brand awareness is viewed as the customer's ability to recall and recognise store brands.

Based on the above-mentioned definitions of brand awareness, brand recall refers to the degree to which a brand is retrieved from memory either spontaneously or with a brand cue (Krishnan *et al.* 2013:416). Brand recognition, on the other hand, refers to the consumer's ability to confirm prior

exposure to the brand, when the brand is given as a cue (Dew & Kwon 2010:5; Brochado, Da-Silva & La-Placa 2015:127). Brand awareness is created by increasing the familiarity of the brand through repeated exposure of the brand and to have the brand linked with strong and relevant cues, thus enabling the customer to effectively recall the brand (Conradie, Roberts-Lombard & Klopper 2014:105). Therefore, brand awareness is measured according to the different ways in which customers remember a brand, such as recognition, recall, top/first in mind and brand name dominance (Conradie, Roberts-Lombard & Klopper 2013:203). Cizmeci and Ercan (2015:151) list these measurement elements in a pyramid as shown below:



**Figure 2.4: Pyramid of brand awareness**

Source: (Cizmeci & Ercan 2015:151)

### **2.7.1.1 Brand recognition**

Studies of consumer behaviour suggest that consumers evaluate brands based on prior exposure or experience with those brands (Yoo 2014:86). However, only a small number of brands may be recalled by a customer from prior exposure to those brands. Therefore, brand recognition is considered as “a minimum level of brand awareness and is based on aided recall” (Conradie 2011:187). Aided recall refers to a customer being able to recognise a brand from a set or list of brand names (Dhurup, Mafini & Dumasi 2014:9). In the context of brand awareness, brand recognition initially occurs prior to recall. For consumers to recognise the brand as seen before (or known), customers would have experienced the brand (Langaro, Rita & De Fatima-Salgueiro 2018:149) and this experience can come in media forms such as print media, websites, radio and television commercials (Dhotre & Bhola 2010:25). At times, marketing practitioners make use of less traditional and more creative media platforms referred to as brand placement.

- **Brand placement towards recognition**

Brand placement is defined as the use of a product or product name, packaging, signage or other trademarks in media (Nagar 2016:150). In addition, Gillespie, Joireman and Muehling (2012:55), attest that these brand identifiers in media are used with the intention to influence viewers' attitudes or behaviour. For example, Heineken beer setting up a promotional campaign around its appearance in the James Bond film *Skyfall* (Dens, De Pelsmacker & Verhellen 2018:158) or in a video game such as "Guitar Hero III" where Gibson guitars are used (Kim & Eastin 2015:392). The type of brand placement has evolved from a simple announcement ("This programme is brought to you by..."), or a plain display of a brand (logo) and product in a scene, to complete programmes developed in collaboration with sponsors in which the brand becomes an intrinsic part of the programme also known as brand-integrated programmes (Smit, Reijmersdal & Neijens 2009:762). Given the different ways of placing brands, however, the central purpose of obtaining brand recall and improving brand image remains (Lehu & Bressond 2008:1084).

The practice of placing products and brands in media vehicles - otherwise known as brand/product placement - dates to 1916, when a movie was entitled *She wanted a ford* (Thomas & Kohli 2011:41). The strong interest in brand placement maybe attributed to the fragmentation of media and their audiences, the growth of the internet and the rise of electronic video devices that allow viewers to skip commercials (Lehu & Bressoud 2008:1084). Devices such as TiVo and DVR, wherein consumers can 'zap' (change channels) or 'zip' (fast forward) when commercials appear on-screen, makes it very challenging for advertisers or marketers to get face time with customers via the traditional advertising (Thomas & Kohli 2011:42). The global brand placement sector has achieved double-digit growth rates in the last decade and is estimated to be worth over \$21 billion by 2019 (Dens *et al.* 2018:151). Brand placement presents several benefits to advertisers or marketers, such as positive attitudes of viewers of this technique, positive effect on brand recall, positive effect on brand image and positive effect on customers' brand preference (Uribe & Fuentes-Garcia 2015:165; Dens *et al.* 2018:151).

Burkhalter, Curasi, Thornton and Donthu (2017:141), together with Vermeir, Kazakova, Cauberghe & Slabbinck (2014:785), are of the shared opinion that brand placement is a less intrusive alternative way of communicating with the intended market. The less intrusive nature of brand placements has a positive appeal on practitioners and thus makes brand placement an attractive alternative towards advertising (Vermeir *et al.* 2014:785). The added advantage of prominent brand placement is that it produces higher brand recall (Vashisht & Royne 2016:163). Repeated exposure of brands through media platforms by means of brand placement leads to high

familiarity and an increase in brand recall and recognition (Tjiptono & Andrianombonana 2016:881).

### **2.7.1.2 Brand recall**

Recall is a function of retrieving or remembering things or brands from memory (Walsh, Zimmerman, Clavio & Williams 2014:388; Arnas, Tas & Ogul 2016:536). The concept of brand recall is critical to marketers because first, it informs the consumer's preference towards the recalled brand. Secondly, in recalling the brand consumers also recall the brand attributes such as the colour and shape, benefits such as comfort and their attitude towards the brand. Thirdly, the ease of retrieval from memory makes the customer argue unconsciously that the "brand must be a good brand or else why did I remember it so quickly when I thought about shoes" (Krishnan *et al.* 2013:416). Since brand recall is an important factor towards determining preference of a brand, how to increase recall is of major interests in the academic literature.

In a study conducted by Dardis, Schmierbach and Limperos (2012:3) brand recall was reported to increase through interactive participation with the brand through a video game simulation. Similarly, in a study conducted by Park and Berger (2010:431) recall was reported to have increased through a visual and audio presentation of a brand in a motion picture film. In Sridevi's study (2012:204) recall is increased through the attachment of celebrity endorsement that is, placing a celebrity in an ad to promote a brand. Moreover, in a study conducted by Harrison (2013:182) it was found that consumers are likely to recall brands they have used before as opposed to brands they have not used. In the latter study, it is found that if a customer drives a Toyota brand, he/she will be more likely to notice and thus recall advertisement that included the Toyota brand as opposed to other car advertisements.

Staying with television advertisements, it is found that 47.3 percent of respondents were able to recall advertisements that included humour in their offering (Trivedi 2013:1132). Whether marketers use in-game advertisements, television commercials or placements of brands in popular shows, what is critical in the academic literature is that the brand information must appeal to more than one sensory channel of a consumer, for example visual or auditory (Besharat, Kumar, Lax, Rydzik 2013:172). Through the usage of the above-mentioned platforms, the marketer creates brand awareness, which elicit consumers' attention towards the brand and which leads to brand recall (Mariana & Mohammed 2014:52). In the contexts of store brands, promotion of store brands should not be limited to traditional televisions advertising. However, to aid in strengthening the awareness store brands, platforms such as brand placement should be frequently utilised.

### **2.7.1.3 Top of mind**

In the study of Dhotre and Bhola (2010:29), top of mind was measured by asking the respondents to recall any five TV ads that first came to their minds that featured celebrities. They had to identify both brand and the celebrity. When customers need a solution that brands provide, the names of brands that come up first in the customer's memory are said to have top of mind awareness (Manternach 2011:26). The advantage of this is that these brands stand a better chance of being purchased than the competitor. For a brand to reach top of mind or to be part of the consideration set in the customers mind, the brand would have been repeatedly communicated to the customers through different media platforms (Reuters 2013:1). The relationship between the strength of customers brand awareness and brands is best reflected in top of mind awareness, in that customers will be less actively involved in information search, comparing alternatives but rather use memory or top of mind awareness when confronted with a buying situation (Grover & Dasgupta 2017:21).

### **2.7.1.4 Brand name dominance**

When a group of consumers are asked to name a brand in a specific category and all consumers give a name of a same single brand, then that brand is said to have brand name dominance (Cizmeci & Ercan 2015:152). The foregoing statement is indicative of the dominance or power a brand has on customers. According to Cervellon and Coudriet (2013:871) this power is defined as the ability of a brand to influence the behaviour of customers. An example of the latter statement is the customer's willingness to forego cheaper alternatives for the brand. Furthermore, some of the benefits of a dominant brand in the market include greater customer loyalty, less susceptibility to competitive marketing actions and marketing crises and inelastic customer's response to price increase (Keller 2009:140). The benefits alluded to present an objective that marketing practitioners want to ultimately achieve and the goal is to have a brand that is familiar with many customers who hold a strong and favourable association that is exclusive only to the brand (Muhlbacher *et al.* 2016:2774-2780).

In summary, brand awareness indicates quality and commitment, which may motivate customers to buy a specific brand (Grover & Dasgupta 2017:22). It, therefore, plays a pivotal role in customer decision making in numerous ways, inter alia, it has influence on brand choice, even in the absence of another brand association (Homburg, Klarmann & Schmitt 2010:202). Brand awareness assists the customer in understanding which product category a brand belongs to and what products are sold under the brand name (Dhurup *et al.* 2014:4). During purchase situation brand awareness helps the customer to decide on the brand and speeds up the decisions process (Brewer & Zhao 2010:36). Brand awareness may also indicate quality and commitment, encouraging consumers to

consider the brand at the point of purchase (Hakala *et al.* 2012:441). Lastly, brand awareness provides the learning advantage, the higher the awareness the easier it is for consumers to learn about the brand and the better the brand is registered in customers' memory (Seric, Saura & Mikulic 2016:163).

### **2.7.2 Brand association**

Aaker (1991:109) defines brand association as anything linked in memory to a brand. Chen (2017:947) defines brand association as informational nodes linked to the brand node in a person's memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. In the same vein, Sasmita and Suki (2015:277), posit that brand association is related to information that is present in the mind of the customer about the brand, either positive or negative, connected to the node of the brain memory. However, Kunkel, Doyle, Funk, Du and McDonald (2016:119) view brand association as representing any attribute or benefit linked to a brand as perceived by a consumer. In line with the latter authors, Jin, Yoon, Lee (2019:52) define brand association as unique attributes connected to a brand that differentiates the brand from other brands in the same category.

In this study brand association is perceived as anything linked towards store brands in the memory of the customer (Maulan, Omar & Ahmed 2016:333). To marketing practitioners this link in customer memory is significant. First, the associated link assists the customer to process and retrieve information about the brand. Secondly, if these associations are positive, they will result in a beneficial attitude and feeling and provide a reason to buy (Till, Baack & Waterman 2011:92). According to Chen (2017:974-975) brand associations comprise three categories: brand attributes, brand benefits and brand attitude.

#### **2.7.2.1 Brand attributes, brand benefits and brand attitude**

*Brand attributes* expresses what is promised and what is expected by consumers from a brand (Bonaiuto, De Dominicis, Lllia, Rodriguez-Canovas & Lizzani 2013:781). For example, the derived attribute of safety from Volvo cars (French & Smith 2013:1357), is what is promised and what is expected. Brand attributes are "bits" of information from customers' experience, marketing communication and/or word-of-mouth that creates an image of the brand in customers' memory (Romaniuk 2003:75). The created image through brand attributes comes to surface in purchase situations because customers' make purchase decisions through considering attributes (Lee & Nguyen 2017:77). Furthermore, Parise and Spence (2012:17) attest that on average most consumers spend less than eight seconds to make an evaluations and purchase decisions within a store setting, hence the importance of brand association as it filters and helps the customer to make

an appropriate purchase decision. Furthermore, Visentin, Colucci and Marzocchi (2011:1121) add that customers usually associate a brand name with brand benefits.

*Brand benefits* refer to the perceptions that the consumer's form of a brand, based on what the brand attribute can do for them (Lin, Lobo & Leckie 2017:427). The existing literature suggests several forms of brand benefits such as functional, symbolic, experiential, which later shifted to transformational, utilitarian and hedonic benefits (Apaolaza-Ibanez, Hartman, Diehl & Terlutter 2011:739; Oliveira-Castro & Seco-Ferreira 2011:251; Sabrina & Shobeiri 2016:586; Huang, Fang, Fang & Huang 2016:143). In the context of this study, functional and symbolic benefits are more relevant and will be elaborated upon.

According to Franzak, Makarem and Jae (2014:17) functional benefits refers to the product executing what it is designed to do in a reliable, safe, convenient and economically efficient manner. Furthermore, Calvo-Porrall. *et al.* (2015:4) posit that functional benefits refers to the rational economic value obtained by consumers, mainly related to the quality of the product or the quality of the service provided. These benefits relate mainly to the quality of the product, flexibility, responsiveness and price. Moreover, Lin *et al.* (2017:427) are of the view that customers perceive a brand to have good functionality if they find that the quality of the brand is satisfying, as a result they develop positive brand attitude. For this study, it is interesting to investigate whether consumers perceive store brands to possess functional benefits that are satisfactory to their needs.

According to Lin *et al.* (2017:428) symbolic benefits focus on the consumers' need for social expression, self-expression and outer-directed self-esteem. Furthermore, Franzak *et al.* (2014:17) view symbolic benefits as "what the product indicates about the user, or symbolic association of the product to users". For this study it is relevant to investigate the customer's perceived symbolic association toward store brands. Although symbolic benefits are not product related, they cater for the consumer's need for social approval (Kang & Shin 2016:300). This suggests that the use of brands (or store brands) is not only for consumption purposes but also for approval. Store brands are, generally, considered as a cheaper alternative to national brands (Calvo-Porrall & Levy-Mangin 2017:90). For example, Carrefour, the second largest world retailer, chose to use store brands in their first campaign on French Television in 2008, where they positioned their store brands as affordable (Kremer & Viot 2012:526). Therefore, it will not be ingenious to believe that store brand users seek social approval of being cost effective.

*Brand attitude* is defined as customers' overall evaluation of a brand (Bayraktar 2015:566; Kudeshi & Kumar 2017:315). Marketers regard brand attitude as a relevant and reliable predictor

of consumer behaviour toward brands (Liu *et al.* 2012:924). This is because attitudes are stable and enduring predispositions towards behaviour (Kudeshi & Kumar 2017:316). The foregoing statement is supported by the assertion that attitudes are formed through learning and experience, hence they are resistant to change (Dondolo 2014:30; Salehzadeh & Pool 2017:76). Although resistant to change, attitudes can alter through consumers' perception of the perceived value of a brand (Dondolo 2014:40), which would mean that marketers still have an opportunity to positively alter customers' attitudes by increasing their customers brand experience and influencing their perception towards the strength and uniqueness of their brand attributes (Langaro *et al.* 2018:149).

### **2.7.2.2 Studies on the influence of brand association**

The study of brand association influence has been investigated in different settings. For example, brand association influence on unknown online brands was investigated by Delgado-Ballester and Hernandez-Espallardo (2008:81-113), brand association influence on internet banking brand equity by Loureiro (2013:139-158) and brand association influence on brand preference by Elangeswaran and Ragel (2014:38-54). In examining these studies, what appears to be a common thread in the literature is that brand association influences customer's purchase decisions. Moreover, brand association builds expressions of personal meanings that consumers attribute to a brand, which form the brand's image. Thus, if these associations are positive and unique, they strengthen the brand and increase its equity (French & Smith 2013:1358;; Chen, Yeh & Jheng 2013:1914; Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel 2013:68; Elangeswaran & Ragel 2014:38).

### **2.7.2.3 Benefits of brand association**

"The use of a brand's association by customers in buying situations will hopefully cause the customer to favour purchase of a certain brand" (Romaniuk & Gaillard 2007:268). Brand association influences customers' perceptions, preferences and choices that ultimately become linked to a brand (Llicic & Webster 2015:168). Furthermore, brand association can underpin the customers' propensity to consider and buy the brand (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel 2013:68). Marketers make use of brand associations to differentiate, position and extend brands, to create positive attitudes and feeling towards brands and to suggest attributes or benefits of purchasing or using specific brands (Low & Lamb 2000:351). Brand associations provide indicators to brand salience, which influence the likelihood of brand selection and consumption (Kunkel *et al.* 2016:119).

Positive brand association provides sustainable comparative advantage, which leads to a positive brand response (Koll & Von Wallpach 2014:1502). Brand association can be used as leverage in

creating effective brand extensions (Till *et al.* 2011:93). Positive brand association leads to higher brand loyalty (Severi & Ling 2013:127). This works in favour of the company or brand, because it is cheaper to retain existing customers than to recruit new ones (Nguyen, Barret & Miller 2011:224) and lastly, it is generally accepted that customers refer to these associations while making purchase decisions (Boisvert & Burton 2011:58). In a case of store brands, if these association are strong and positive, they will likely influence customers to purchase the store brands.

### **2.7.3 Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is defined as a deeply held predisposition or commitment to rebuy or patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Nysveen, Pedersen & Skard 2013:410; Drennan, Bianchi, Cacho-Elizondo, Louriero, Guibert & Proud 2015:48 & Molinillo, Japutra, Nguyen & Chen 2017:170). However, Sasmita and Suki (2015:278) view brand loyalty as related to the users' continuous buying behaviour over time with a positively biased emotive, evaluative and/or behavioural tendency towards a branded, labelled or graded alternative or product choice. In this study brand loyalty is considered "as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or continually repatronize store brands consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Nguyen, Barrett & Miller 2011:224).

Brand loyalty consists of two components: attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Kuikka & Laukkanen 2012:529; Kruger, Kuhn, Petzer & Mostert 2013:2). Attitudinal loyalty is the consumer's willingness to purchase at a higher price and overcome obstacles to purchase (Lazarevic 2012:48) and behavioural loyalty is the actual action of brand repurchase (Ferreira & Coelho 2015:351). The effects of the former are acceptance to pay premium price and resistance to counter persuasion, while the effects of the latter are greater increased profits and greater market share towards the brand or company (Yeh, Wang & Yieh 2016:245).

The necessity of loyal customers or (brand loyal customers) is double fold: first it is observed through a notion that it is more expensive to attract new customers than to retain existing ones (Nguyen *et al.* 2011:224; Lazarevic 2012:48). Secondly, the brand loyalty literature suggests a 20-80 principle, in that 20 percent of customers create 80 percent of the company's profit and are most likely to be loyal customers to the company (Lee & Workman 2015:12). Additionally, satisfied and loyal consumers tend to become advocates who provide brand exposure and reassurance to new customers through word-of-mouth (Drennan *et al.* 2015:48). The above-

mentioned benefits of brand loyalty are by no means exhaustive to the ones stated, the major benefit that companies enjoy from brand loyalty is that it fosters successful financial performance (Petzer, Mostert, Kruger & Kuhn 2014:458).

### **2.7.3.1 Determinants of brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty has gained much interest from academicians and practitioners (Nguyen *et al.* 2011:224). However, there is less agreement towards the building blocks or determinants of loyalty. As noted by Xiang and Petrick (2008:47) a variable suggested to be a critical determinant of brand loyalty in one study, might appear in a different study as marginally related to brand loyalty. Studies on the determinants of brand loyalty (Ferreira & Coelho 2015:351; Pappu & Quester 2016:6; Xiang & Petrick 2008:26; Giovanis & Athanasopoulou 2017:810; Veloutsou 2015:405) have shown that brand experience, brand trust and brand satisfaction are the common determinants of brand loyalty. Due to the predictive nature of brand experience towards consumers', the construct will thus be briefly elaborated upon in the ensuing section.

- **Brand experience**

Academicians have stressed that retailers are “experience stagers” and source of relevant memories rather than merely providers of goods and services (Khan & Rahman 2016:435). The foregoing statement is in line with the current study, because store brands are located within retailers wherein customers get to interact with store brands. Brand experience is defined as a cluster of feelings, sensations, cognitions and behavioural responses aroused by brand-related stimuli, which are elements of a brand identity (Sahin, Kitapci, Altindag & Gok 2017:708). However, Nysveen *et al.* (2013:406) and Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonello (2015:728) view brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensation, feelings and cognitions) as well as behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments”.

Brand experience arises in different ways as some brand experience takes place in an indirect manner through consumers’ exposure to intangible aspects of marketing communication, while others arise directly when consumers search for, purchase and consume the product (Shamim & Butt 2013:103). Marketing scholars agree that brand experience is made up of four dimensions, namely sensory, affective, intellectual/cognitive and behavioural experiences (Brakus Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009:54; Merriless 2016:404; Xie, Poon & Zhang 2017:269; Khan & Rahman 2017:166).

Sensory experience refers to physical experience based on colours, sound, smell, taste and touch (Xie *et al.* 2017:269). When a customer walks into a retail outlet and takes notice of store brands, their colours, shapes and sizes and the customer goes further by physically handling the brand, the customer would have inadvertently experienced a store brand. Furthermore, Ding and Tseng (2015:996) define sensory experience as “experience that appeals to consumers five senses”. Given this definition, practitioners should place more focus on packaging to appeal to the consumers’ sense of sight. According to Wu, Hsu and Lee (2015:486) brands that can cause consumers to be involved in them, can evoke consumers’ emotions and these emotional responses to the packaging of brands can further influence consumers’ purchase decisions. Moreover, by increasing the level of store brand engagement with customers, beyond packaging but through handling, purchasing and consumption of store brands, it may lead to unique and memorable brand experience (Khan, Rahman & Fatma 2016:1026).

Affective experience refers to consumers’ emotions, moods and inner feelings towards the brand (Shamim & Butt 2013:105; Risitano, Romano, Sorrentino & Quintano 2017:1886). According to Bapat (2017:639), consumers are emotionally driven and are keen to achieve pleasurable experiences. Since emotions affect individuals’ subconscious levels, they serve as an internal motivator that attracts consumers to the things that makes them feel good or that are positively associated in their minds (Law, Wong & Yip 2012:114). According to Law *et al.* (2012:113), affective experience largely applies to products or brands that can be evaluated objectively. Considering the foregoing statement, Merrilees (2016:404) asserts that when examining fashion brands or cosmetic brands, emotional involvement is paramount, whereas sensory stimulation reinforces the emotional involvement and acts as a tool to assess the brand options.

Cognitive experience refers to a customer’s experience derived from intellectual interactions with the brand (i.e., positive thinking, curiosity) (Ong, Lee & Ramayah 2018:7). Cognitive experience engages the consumer’s divergent and convergent thinking (logical and creative thinking) and makes consumers think of ways to reproduce the things in different ways or change their thoughts on brand issues (Zarantonello & Schmitt 2010:533; Shamim & Butt 2013:105; Ding & Tseng 2015:996).

The above literature shares some similar traits with the concept of reasoned action (Belleau, Summers, Xu & Pinel 2007:246) through its foundational idea, which goes to say that customers are rational and make systematic use of information available to them. To reach consumers’ cognitive aspects, practitioners should look to develop store brands in such a way that they will

succeed the utilitarian value and reach the cognitive value to complement the consumers' overall brand experience.

Behavioural experience refers to experiences that stimulates the consumer's intentions by appealing to the physical experiences, lifestyle and long-term behavioural patterns or interactions with other people (Ding & Tseng 2015:996). Moreover, Ong, Lee and Ramayah (2018:7) posit that "behavioural experience refers to a consumer's experience with the brand, which leads to an action-based exhibition", (e.g. sleeping in a hotel bed or taking photos of the food presentation and surrounding of the place). Borrowing from the behavioural intention literature, the underlying premise of behavioural experience is the act or actions of the consumer as elucidated by Pujiastuti, Nimran, Suharyono and Kusumawati (2017:1172) who view behavioural intention as the consumer's tendency to make certain activity or actions towards a product (or brand) after consumption. The usage or consumption of store brand should instigate a long-term behavioural pattern that supersedes those of rival national brands.

#### **2.7.4 Perceived quality**

Perceived quality can be defined as the customers' perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or services in relation to its intended purpose relative to alternatives (Aaker 1991:85). Likewise, Martinez-Carrasco *et al.* (2012:1414) and Clayton and Heo (2011:310) posit that perceived quality refers to the "judgement a consumer makes about the superiority or excellence of a product". However, Joung, Choi and Wang (2016:103) view perceived quality as a customer's perception of the overall excellence of a product or service and the discrepancy between their expectations and perceptions of the product or service. For this study, perceived quality is viewed as the customer's judgement about store brands overall excellence or superiority" (Kim & Damhorst 2010:58).

Perceived quality has a direct and positive effect on the level of customer satisfaction (Malik 2012:70; Chen & Chang 2013:68; Diaz 2017:76). Research on food consumer behaviour has led to different approaches towards perceived quality and these approaches explain how consumers make subjective judgement about brands or food quality and on what attribute cues they base their judgements (Martinez-Carrasco *et al.* 2012:1415). The study will elaborate on the intrinsic and extrinsic attribute of perceived quality.

##### **2.7.4.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to perceived quality**

A product is made of a series of cues that consumers rely on to evaluate the quality of the product (Yang 2012:1115). Intrinsic cues are product attributes, which cannot be changed or

experimentally manipulated without also changing the physical characteristics of the product (Erdogmus & Budeyri-Turan 2012:404). Intrinsic cues involve both search and experience attributes (Chamhuri & Batt 2015:1171). Search attributes refers to the size, shape and colour of the product (Yang 2012:1115). Consumers can judge these attributes before buying the product, whereas experience attributes refer to the taste and tenderness of the product and consumers can only judge this attribute after consuming the product (Martinez-Carrasco *et al.* 2012:1415). According to Chamhuri and Batt (2015:1172) search attributes were found to be important during the buying process, while the experience attributes were found to be important during consumption.

Extrinsic cues are neither directly related to product performance nor physical components of the products, such as packaging and brand name (Kim and Damhorst 2010:58; Li, Ji & Jiang 2013:1002). In a situation where the search and experience attributes are the same between two alternatives, consumers make their purchase decision based on the brand the product belongs to (Vranesevic & Stancec 2003:814). Moreover, perceived quality is related to perceived risk (Marakanon & Panjakajornsak 2017:25). Thus, to reduce the risk when purchasing store brands, customers may rely on the association of a good brand name to which store brands belong and use that as a way to predict the product quality.

#### **2.7.4.2 Cue utilisation**

The principal idea behind the concept of cue utilisation is that a product provides a series of cues and that customers judge the quality of the product based on these cues (Wang, Cui, Huang & Dai 2016:273). Research suggests that the success of store brands is affected by many factors, among which quality is a very important factor that affects the purchase of store brands (Yan, Xiaojun, Li & Dong 2019:714). The foregoing authors further posit that when customers judge the quality of store brands, they primarily tend to rely on extrinsic cues rather than intrinsic cues. During the buying decision-making process customers rely on various characteristics or cues of products in their evaluations to determine product quality (Bruwer, Chrysochou & Lesschaeve 2017:830) and, thus through the lens of cue utilisation, a product consists of an array of cues that serve as surrogate indicators of quality to customers (Bruwer *et al.* 2017:830).

According to Cox, as cited by Fejes and Wilson (2013:321), customers assign information values to a cue based at least on two dimensions, namely predictive value (PV) and confidence value (CV). PV is the degree that customers predict product quality by perceiving a cue (Yang 2012:1115). On the other hand, CV refers to the degree to which a customer has assurance in his or her ability to accurately judge a cue (Fejes & Wilson 2013:321). To contextualise PV and CV in

the current study, the following example is provided. The quality of ingredients used to prepare the store brand peanut butter would be a high PV cue for the overall quality of peanut butter, whereas the colour of the material used to package the peanut butter would be regarded as low PV (Chung, Yu & Pysarchik 2006:200). Based on the provided example, the foregoing authors posit that the ingredients used to prepare peanut butter would be a high CV for customer who are knowledgeable about nutrition and a low CV for customers who have little to no knowledge about nutrition.

As to the question of what type of cue is used in decision making, Purohit and Srivastava as cited by (Wang *et al.* 2016:237), found that product warranty (low PV) was used in product quality judgement only when the valence of manufacture reputation or retailer reputation (high PV) was positive. In the same breath, Cox (1967), as cited by Chung *et al.* (2006:201), found that customers rely more on high CV/low PV cues than high PV/low CV. Customers not only use cues for assessing product quality, but also to reduce purchase-related risks. Nakhata and Kuo (2014:441) suggest that when customers are faced with potential purchase-related risks, they tend to seek cues to help them make purchase decisions. Perceived quality is important in this study because it aids in the researcher's understanding of how customers assess or evaluate store brands before they make a purchase decision.

### **2.7.5 Brand preference**

Brand preference is defined as the extent to which the customer favours the designated services or products provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the designated service or products provided by other companies in his or her consideration set (Amoako, Anabila, Effah & Kumi 2017:986; Alamro & Rowley 2011:476). However, Latha (2016:49) views brand preference as the consumer's predisposition toward a brand that varies depending on the salient beliefs that are activated when faced with multiple brands. Moreover, Wang (2013:808) posits that brand preference is the customer's relative preference for choosing and continuous use of a specific brand over other brands. In this study, brand preference is viewed as a customer's relative preference for choosing and continued use of store brands over competing brands (Wang 2013:808).

Successful brand management focuses on building brand preference, ensuring that products and/or services sold under the brand's umbrella of values are perceived to be superior to those of competitors (Alamro & Rowley 2011:475). Brand preferences are formed when customers process available information, which leads to purchase intentions (Wyma 2010:24). This formation can result from a pre-purchase/ pre-consumption stimulus owing to marketing communication

activities and word-of-mouth communication or the culmination of post-purchase/ post-consumption evaluation of the perceived performance in relation to the consumer's expectations (Amoako *et al.* 2017:986).

Brand preference is, in effect, a measure of consumer choice, which falls at the edge of the consumer decision-making process (Vogel & Watchravesringkan 2017:519). Brand preference has been studied within the contexts of brands and brand strategies (Alamro & Rowley 2011:475). There seems to be two established yet varied approaches towards the antecedents of brand preference. On the one hand, brand preference is viewed as an antecedent of brand loyalty to which at times these variables can be regarded as synonymous and can be used inter-changeably (Amoako *et al.* 2017:986). On the other hand, brand preference is viewed as outcome of brand equity (Chomvilailuk & Butcher 2010:397). Brand equity is positively related to brand preference (Lim & Weaver 2012:224) and high equity is associated with high brand preference (Chang & Liu 2009:1692).

#### **2.7.5.1 The influence of perceived value on brand preference**

Perceived value plays a useful role towards understanding customers' preference of store brands. Accordingly, Wang (2010:387) posits that perceived value is seen as the central driver or motivator in a purchase decision. Perceived value refers to a customer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service based on perceptions of what is given and what is obtained (Allameh, Pool, Jaber, Salehzadeh & Asadi 2015:195; Aurier & De Lanauze 2011:815). In an exchange, "value" can be understood as the degree to which a customer perceives that his/her outcomes exceed his/her inputs (Vera 2015:148). In the same vein, Wu and Chang (2016:1231) posit that value is the trade-off between what is given and what is received.

Although numerous studies have explored perceived value (De Medeiros, Ribeiro & Cortimiglia 2016:158), there is lack of consensus towards its conceptualisation, domain and scope, definition and antecedents (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Zebkar 2015:86; Arslanagic-Kalajdzic & Zebkar 2017:48). Drawing from the stated definition of perceived value, the current study adopts the Zeithmal's (1988) approach towards perceived value. Zeithmal (1988), as cited by De Medeiros *et al.* (2016:159), suggests that perceived value results from the difference between the evaluation of all benefits and cost associated to a particular offering, such that if the balance is perceived to be positive, the customer will perceive superior value in the offering.

Zeithaml found that consumers define value in four terms: (1) "low prices", (2) "whatever I want in a product", (3) "the quality I get for the price I pay", (4) "what I receive for what I give" (Yang,

Yu, Zo & Choi 2016:257). The value for money conceptualisation largely derives from the desire to empirically validate the dual role of price as both an indicator of what the customer receives in terms of perceived quality and what that customer gives up in terms of perceived sacrifices (Williams, Ashill & Thirkell 2016:5876). A customer in a retail setting considering a purchase is likely to consider that value is equal to either price or quality, accordingly, the marketer can increase the buyers' perception of value by raising either product quality while maintaining prices or maintain product quality while reducing prices (Yoon, Oh, Song, Kim & Kim 2014:2088).

Yu, Lee, Ha and Zo (2017:208) point out that most research converges on two classical approach, the economic approach (where value is linked to perceived price through what is known as transactional value) and the psychological approach (where value relates to the cognitive and affective influences on product purchase and brand choice). In the economic view, perceived value is strongly connected to the price a customer is willing to pay for what he or she perceives as the offering (De Medeiros *et al.* 2016:159). Economically this would mean that a marketer could increase the perceived value of a purchase by changing either part of the value equation model: that is to raise the quality while holding the price constant or reduce the price while holding the quality constant (Yoon, Oh, Song, Kim & Kim 2014:2089). In this approach, Zeithaml asserts that benefits include salient intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, perceived quality and other relevant high-level abstraction and the sacrifice includes monetary price and non-monetary price (time, energy and effort) (Yu, Lee, Ha & Zo 2017:208).

According to Jalil, Fikry and Zainuddin (2016:540) value is one of the most powerful forces in today's market place is fast becoming an increasing concern to customers, which within the context of this could play a large role towards influencing customer preference. Empirical findings have revealed that customer perceived value is even more important than consumer satisfaction in explaining customer behavioural intention (Chi & Kilduff 2011:423) and predicting purchase behaviour (Chang & Tseng 2013:865). Amini, Falk, Hoth and Schmitt (2016:1) state that in durable goods, perceived value does inform repurchase intention, in that before purchase, the consumer forms an opinion of value and during usage the consumer forms a renewed opinion that affects re-purchase behaviour. Findings revealed that perceived value affects customer satisfaction (Jalil, Fikry & Zainuddin 2016:541). This is a lucrative benefit towards marketers because satisfied customers tend to remain with the firm.

### **2.7.6 Purchase intention**

Purchase intention refers to the process by which consumers plan to purchase a product/service (Lee, Lee and Yang 2017:1015). Furthermore, purchase intention represents the possibility that a

customer will purchase a certain product or service in the nearest future (Calvo-Porrall and Levy-Mangin 2017:91). However, Davtyan and Cunningham (2017:163) suggests that purchase intention is consumers' inclinations to buy a product from a specific brand. In the current study, purchase intention is viewed as the customers' plan or intention to engage in a transaction regarding store brands (Calvo-Porrall and Levy-Mangin (2017:91).

Intentions are plans to act in a particular way and represent the motivation toward the behaviour (Chung, Stoel, Xu & Ren 2012:145). Consumers' purchase decision is a complex one (Barber, Kou, Bishop & Goodman 2012:281) and is usually related to purchase intention and consumers' attitude (Lee 2017:402). With that being said, the foregoing author further suggests that intention is a major force driving consumers towards purchasing products. Consumers' intentions have far reaching implications and often will result in a positive impact on the consumers' actions (Hung, Chen, Peng, Hackley, Tiwsakul & Chou 2011:458). Furthermore, the probability that a behaviour will be performed by the consumer largely relies on the strength of his/her intentions, hence when the intention of performing the behaviour is strong then there will be a high likelihood that the respective behaviour will be performed (Haque, Anwar, Yasmin, Sarwar, Ibrahim & Momen 2015:2).

#### **2.7.6.1 The role of brand familiarity towards purchase intention**

Brand familiarity is described as the number of product-/brand-related experience that has been accumulated by the consumer including advertising exposure, information search, interactions with salespersons and purchasing and product usage in various situations (Alba and Hutchinson as cited in Dursun, Kabadayi, Alan & Sezen 2011:1193). Following Alba and Hutchinson's definition as cited in (Tam 2008:4), therefore, brand familiarity is therefore defined as the accumulated related experiences that customers have had with a product/brand. Brand familiarity plays a significant role towards customers' brand choice through (1) enhancing perceptual identification of a brand, (2) increasing the probability of inclusion in the evoked set, (3) generating positive affect toward the brand and (4) generating positive affect toward the brand (Dursun *et al.* 2011:1193). An added advantage of brand familiarity is its ability to reduce customers' perceived risk when choosing to purchase a brand. According to Park and Stoel (2005:149) as familiarity with the brand increases, a customers' confidence about that brand increases, suggesting that customers perceive less risk when they are more familiar with a brand.

Brand familiarity can affect customers purchase intention or repurchase intention. According to Tam (2008:5) in a competitive market such as the grocery market, customers are generally less likely to purchase or continue purchasing brands toward which they are unfamiliar with or of

which they hold negative evaluations. Therefore, it becomes critical for marketers of store brands to strengthen customers' familiarity with their brands. The literature holds that if customers are thoroughly familiar with a brand, they would have generally developed certain knowledge regarding that brand and their pre-purchase uncertainty reduces (Jeng 2017:183). In the same vein, Marti-Parreno, Bermejo-Berros and Aldas-Manzano (2017:57) state that brand familiarity has been found to be a critical factor in influencing brand memory and explicit attitude toward the brand. Furthermore, Marti-Parreno *et.al* (2017:58) are of the view that familiar brands are easier to recall than unfamiliar or ambivalent brands.

#### **2.7.6.2 The role of price fairness towards purchase intention**

From a customers' perspective, price is best described as a sacrifice resembling a requisite to obtain a product or service during a purchase transaction (Han, Lee, Chua, Lee & Kim 2019:92). Whilst fairness is described as a judgement of whether an outcome and/or process to achieve a desired end is reasonable, acceptable and just (Ahmat, Radzi, Zahari, Muhammed, Aziz & Ahmad 2011:24). Having described price fairness, customers' perceived price fairness (PPF) is described as customers' assessments and associated emotions of whether the difference or lack of difference between the price of store brands price, comparatively with other similar brands is reasonable, acceptable, or just (Ahmat *et al.* 2019:24). Price has always been considered as one of the most critical factors determining the consumer decision making process (Zhang, Fu, Huang, Wang, Xu & Zhang 2018:1499), therefore, the consumers perception of the fairness or unfairness of price becomes a critical issue towards marketers of store brands.

For a customer to deem a price as fair or unfair, the customer must have held in his/her a mind a price reference. According to Anttila (2004:48) the reference price is the basis for determining a "fair price" or what is reasonable for the product or service. A reference price is derived from a customer's previous pricing experience with the brand (Han *et al.* 2019:92). The foregoing authors further posit that a reference price can come in a variety of ways such as the price most recently paid for a store brand, the most regularly paid price for a particular store brand, prices of similar offerings, market prices and also posted prices from the business itself. The factor of price has a significant influence on customers with regards to undertaking price judgement concerning the store brand and competing brands, choosing among store brands and store formats, evaluating the attractiveness of advertised promotions (e.g. in flyers, advertisings and stores) and improving or reducing price search and comparison behaviours (Hsu, Chang & Yansritakul 2017:147). Equally, price has been found to be a strategic marketing variable that has an influence on customer purchase decision (Zhang *et al.* 2018:1500).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviewed the literature on the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study and provided theoretical background on key variables with the aim to provide greater understanding of consumers' preferences and purchase intentions towards store brands. This chapter provided an international overview of supermarket retailing and went on to provide a national overview of supermarket retailing. The chapter outlined the concept of brands, depicting through a table and the performance of some brands competing in the market and using figures to describe the penetration and performance of store brands in different countries.

This chapter described the concept of brand equity, outlining the two major dimensions of brand equity, which are consumer-based brand equity and financial-based brand equity. In the same vein, the chapter also provided the theories underlying brand equity, which for the current study, were deemed to be TPB, SIT and self-congruity theory. This chapter also provided the brand equity elements affecting the consumer's reference and purchase intention of store brands. The next chapter addresses the research design and methodology that was used for this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter (Chapter 2), reviewed the literature on theoretical foundations underlying the study and provided an in-depth discussion on the constructs of the study. The current chapter describes the research design and approach applied in the study, the sampling design, the instrument used in data collection. The chapter provides information regarding the pilot study undertaken and describes the data preparation procedure and elaborates on the data analysis procedure. The study covers reliability and validity procedures employed in the study and concludes by mentioning the ethical steps employed in the study.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design deals with the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve marketing research problems (Malhotra 2010:102). Likewise, Churchill *et al.* (2010:80) state that a research design is simply a plan for a study used as a guide in collecting and analysing data. According to Malhotra (2010:104), research designs can be classified into three basic types, namely exploratory, descriptive and causal design. The design types are shown in Table 3.1 below:

**Table 3.1: A comparison of different research design categories**

	<b>Exploratory</b>	<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Causal</b>
Objective	Discovery of ideas and insights	Describe market characteristics or functions	Determine cause and effects relationships
Characteristics	Flexible, versatile Often the front end of total research designs	Marked by the prior formulation of specific hypothesis Pre-planned and structural	Manipulation of one or more independent variables Measure the effect on dependent variables Control of other mediating variables

**Table 3.1: A comparison of different research design categories (continued ...)**

	<b>Exploratory</b>	<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Causal</b>
Methods	Expert surveys Pilot surveys case studies  Secondary data: qualitative analysis  Qualitative research	Secondary data: quantitative analysis Surveys Panels Observation and other data.	Experiments

Source: Malhotra (2010:104)

For this study, a descriptive and causal design was adopted. The selection of these designs was informed by the objectives of the study, which is to understand and describe the relationship between selected consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intention towards store brands among the students within the Vaal region.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODS**

Adele and Petzer (2011:45) put forward that research methods for collecting primary data are classified in two basic divisions, namely qualitative and quantitative. Furthermore, researchers can utilise a mixed research method wherein both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in a single study (Harrison & Reilly 2011:8).

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative research method**

Qualitative research is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individual or group ascribe to a social, human problem or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell 2018:4). One of the main objectives of qualitative research is to ascertain preliminary insights into a research problem (Shiu, Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2009:172). Motaung (2016:48) alleges that qualitative research includes subjective exploration and evaluation of attitudes, opinions and behaviours of categorical information. Qualitative research views the world in terms of people, situations, events and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on analysis of how some situations and events influence others (Maxwell 2013:29). Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of empirical materials, namely case studies, personal experiences, in-depth interviews, focus group and observations (Denzin & Lincoln 2008).

### **3.3.2 Quantitative research method**

Quantitative research is a method for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among proposed variables (Creswell & Creswell 2018:4). Quantitative research is either descriptive in nature or lends itself to determining the causal relationships between constructs (Berndt & Petzer 2011:47). A quantitative method requires the use of a pre-constructed standardised instrument into which the participants' varying perspectives and experience are expected to fit and usually demands a large representative sample for researchers to generalise their findings from the sample (Yilmaz 2013:313). Quantitative data are normally precise and can be captured at various points in time and in different contexts due to their link to a positivism paradigm and usually result in findings with a high degree of reliability (Collis & Hussey 2014:130). Table 3.2 summarises the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods:

### **3.3.3 Mixed method research**

Mixed research method involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected simultaneously or sequentially (Taguchi 2018:3). In the same vein, Zou, Xu, Sanjayan and Wang (2018:239) assert that mixed research method is based on a pragmatism paradigm at the philosophical level and it concentrates on collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data for the research at the methodological level. Researchers may employ a mixed research method for the following reasons: triangulation and corroboration of results, elaboration and clarification of results, development of new methods, discovery of new or contradictory perspective and expansion of the scope of inquiry (Brown, Strickland-Munro, Kobryn, Moore 2017:153). Furthermore, mixed research method allows for creating a more holistic picture on a new phenomenon by combining strengths of different research methods (Tauscher & Laudien 2018:322). Table 3.2 describes the dimensions of contrast amongst the three methods.

**Table 3.2: Dimensions of contrast among the three methodological communities**

<b>DIMENSION OF CONTRAST</b>	<b>QUALITATIVE POSITION</b>	<b>MIXED METHODS POSITION</b>	<b>QUANTITATIVE POSITION</b>
Methods	Qualitative methods	Mixed methods	Quantitative method
Researchers	QUAL	Mixed methodologists	QUAN
Paradigms	Constructivism	Pragmatism; transformative perspective	Post-positivism Positivism
Research question	QUAL research questions	MM research questions (QUAN plus QUAL)	QUAN research question; research hypothesis
Form of data	Typically narrative	Narrative plus numeric	Typically numeric
Purpose of data	(Often) exploratory plus confirmatory	Confirmatory plus exploratory	(Often) confirmatory plus exploratory
Role of theory, logic	Grounded theory; inductive logic	Both inductive and deductive logic; inductive-deductive research cycle	Rooted in conceptual framework or theory; hypothetic-deductive model
Typical studies or designs	Ethnographic research designs and others (case studies)	MM designs, such as parallel and sequential	Correlational; survey; experimental; quasi-experimental
Sampling	Mostly purposive	Probability, purposive and mixed	Mostly probability
Data analysis	Thematic strategies: categorical and contextualising	Integration of thematic and statistical; conversion of data	Statistical analyses: descriptive and inferential
Validity/trust worthiness issues	Trustworthiness; credibility; transferability	Inference quality; inference transferability	Internal validity; external validity

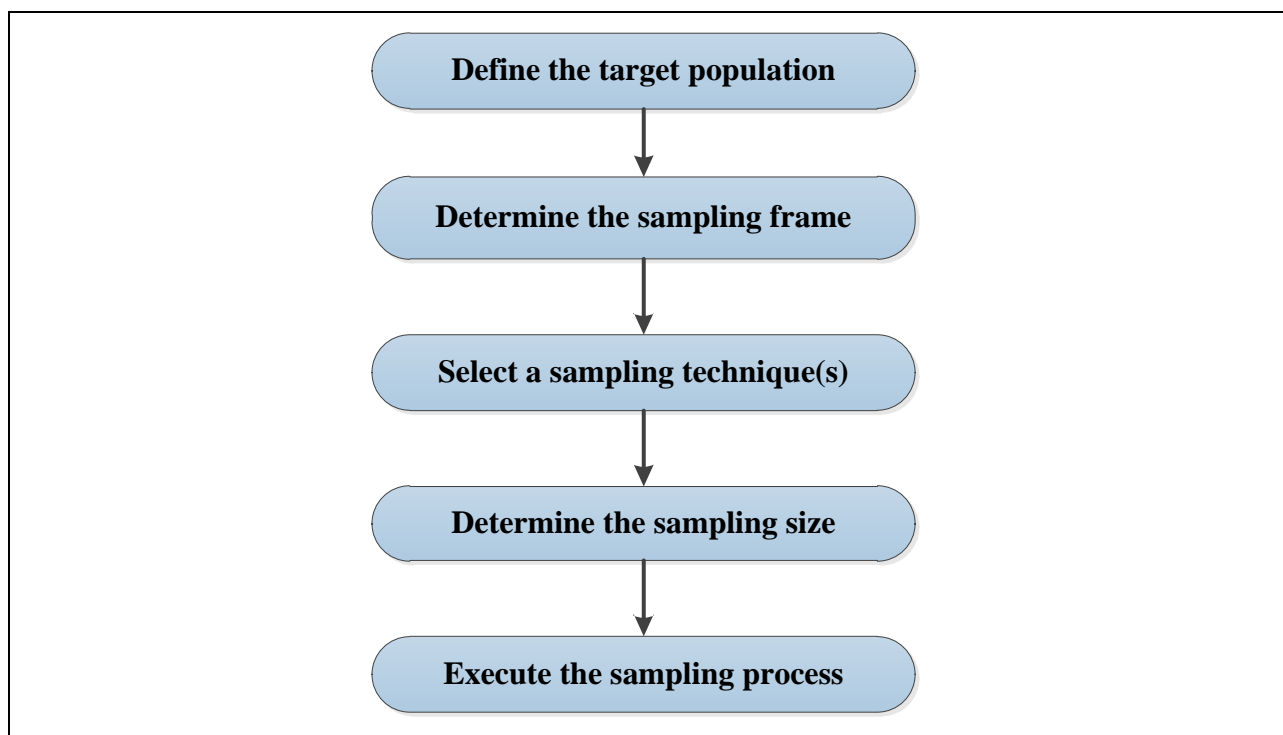
Source: Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009:22)

Quantitative methodology is selected in order satisfy the purpose of this study, which is to determine the relationship between variables of the study, namely brand equity elements, brand preference and purchase intention towards store brands. Furthermore, a single cross-sectional design was also adopted. Berndt and Petzer (2011:348) state that quantitative research helps the

researcher to determine causal relationships among variables. Quantitative approaches are most appropriate and applicable in cases where there are clearly framed hypotheses (Alamro & Rowley 2011:480). The current study has clearly framed hypotheses (H1-H5). The researcher opted for quantitative research because results are easily quantifiable and the instruments have a potentially high degree of accuracy (Du Plessis & Rousseau 2007:21).

### 3.4 SAMPLING DESIGN PROCEDURE

A sample plan (or procedure) is the blueprint to ensure the data collected are representative of the population (Hair *et al.* 2013:151). Steps provided by Malhotra (2010:372) were followed in developing the sampling procedure for the empirical study as indicated in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: The sampling design process**

Source: Malhotra (2010:372)

#### 3.4.1 Target population

Target population is defined as the totality of units that conform to some designated specifications (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:282). Furthermore, Malhotra, Birks and Wills (2013:236) put forward that the target population refers to the collection of elements or objects that possess the information required by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made. Godwill (2015:64) views the concept of target population as representing two types, namely finite and

infinite population. Finite population is whereby the total number of population elements are known, whereas infinite population represents the opposite.

The target population for this study comprised both male and female students enrolled in the Vaal University of Technology, located within the Sedibeng district. The total number of students enrolled in the Vaal University of Technology is N=21202.

### **3.4.2 The sample frame**

A sampling frame is a guide or master source of sample units in the population (Burns & Bush 2014:240). A sample frame includes a record for identifying the target population (Malhotra *et al.* 2013:238). A record of all students registered during 2019 academic year served as a sampling frame for the study. The record was obtained from the Higher Education Data Analyser (HEDA), provided by email from Ms Selinah Mahlangu the administrator in the marketing and sports department under the faculty of management science at the Vaal University of Technology (Mahlangu 2019).

### **3.4.3 Sampling technique**

A sample is a subset of a population and, as such, it must be representative of its target population if it is to produce valid and reliable estimates of the population from which it was drawn (Wegner 2012:153). There are two fundamental methods of sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling (Wegner 2016:161).

#### **3.4.3.1 Probability sampling**

In probability sampling, each member of the target population has a known non-zero chance (probability) of being included in the sample (Tustin *et al.* 2010:344). Probability sampling uses techniques that result in an ability to calculate exactly the probability of a single person within a sampling boundary (or frame) being chosen to participate in a study (Kolb 2008:182). Sampling techniques employed in probability sampling include simple random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and systematic sampling (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:285).

#### **3.4.3.2 Non-probability**

In non-probability sampling, the “chances (or probability) of selecting members from the population into the sample are unknown” (Burns & Bush 2014:242). The researcher relies on his/her discretion, as such the degree of sampling error cannot be determined (Zikmund & Babin 2013:322). Sampling error is the difference between results obtained from a sample and results

that would have been obtained had the members of the entire population been used (Churchill *et al.* 2010:330). Sampling techniques used in non-probability include convenience sampling, judgment sampling, quota sampling and snowball (or referral) sampling (Wegner 2010:153).

The researcher opted for non-probability convenience sampling method due to the existence of homogeneity within the market (students only) (Tustin *et al.* 2010:345). Furthermore, convenience sampling technique is selected because it is cost-effective and allows a reasonably sufficient amount of data to be collected within a relatively short period of time (Maree 2007:177).

#### **3.4.4 Sampling size**

Sample size refers to a selected number of elements from a group or population to which propositions can be made (Flick 2015:100). Collis and Hussey (2014:198) allege that selecting a sufficiently large sample allows the results to be generalised to the population and thus a larger sample better represents the entire population of interest. Similarly, Zikmund and Babin (2010:459) state that selecting a larger sample increases the accuracy of the research considering that a large sample reduces the probability of the sampling error.

Sampling size determination for this study was based on the historical evidence method. Refer to Section 1.6.6 (in Chapter 1, Table 3.1) wherein previous studies similar to this research were consulted (De-Wulf *et al.* 2005:226; Calvo-Porrall, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga & Levy-Mangin 2013:105; Rubio, Oubina & Villasenor 2014:292 & Glynn & Widjaja 2015:368). Drawing upon the historical evidence approach employed in this study and the nature of analyses utilised in this study, a sample of 400 was deemed appropriate and large enough to mirror the target population. The sample size constitutes 1.8 percent of the total population. The size of the sample for this study is in line with the recommendation by Avkiran (1994:12) who suggests that the minimum sample sizes for quantitative consumer studies should be between 300 to 500 respondents.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

Primary data were collected by means of a self-administered survey, which is defined as any fixed set of questions intended to be completed by the chosen sample respondents for the study (McQuarrie 2012:139).

The rationale for using the survey method stems from the research approach that the study has embarked upon which is a quantitative study wherein data have to be analysed quantitatively.

Fieldwork for the study was conducted by the researcher. The researcher distributed the questionnaires during lecturing hours, between April and May during the 2019 academic year.

### **3.5.1 Questionnaire design**

Hair *et al.* (2013:188) describe a questionnaire as a formal framework consisting of a set of questions and scales with a purpose of generating primary raw data. The study made use of a structured questionnaire consisting of dichotomous, multiple choice and Likert-scale questions. Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:221) state that the appearance of questionnaire can influence the respondent's attitude and co-operation to the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:237) and Burns and Bush (2006:300) provide some perspectives in the design of a questionnaire:

- Make questions clear.
- Avoid double-barrelled questions.
- Short questions are best.
- The questionnaire should be relevant.
- A good designed questionnaire will translate research objectives into specific questions or hypothesis.
- A good designed questionnaire fosters cooperation and keep respondents motivated throughout the interview.
- A good designed questionnaire should facilitate a simple process of data analysis.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaire layout and questions format**

The questionnaire was anchored on a five-point Likert scales measured from one to five where one = strongly disagree and five = strongly agree whereas three = neutral with the exception of Section A.

The questionnaire comprised seven sections (refer to Annexure A):

Section A contained demographical information of the respondents, which included gender, age group, race, monthly income and educational qualification. This information was required to complete a profile of the respondent. Section A was based on dichotomous and multiple-choice questions.

Section B contained scale items on brand awareness adapted from a study by Severi and Ling (2013:131). The reported composite reliability for the constructs was 0.91.

Section C contained scale items on brand association adapted from a study by Severi and Ling (2013:131). The reported composite reliability for the constructs was 0.79.

Section D contained scale items on brand loyalty adapted from a study by Severi and Ling (2013:131). The reported composite reliability for the constructs was 0.82.

Section E contained scale items on perceived quality adapted from a study by Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000:203). The reported composite reliability for the constructs was 0.93.

Section F contained scale items on brand preference adapted from a study by Le, Cheng, Kuntjara and Lin (2014:611). The reported composite the reliability for the constructs was 0.91.

Section G contained scale items on purchase intention adapted from a study by Spears and Sing (2004:60). The reported composite reliability for the constructs was 0.97.

Sections B, C, D, E, F and G, were measured by a five-point Likert scale, where the respondents had to express their level of agreement by ticking a range number from 1=strongly disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree/neutral and 5=strongly agree.

### **3.6 PRETESTING AND PILOTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

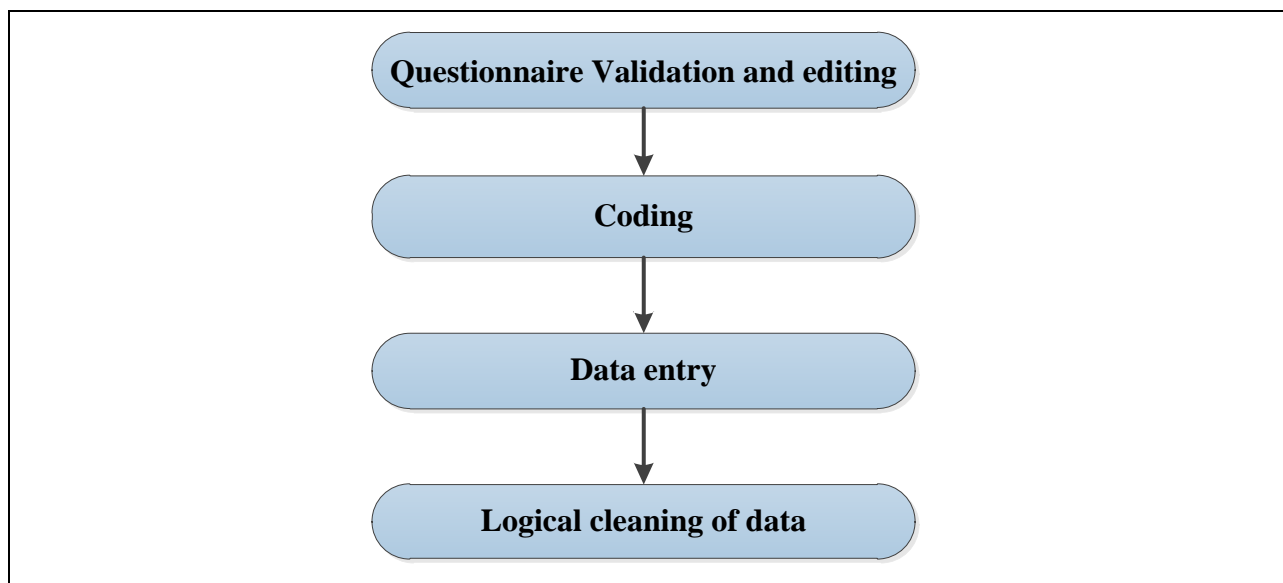
A pre-test involves conducting a dry run of the survey on a small, yet representative set of respondents to reveal questionnaire errors before the main survey is launched (Burns & Bush 2014:229). The purpose of the pre-test is to ensure that the questionnaire meets the researcher's expectations in terms of the information received (Aaker, Kumar & Day 2004:328). Therefore, it is necessary to perform a pre-test for reasons such as: wording of the questionnaire, how long a respondent takes to complete the questionnaire, any strong objection on cultural, religious or moral grounds (Berndt & Petzer 2011:147); does the questionnaire communicate with the respondents as intended (De Leeuwe, Hox & Dillman 2008:176); to assess questions that respondents are not willing to answer or do not know how to answer (Blair, Czaja & Blair 2014:252). For this study, a pre-test was performed by review of the questionnaire with the supervisors and two academics in the Marketing Department at the Vaal University of Technology. Thereafter, minor changes relating to comprehension, layout and sequence of the questions were effected.

A pilot study is defined as a procedure for testing and validating an instrument by administering it to a small group of respondents from the intended test population (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2011:237). For this study, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a sample of 50 students at the Vaal University of Technology.

The reliability of the questionnaire was also assessed. Refer to Section 4.2, Table 4.1 for the results of the pilot study and the amended changes on variables. To ensure that members who participated in the pilot study did not form part of the main survey, only postgraduate students at the Vaal University of Technology were sampled for the pilot study.

### 3.7 DATA PREPARATION

The current study adapted the data preparation steps provided by (McDaniel & Gates 2013:326) in order to fit the current study as illustrated in Figure 3.2.



**Figure 3.2: Data-preparation process**

Source: McDaniel & Gates (2013:326)

#### 3.7.1 Data preparation steps

##### 3.7.1.1 Questionnaire validation and editing

The researcher checked the questionnaire for completeness, legibility, consistency and comprehensibility as suggested by Churchill *et al.* (2010:401). Returned questionnaires that did not meet the requirements in terms of the above, were discarded. Small portions of the questionnaires that had missing values and to which the missing values were not key variables were assigned the missing values (Malhotra 2010:454; Mazzochi 2008:79).

### **3.7.1.2 Coding**

Coding entails assigning a code, usually a number, to each possible response to each question that appears on a questionnaire (Malhotra 2010:454). In this study, coding was undertaken in preparation for statistical analysis by the supervisor.

### **3.7.1.3 Data entry**

Data capturing involves transferring coded data from the questionnaire or coding sheets directly into computers by keypunching (Malhotra 2010:459). In this study, the researcher transferred coded data directly into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet using a personal computer. This was subsequently checked by the supervisor.

### **3.7.1.4 Logical cleaning of data**

Logical cleaning of data refers to final error checking of data by means of a statistical software packages, such as SPSS, version 24.0 (McDaniel & Gates 2013:334). Furthermore, Malhotra (2010:461) asserts that a statistical software packages, such as SPSS, also performs consistency checks and treats missing responses through ways such as substituting with a neutral value, substituting with an imputed response, performing case-wise- and pairwise deletion. In the current study, data were fed into SPSS to perform final data cleaning and case-wise deletion was performed by the statistician.

## **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

### **3.8.1 Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive statistics is used when the aim of investigation is to describe the data that have been collected (Weinberg & Abramowitz 2008:2). Furthermore, Coussement, Demoulin and Charry (2011:45) assert that descriptive statistics give the researcher preliminary insights and also provides a first indication of the success of the data collection and, consequently, the quality of data collected. The most commonly used statistics associated with frequencies are measure of location (mean, mode, median), measure of variability (range, interquartile range, standard deviation and coefficient of variation) and measure of shape (skewness and kurtosis) (Malhotra 2010:486).

#### **3.8.1.1 Measure of location**

A central location measure is a single number that gives a sense of the ‘centrality’ of the data values in the sample (Wegner 2012:63). Likewise, Steinberg (2008:55) affirms that central

location measure summarises in a single value the one score that best describes the centrality of the data.

- **Arithmetic mean**

The mean (or average value) is obtained by adding all elements in a set and dividing by the number of elements (Malhotra 2010:486). In the same vein, Wegner (2012:63) asserts that the arithmetic mean lies at the centre of a set of numeric data values and could be given in the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\text{Sum of all the observation}}{\text{Number of observation}} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}$  = the sample arithmetic mean (average)

$n$  = the number of data values in the sample

$x_i$  = the value  $i^{th}$  data value of random variable  $x$

$\sum x_i$  = the sum of the  $n$  data values, i.e.  $x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + \dots + x_n$

### 3.8.1.2 Measure of variability

Measure of variability (also called spread or dispersion) can be thought of as a measure of how different scores are from one another (Salkind 2017:44). Furthermore, Steinberg (2008:71) asserts that measure of variability summarises in a single value, how spread out are the data.

- **Standard deviation**

Standard deviation is defined as the positive square root of the variance (Howel 2010:41). Furthermore, Aczel and Sounderpandian (2009:16) state that, “the standard deviation of a set of observations is the (positive) square root of the variance of the set”. The standard deviation is symbolised as ( $s$ ) and the population standard deviation is symbolised as ( $\sigma$ ) (Bowerman, O’Connell & Murphree 2009:125-126). Standard deviation can be given in the following formula:

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2}{n - 1}}$$

Where:

$s$  = is the standard deviation;

$\sum$  = is sigma, which tells you to find the sum of what follows;

$X$  = is each individual score;

$\bar{X}$  = is the mean of all the scores; and

n = is the sample size.

(Salkind 2017:46)

The descriptive statistics were used to analyse the different sections of data, which is reported in Chapter 4.

### **3.8.1.3 Use of graphs**

The researcher plotted graphs and charts as means of assessing the frequency distribution of the data set. Frequency distribution or histogram is the process of graph plotting the values of observations on the horizontal axis with a bar graph or charts showing how many times each value occurred in the data set (Field 2009:18). Furthermore, Wegner (2010:63) asserts that summary tables such as graphs and charts are useful to communicate broad overviews of the profiles of random variables. The usage of graphs and charts was primarily for the analysis of the demographic section (Section A), which is reported in Chapter 4.

### **3.8.2 Correlation analysis**

Correlation analysis is a statistical procedure used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables (Privitera 2012:473). Furthermore, Shiu *et al.* (2009:553) assert that correlation analysis describes the degree of relationship between two variables, often presented as an absolute value score between zero and one. The value of a correlation measured by the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) ranges from -1.0 to +1.0, whereby values closer to  $\pm 1.0$  indicate stronger relationship (Privitera 2012:473). Although there are a number of different correlation coefficients, Pearson's correlation coefficient is by far the most commonly used and is referred to as simply the correlation coefficient (Peck, Olsen & Devore 2008:201).

The designation  $r$  symbolises the coefficient's estimate of linear relationship or association based on sampling data (Copper & Schindler 2011:493). Pearson's correlation coefficient measures linear relationships and provides an accurate indication of the magnitude of the association if the variables have a straight-line relationship between them, if the relationship is not linear between variables it will underestimate the true degree of association (Reid 2014:411). A linear relationship means that the strength and direction of the relationship between variables remains the same over the entire range of both variables, whereas a non-linear relationship means that the strength and direction of the relationship between variables changes over the range of both variables (Shiu *et al.* 2009:550).

Correlation coefficients reveal the direction and size of the relationship between variables (Cooper & Schindler 2011:493). The Pearson correlation coefficient sign (+ or -) indicates the direction of the relationship, when the sign is positive it means when one variable increases, so does the other, whereas, when the sign is negative it means when one variable increases, the other decreases (Reid 2014:411). The size of the relationship between variables reflects the strength of the relationship. Pallant (2016:137) suggests the following guidelines:

**Table 3.3: Strength of relationship between variables**

Weak	r=.10 to .29
Medium	r=.30 to .49
Strong	r=.50 to 1.0

Source: Pallant (2016:137)

### **3.8.3 Regression analysis**

Regression analysis is a statistical procedure for analysing associative relationships between a metric dependent (or criterion) variable and one or more independent variables (Malhotra 2010:568). Furthermore, Sharma (2014:486) put forward that regression analysis is a statistical technique that expresses a functional (or algebraic) relationship between two or more variables in the form of an equation to estimate the value of a variable based on the given value of another variable. The study adopted a multiple regression model because more than one independent (or response variable) is associated with the dependent variable (Sharma 2014:487).

Multiple regression is a statistical method that includes two or more independent variables in the equation of a regression line to predict changes in a dependent variable (Privitera 2012:536). In addition, Wright and London (2009:172) state that multiple regression is appropriate when you need to look at the combined effects of more than one variable predicting the criterion variable. Malhotra (2010:569) asserts that the strength of association in regression is measured by multiple correlation coefficient  $r^2$ , which varies between zero and one and signifies the proportion of the total variation in  $Y$  that is accounted for by the variation in  $X$ . Evans (2014:482) states that with two independent variables, the multiple regression equation will be as follows:

$$Y' = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + a$$

Where:

a = Y intercept

b1 = Slope for predictor variable X1

b2 = Slope for predictor variable X2

Whereas, Privitera (2012:536) asserts that with one independent variable, the regression equation will be as follows:

$$Y' = bX + a$$

“The slope (*b*) of a straight line is a measure of the change in *Y* relative to the change in *X*”, whereas the y-intercept (*a*) of a straight line describes the value of *Y* when *X* equals zero (Privitera 2012:539).

Regression analysis is reported in Chapter 4 (See Chapter 4, Section 4.3.5, Figure 4.5).

### 3.8.3.1 Test for multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to a condition said to be present in a multiple regression analysis when the independent (or predictor) variables are correlated among themselves (Churchill *et al.* 2010:474). Furthermore, Pallant (2016:152) asserts that multicollinearity exists when the independent (or predictor) variables are highly correlated ( $r=.9$  and above). According to Malhotra (2010:586) multicollinearity presents several problems, including:

- The partial regression coefficients may not be estimated precisely. The standard errors are likely to be high.
- The magnitude as well as the signs of the partial regression coefficients may change from sample to sample.
- It becomes difficult to assess the relative importance of the independent variables in explaining the variation in the dependent variable.
- Predictor variables may be incorrectly included or removed in stepwise regression.

According to Burns and Bush (2014:414), the way to handle multicollinearity is to utilise variance inflation factor (VIF). As the rule of thumb, it is suggested that as long as the VIF is less than 10, and tolerance value  $<0.10$  then multicollinearity is not a concern. Test for multicollinearity was also conducted (See Chapter 4, Table 4.11 in the collinearity statistics).

### **3.8.4 Reliability analysis**

Reliability refers to the ability of a measure to obtain consistent scores or results for the same object, trait or construct, across time, across different evaluators or across the items forming the measure (Churchill *et al.* 2010:257). Reliability can be assessed in the following ways:

#### **3.8.4.1 Test-retest reliability**

Test-retest involves repeated measurement of the same person or group using the same scale device under equivalent conditions (McDaniel & Gates 2013:216). The scores of these measurements are compared to determine their similarity and the assumption is that the greater the discrepancy in scores, the greater the random error present in the measurement process and thus the lower the reliability (Feinberg, Kinnear & Taylor 2013:132).

Despite its appeal, this approach has a number of problems: first, locating the same respondents to administer the second measurement (e.g. shoppers randomly recruited in a mall). Secondly, during the time between the two measurements, the respondents could have been exposed to things that might change their opinions, feelings or attitudes about the behaviour under study and, lastly, environmental or personal factors may alter, causing the second measurement to change (Feinberg *et al.* 2013:132; McDaniel & Gates 2013:216; Drost 2011:108).

#### **3.8.4.2 Internal consistency reliability**

Internal consistency measures consistency within the instrument and addresses the question of how well a set of items measures a particular behaviour or characteristics within the test (Drost 2011:111). The theory of internal consistency is built upon the concepts of equivalence (McDaniel & Gates 2013:217). Equivalence refers to consistency among responses of multiple users of a measurement or among alternate forms of a measurement (Heale & Twycross 2015:67). The researcher can test for item equivalence by examining the homogeneity of a set of items (McDaniel & Gates 2013:217). Homogeneity can be examined using item-to-total correlation, split-half reliability, Kuder-Richardson coefficient and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ).

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the average or mean of all possible split-half coefficients resulting from different ways of splitting the scale items (Malhotra 2010:319). Cronbach's alpha coefficient can be categorised as follows: 0.80 and 0.96 possessing excellent reliability, between 0.70 and 0.80 possessing good reliability and between 0.60 and 0.70 possessing fair reliability and below 0.60 possessing poor reliability (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin 2013:302; Zikmund & Babin 2013:257; Rekleiti *et al.* 2018:63).

### **3.8.4.3 Alternate-forms reliability**

Alternate-form reliability involves giving each subject two distinct forms of the measure believed to be equivalent and comparing the results (Feinberg *et al.* 2013:132). If the correlation between the alternative forms is low, it could indicate that considerable measurement error is present, because two different yet equivalent scales were used (Drost 2011:110). However, if the two sets of responses are not too different (consisting of high correlation) then alternate forms reliability is established (Engel & Schutt 2010:68).

This approach has two major problems. First, it is time-consuming and expensive to construct an equivalent form of the scale. Secondly, it is difficult to construct two equivalent forms of a scale since the two forms should be different and yet be equivalent with respect to content (Malhotra 2010:319).

For the purpose of the study, internal consistency reliability was used. The Cronbach's alpha was utilised to assess the reliability of the scales. Cronbach's alpha is used in this study because it overcomes the issue related to the split-half technique, wherein the estimate of the coefficient of reliability is highly dependent on how the items were split (McDaniel & Gates 2010:252). As such, Cronbach's alpha has gained wide acceptance by most researcher as means to assess scale reliability (Sekaran & Bougie 2013:229). The reliability results of the current study are computed in Chapter 4 in Tables 4.1 and 4.12-4.13.

### **3.8.5 Validity analysis**

Validity refers to the accuracy of the instrument; it is an assessment of the exactness of the measurement relative to what actually exists (Burns & Bush 2014:214). Furthermore, Graziano and Raulin (2010:81) assert that validity refers to an instrument measuring what it is supposed to measure. Validity can be assessed in the following ways:

#### **3.8.5.1 Content validity**

Content validity is the extent to which a measurement (or instrument) reflects the true content of the concept in question (Bryman & Bell 2011:160). Furthermore, Creswell and Clark (2011:210) assert that content validity assesses whether the items or questions are reflective of possible items. Moreover, Malhotra (2010:320) states that content validity is a subjective but systematic evaluation of how well the content of an instrument represents the measurement tasks at hand. In the current study, content validity was assessed through a review of the literature to affirm the

instrument, pre-testing and piloting the study. The pre-testing information is provided in this Chapter in Section 3.6 and pilot is provided in Section 4.1 of Chapter 4.

### **3.8.5.2 Predictive validity**

Predictive validity refers to the question of whether the scores with an assessment instrument correlate with the scores of another instrument that is supposed to measure similar concepts (Van Helvoort, Brand-Gruwel, Huysmans & Sjoer 2017:306). Under criterion validity, predictive validity was assessed. Feinberg *et al.* (2013:131) assert that “predictive validity involves the ability of measured marketing phenomenon at one point in time to predict another marketing phenomenon at a future point”. The study employed regression analysis to assess the predictive validity of the scale amongst constructs (See Chapter 4, correlation results, Section 4.3.4).

### **3.8.5.3 Construct validity**

Construct validity is based on the extent to which a test measures a theoretical construct (or trait) and attempts to validate the theory underlying the measurement by testing of the hypothesised relationship (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2014:294). Construct validity of an instrument assesses the extent to which it gives accurate information about the construct that it is designed to measure (Alban-Metcalf, Alimo-Metcalf & Hughes 2010:58). Furthermore, it refers to the question of whether all the criteria of assessing the instrument is relevant for the construct of interest (Van Helvoort *et al.* 2017:306).

In this study, construct validity was assessed through the computation of the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the scale items as a means to assess the internal consistency of the related criterion variables under investigation (Helvoort, Brand-Gruwel, Huysmans & Sjoer 2017:306) (refer to Table 4.12 and Section 4.3.6.1 of Chapter 4).

### **3.8.5.4 Convergent validity**

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which scores on one scale correlate with scores on other scales designed to assess the same concept (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:305; Copper & Schindler 2011:282). Furthermore, Malhotra (2010:321) asserts that convergent validity is the degree to which the scale correlates positively with other measures of the same construct and can thus be assessed by correlation analysis (Sekaran & Bougie (2013:227). In line with the above-mentioned authors, convergent analysis was assessed through correlation analysis (See Section 4.3.4 of Chapter 4).

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics refers to a domain of inquiry, discipline, in which matters of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice, are systematically examined (Smith & Murphy 2012:13). Likewise, Kumar (2014:282) suggests that ethics refer to principles of conduct that are considered appropriate in a given profession. The following standards, which are stated in Chapter 1 of this study, were upheld:

- The consent letter was attached to each questionnaire that was distributed.
- The researcher ensured that the participation of respondents was completely voluntary by informing the participants about the purpose of the study.
- Personal information of participants was processed fairly, lawfully and used only for the purpose of the study.
- The participants' right to anonymity was highly preserved at all times.
- The main findings of the study would be made available to the participants on request.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

The chapter provided justification of the selected research design. The chapter provided descriptions on the different research approaches, which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed research methods and provided a justification as to why quantitative methodology was selected. The chapter illustrated and explained the sampling design process. The chapter elaborated on the data collection procedure, detailing the questionnaire design and the questionnaire layout and questions format.

The chapter illustrated and explained the data preparation procedure. It also provided a description of various analysis tools employed in the study, which included a descriptive study of the data set, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The study explained the forms of reliability and validity employed in the study. The study also detailed the ethical steps employed in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter covered the research methodology employed in the study, provided a detailed sampling design procedure, data collection and questionnaire design. The current chapter focuses on the results and the findings emanating from the survey employed in the study. The chapter also describes the pilot study undertaken and depicts the demographic profiles of the sample through graphs, charts and tables. The chapter also provides descriptive statistics of the sample and covers correlation and regression analysis. Lastly, the chapter covers reliability and validity assessments.

#### **4.2 PILOT STUDY RESULTS**

A pilot study was undertaken to ensure the questionnaire used in the study was properly constructed and that the questionnaire captured the required information regarding the variables of the study. The pilot testing comprised (N=50) respondents. Respondents who participated in the pilot study were excluded in the main survey.

##### **4.2.1 Reliability statistics of the pilot study**

Researchers consider scales exhibiting a Cronbach's coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) between 0.80 and 0.96 possessing excellent reliability, between 0.70 and 0.80 possessing good reliability, between 0.60 and 0.70 possessing fair reliability and below 0.60 possessing poor reliability (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, Griffin 2013:302; Zikmund & Babin 2013:257; Rekleiti *et al.* 2018:63). Based on these recommendations, the results of the pilot study shown in Table 4.1 provide satisfactory indication of alpha coefficient  $\geq$  the recommended threshold of 0.60. At this stage, no changes were made to the questionnaire.

**Table 4.1: Results of the pilot study**

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Section B: Brand awareness	5	.732
Section C: Brand association	6	.600
Section D: Brand loyalty	5	.825
Section E: Perceived quality	5	.785
Section F: Brand preference	4	.908
Section G: Purchase intention	5	.908

Source: Own research

### 4.3 MAIN SURVEY RESULTS

Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 361 were completed and returned and thus were usable. 39 questionnaires were incomplete and, as a result, were unusable. A discussion of the analysis of data is presented as follows:

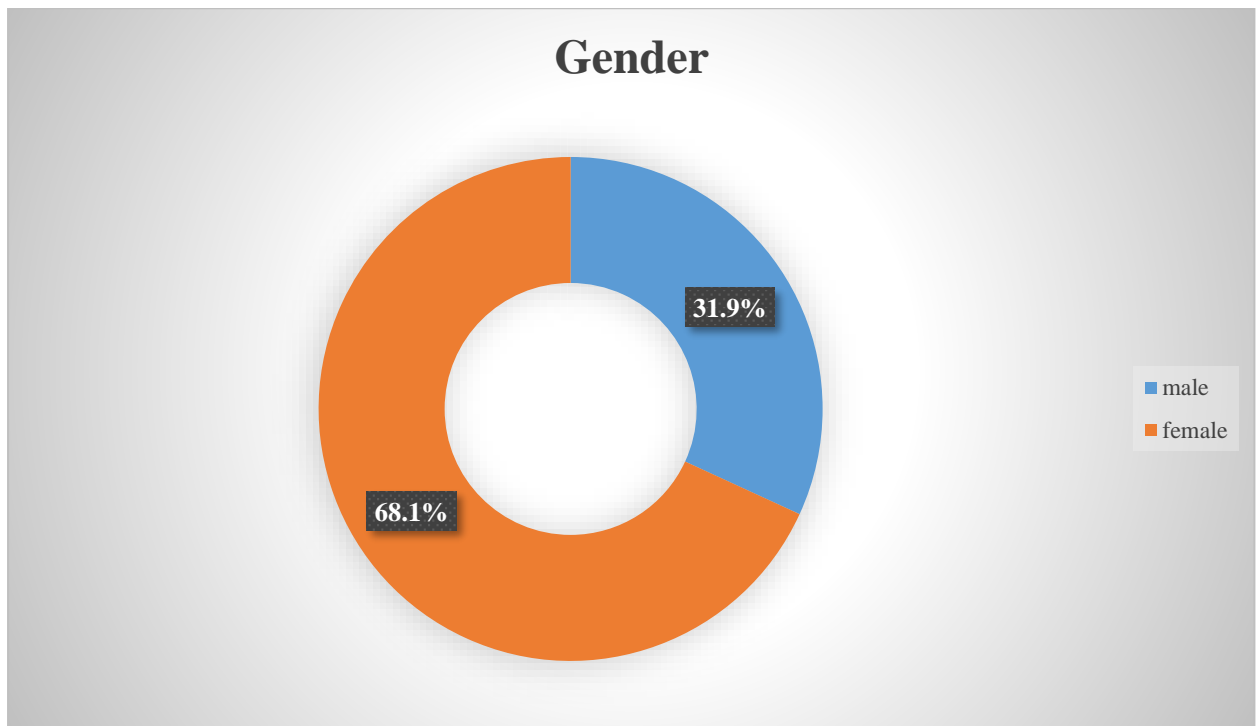
- Demographical information of the respondents
- Descriptive statistics: means and standard deviation of the sample
- Reliability analysis
- Validity analysis
- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis

#### 4.3.1 Demographic of the respondents

Section A reports on the general demographic information of the students. Information such as their gender, age, race, monthly income/allowance and educational qualification was gathered.

##### 4.3.1.1 Gender composition of the sample

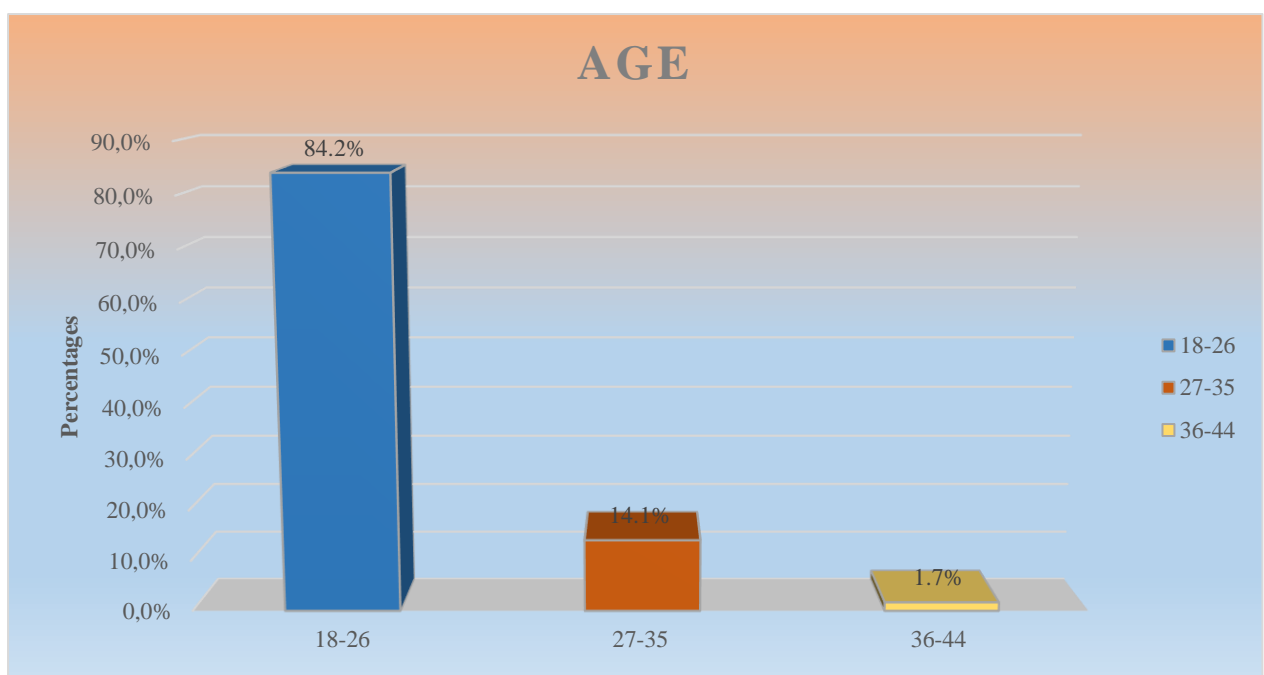
Figure 4.1 provides the gender composition of the sample. The gender characteristics of the sample consisted of n=115 males, representing 31.9 percent and n=246 females, representing 68.1 percent. This result show that more females participated in the study.



**Figure 4.1: Gender**

#### 4.3.1.2 Age distribution of the sample

Figure 4.2 provides the age composition of the respondents. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18-26 years ( $n=304$ ; 84.2%), followed by those who were between the ages 27-35 ( $n=51$ ; 14.1%) and those who were between the ages 36-44 ( $n=6$ ; 1.7%).



**Figure 4.2: Age**

#### 4.3.1.3 Race

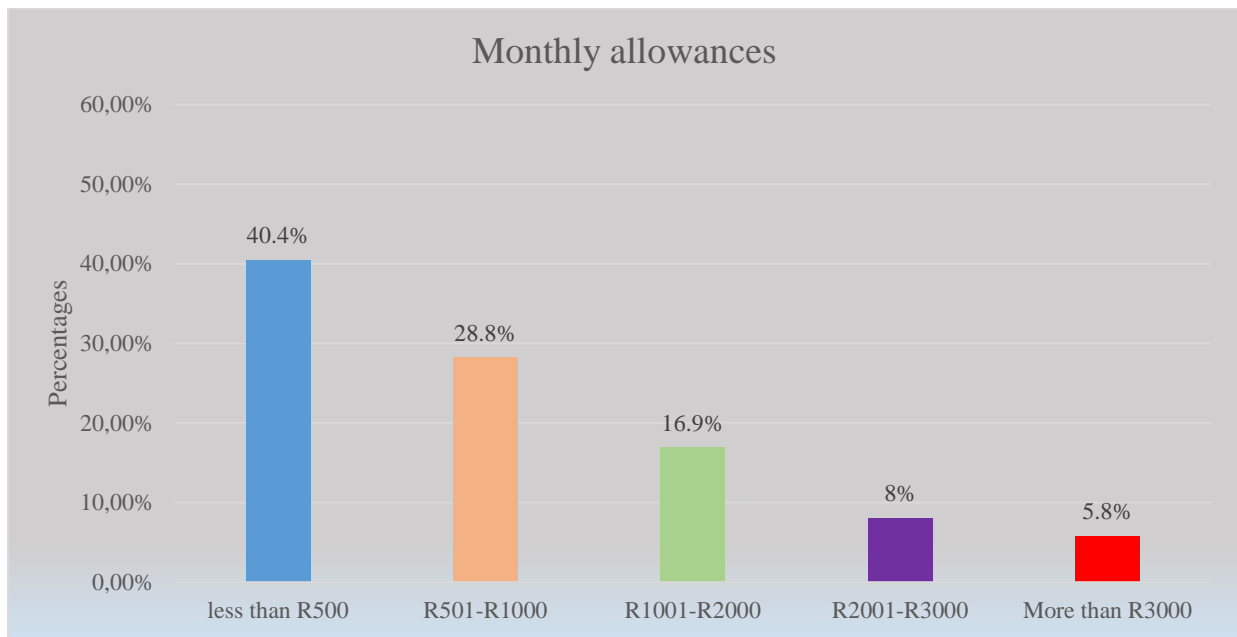
Table 4.2 provides the race composition of the respondents. The majority of respondents were Black (n=351; 97.2%), followed by Coloured (n=8; 2.2%) and Whites (n=2; 0.6%). The high variation could be attributed to the observable race population in the Vaal Triangle, which is mostly Blacks. This observation finds support in the fact that the majority of students enrolled in public universities were Black Africans at 71.9 percent, followed by White students at 15.6 percent, Coloured students at 6.3 percent and Indian/Asian students at 5.2 percent (Department of Higher Education and Training Republic of South Africa 2018:12).

**Table 4.2: Race**

Race	Frequency	%
Black	351	97.2
Coloured	8	2.2
Whites	2	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.3.1.4 Monthly allowance

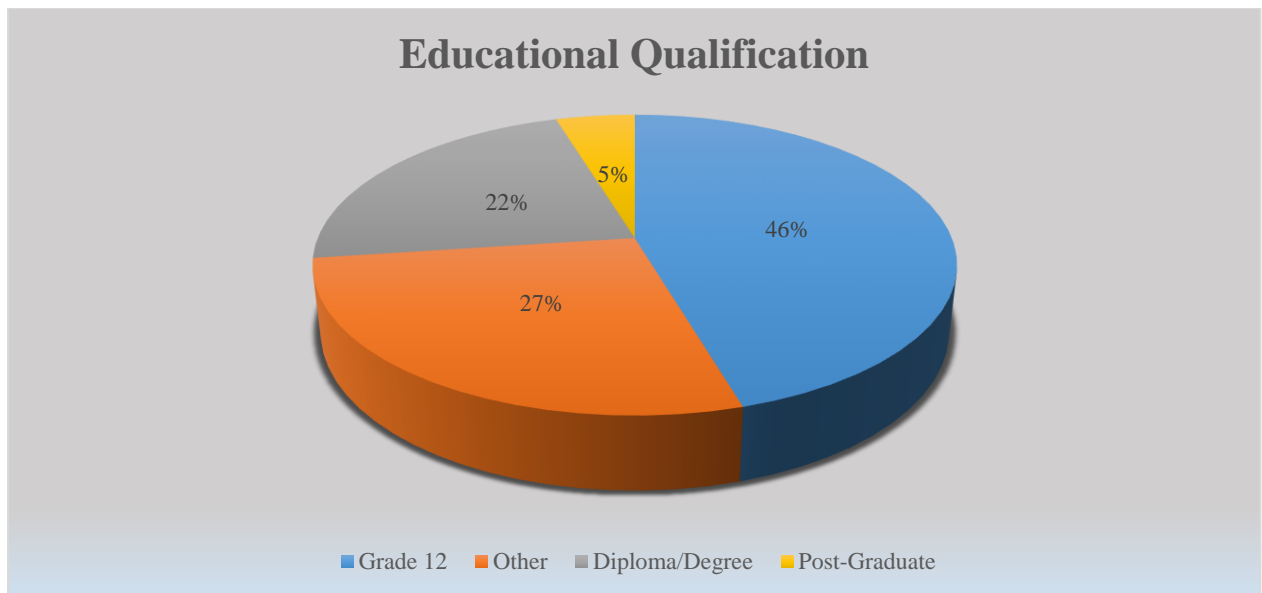
Figure 4.3 provides the monthly allowance composition of the respondents. The majority of respondents received a monthly allowance of less than R500 (n=146; 40.4%), followed by those who received a monthly allowance of between R501-1001 (n=104; 28.8%), those who received a monthly allowance of between R1001-R2000 (n=61; 16.9%), those who received a monthly allowance of between R2001-R3000 (n=29; 8%) and lastly, those who received a monthly allowance of more than R3000 (n=21; 5.8%).



**Figure 4.3: Monthly allowance**

#### **4.3.1.5 Educational qualification**

Figure 4.4 provides the educational qualification composition of the respondents. The majority of the respondent were in possession of a grade 12 national certificate (n=164; 45.4%), followed by those who were represented by “other” (n=99; 27.4%), followed by those in a position of a diploma/degree (n=81; 22.4%) and, lastly, those who were in possession of a postgraduate degree (n=17; 4.7%). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (2018:16), during the 2016 academic year, more than half of all students enrolled for undergraduate degrees at 54.3 percent and over a quarter were enrolled for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, at 26.1 percent.



**Figure 4.4: Educational qualification**

#### 4.3.2 Descriptive statistics: means and standard deviation of the sample

Descriptive statistics are used to organise, describe and summarise the characteristics of a collection of data (Salkind 2017:8). The mean scores of the items in sections B, C, D, E, F and G of the questionnaire are discussed in the next sub-sections.

##### 4.3.2.1 Brand awareness (Section B)

Table 4.3 reports on students' brand awareness towards store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five (strongly agree).

**Table 4.3: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section B – Brand awareness)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					4.21	1.02
B1	I am aware of store brands.	361	1	5	4.44	.917
B2	I can recognise store brands in comparison with competing brands.	361	1	5	4.24	1.017
B3	I know how store brands looks like.	361	1	5	4.25	.918

**Table 4.3: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section B – Brand awareness) (continued ...)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
B4	I can quickly recall symbols or logos of store brands.	361	1	5	4.18	1.084
B5	When advertised, some characteristics of store brands come to my mind quickly.	361	1	5	3.94	1.152

Section B (brand awareness) had the highest mean score of 4.44 (Item B1) and the lowest means score was 3.94 (Item B5). The standard deviation ranged from 1.084 to 1.152. The mean scores indicate that students are generally aware of store brands and this awareness can be linked with strong and relevant cues that enable the consumer to effectively recall the brand (Conradie, Roberts-Lombard & Klopper 2014:105).

#### 4.3.2.2 Brand association (Section C)

Table 4.4 reports on students' brand association towards store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five strongly agree.

**Table 4.4: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section C – Brand association)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					3.45	1.27
C2	I like store brands.	361	1	5	3.40	1.296
C3	Store brands are excellent brands.	361	1	5	3.40	1.212
C4	I am proud to buy store brands.	361	1	5	3.48	1.280
C5	I trust the supermarket that sells store brands.	361	1	5	3.57	1.252
C6	I trust store brands.	361	1	5	3.42	1.287

Section C (brand association) had the highest mean score of 3.57 (Item C5) and the lowest mean score was 3.40 (Item C2 and C4). The mean scores indicate that students were somewhat neutral on brand association regarding store brands.

#### 4.3.2.3 Brand loyalty (Section D)

Table 4.5 reports on students' brand loyalty towards store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five strongly agree.

**Table 4.5: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section D – Brand loyalty)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					3.07	1.32
D1	I usually refer store brands to other people.	361	1	5	3.14	1.377
D2	I usually choose store brands as my first choice, in comparison to other brands.	361	1	5	2.78	1.415
D3	I will not switch to a competitor brand the next time I do grocery shopping.	361	1	5	2.74	1.275
D4	I am satisfied with store brands.	361	1	5	3.33	1.217
D5	I will recommend store brands to my friends.	361	1	5	3.36	1.301

Section D (brand loyalty) had the highest mean score of 3.36 (Item D5) and the lowest mean score was 2.74 (Item D3). The standard deviation ranged from 1.377 to 1.415. These means scores indicate that students were somewhat neutral in their responses regarding brand loyalty of store brands.

#### 4.3.2.4 Perceived quality (Section E)

Table 4.6 reports on students' perception of quality towards store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five strongly agree.

**Table 4.6: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section E – Perceived quality)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					3.30	1.19
E1	Store brands are of high quality.	361	1	5	3.07	1.245
E2	The expected quality of store brands is extremely high.	361	1	5	3.20	1.207
E3	The likelihood that a store brand will be functional is high.	361	1	5	3.21	1.184
E4	The likelihood that a store brand is reliable is very high.	361	1	5	3.25	1.143
E5	Store brands must be of very good quality.	361	1	5	3.77	1.193

The mean score for Section E (perceived quality) had the highest mean score of 3.77 (Item E5) and the lowest mean score was 3.07 (Item E1). These mean scores indicate that students were somewhat neutral in their responses regarding brand loyalty of store brands.

#### 4.3.2.5 Brand preference (Section F)

Table 4.7 reports on students' brand preference in relation to store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five strongly agree.

**Table 4.7: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section F – Brand preference)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					3.48	1.23
F1	I like store brands.	361	1	5	3.42	1.289
F2	My overall opinion on store brands is positive.	361	1	5	3.59	1.142
F3	I think store brands are good brands.	361	1	5	3.53	1.190
F4	I will choose store brands the next time I do grocery shopping.	361	1	5	3.39	1.304

The mean score for Section F (brand preference) had the highest mean score of 3.59 (Item F2) and the lowest mean score was 3.39 (Item F4). These means scores indicate that students were somewhat neutral in their responses regarding brand preference of store brands. Brand preference is formed when customers process available information, which this process leads purchase intention (Wyma 2010:24). Retailers of store brands must capitalise and increase brand awareness effort in order to provide consumers with necessary and relevant information for purchase decisions.

#### 4.3.2.6 Purchase intention (Section G)

Table 4.8 reports on students' purchase intention regarding store brands. The students were asked to indicate their level of agreement through Likert scale questions with values ranging between one (strongly disagree) and five strongly agree.

**Table 4.8: Descriptive statistical analysis (Section G – Purchase intention)**

Scale		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall score					3.36	1.26
G1	I will purchase store brands.	361	1	5	3.47	1.265
G2	I am definitely intending to purchase store brands.	361	1	5	3.29	1.235
G3	I am highly interested in purchasing store brands.	361	1	5	3.28	1.267
G4	I am definitely going to purchase store brands.	361	1	5	3.27	1.268
G5	I will probably purchase store brands.	361	1	5	3.47	1.240

The means score of Section G (purchase intention) had the highest mean score of 3.47 (Item G1 and G2) and the lowest means score was 3.27 (Item G4). These means scores indicate that students were somewhat neutral in their responses regarding their purchase intention of store brands. Purchase intentions is an important element in relation to customer's behaviour, as it is the ultimate forecaster of purchase behaviour (Mowzer 2016:56).

### 4.3.3 Reliability

Table 4.13 reports on the reliability results. Researchers consider scales exhibiting a Cronbach's coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) between 0.80 and 0.90 possessing excellent reliability, between 0.70 and 0.80 possessing good reliability, between 0.60 and 0.70 possessing fair reliability and below 0.60 possessing poor reliability (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2013:302). The Cronbach's coefficient results of the study ranged from 0.694 to 0.939, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60, thereby suggesting that scales have adequate internal consistency. One item on brand association revealed a low corrected item-total correlation at .159; which was below the recommended threshold of .30 (Tapsir, Nik Pa & Syed Zamir 2018:40) and was duly deleted.

**Table 4.9: Cronbach's alpha reliability results**

Sections of the questionnaire	Number of items	Items Deleted	Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Brand awareness (Section B)	5	-	0.694
Brand association (Section C)	5	1	0.884
Brand loyalty (Section D)	5	-	0.810
Perceived quality (Section E)	5	-	0.829
Brand preference (Section F)	4	-	0.886
Purchase intention (Section G)	5	-	0.939

### 4.3.4 Validity

The following measures of validity, namely content validity, construct validity, convergent validity and predictive validity are discussed in the following sub-sections.

- **Content validity**

Content validity was assessed through a review of the literature to affirm the instruments, pre-testing and piloting the study. As per pre-testing, the questionnaire was examined for suitability and whether the questions were measuring the constructs of the study. This was done with the assistance of the supervisor and two experts in the field. Minor changes such as rewording and re-phrasing of the scale items were done. As for the pilot study, a total of 50 respondents were selected conveniently to participate in the pilot study. Based on the pilot study, minor changes were applied to the questionnaire; one scale item under brand association was deleted (refer to Table 4.12).

- **Construct validity**

Construct validity was determined through the computation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of scale items. These results revealed acceptable reliability values (refer to Table 4.12).

- **Convergent validity**

Convergent validity was assessed through correlation analysis in order to determine the degree to which the scale correlates positively with other measures of the same constructs (Malhotra 2010:321). The results revealed positive correlations between constructs. The correlation coefficients ranged from  $r=0.160$  to  $r=0.783$  ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (refer to Table 4.10).

- **Predictive validity**

Predictive validity, which is a component of criterion validity, was assessed through regression analysis, wherein if the correlation between two measures (or events) is high, the initial measure is said to have predictive validity (Feinberg *et al.* 2013:131). Regression analysis revealed significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables (refer to Table 4.11).

#### 4.3.5 Correlation analysis

The current study sought to examine the relationship between consumer-based brand equity elements and brand preference. Furthermore, the study also sought to examine the relationship between brand preference and purchase intention. In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, correlation analysis was employed. Correlation analysis seeks to describe the strength and direction of the linear (straight-line) relationship between two variables (Pallant 2016:132). The degree or strength of the relation between variables is reflected by the product moment correlation ( $r$ ), which is also known as the Pearson correlation coefficient (Malhotra 2010:562). The size of the relationship between variables reflects the strength of the relationship. Pallant (2016:137) suggests the following guidelines:

**Table 4.10: Strength of relationship between variables**

Weak	$r=.10$ to $.29$
Medium	$r=.30$ to $.49$
Strong	$r=.50$ to $1.0$

Source: Pallant (2016:137)

Table 4.11 reflects the results of the correlation analysis that was undertaken for this study.

**Table 4.11: Correlation analysis**

	<b>Brand awareness</b>	<b>Brand association</b>	<b>Brand loyalty</b>	<b>Perceived quality</b>	<b>Brand preference</b>	<b>Purchase intention</b>
<b>Brand awareness</b>	1.000	.221**	.129*	.150*	<b>.160**</b>	.065
<b>Brand association</b>	.221**	1.000	.636**	.572**	<b>.679**</b>	.608**
<b>Brand loyalty</b>	.129*	.636**	1.000	.641**	<b>.709**</b>	.691**
<b>Perceived quality</b>	.150	.572**	.641**	1.000	<b>.695**</b>	.635**
<b>Brand preference</b>	.161**	.679**	.709**	.695**	1.000	<b>.783**</b>
<b>Purchase intention</b>	.065	.608**	.691**	.635**	<b>.783**</b>	1.000
Note <sub>1</sub> **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Note <sub>2</sub> *Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed).						

#### **4.3.5.1 Brand awareness towards brand preference**

The results revealed a significant and positive correlation between brand awareness and brand preference ( $r=.160$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This suggests that increasing brand awareness of store brands will moderately increase consumers' preferences towards store brands.

#### **4.3.5.2 Brand association towards brand preference**

The results showed a strong positive correlation between brand association and brand preference ( $r=.679$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This implies that when consumers form strong brand association towards store brands, it will, consequently, increase their preference towards store brands.

#### **4.3.5.3 Brand loyalty towards brand preference**

The results indicated a strong positive correlation between brand loyalty and brand preference ( $r=.709$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This suggests that increased levels of brand loyalty may have a positive association with consumers' brand preference of store brands.

#### 4.3.5.4 Perceived quality towards brand preference

The results revealed a strong positive correlation between perceived quality and brand preference ( $r = .695, p < 0.01$ ). This implies that reinforcing high perceptions of quality increases a consumer's preference towards store brands.

#### 4.3.5.5 Brand preference towards purchase intention

The results showed a strong positive correlation between brand preference and purchase intention ( $r = .783, p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that when marketers focus on building brand preference through leveraging the consumer-based brand equity elements, customers' purchase intention will be high.

#### 4.3.6 Regression analysis

The study employed regression analysis to address the following hypotheses:

**H1:** *There is a positive relationship between brand awareness and brand preference.*

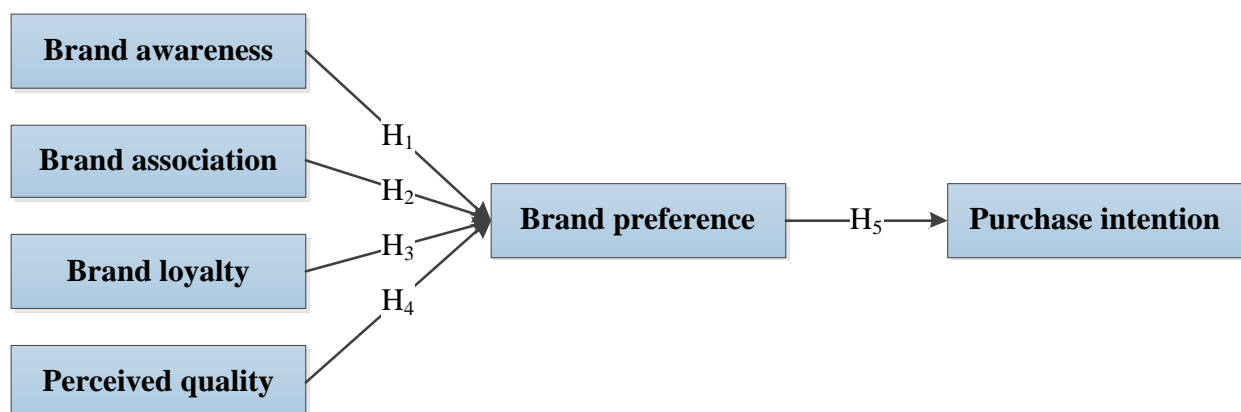
**H2:** *There is a positive relationship between brand association and brand preference.*

**H3:** *There is a positive relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference.*

**H4:** *There is a positive relationship between perceived quality and brand preference.*

**H5:** *There is a positive relationship between brand preference and purchase intention.*

The conceptual framework of the study, which was presented in Chapter 1, is herein presented as a means to provide better understanding of the results. In line with the above-mentioned study's hypotheses, the model is presented in the figure below:



**Figure 4.5:** Conceptual framework for the study

### 4.3.6.1 Test for multicollinearity

Multicollinearity refers to a condition said to be present in multiple regression analysis when the independent (or predictor) variables are highly correlated among themselves (Churchill *et al.* 2010:474). Collinearity diagnostics were also checked as part of the multiple regression procedure. None of the sets of correlations were  $>0.90$  (refer to Table 4.10). Further, the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) was examined. Tolerance values  $< 0.10$  and  $VIF > 10$  would suggest that multiple correlations with variables are high, indicating the possibility of multicollinearity (Pallant 2016:152). Tests for multicollinearity for this study revealed that tolerance values ranged between 0.442 and 1 and VIF ranged between 1.00 and 2.261. Based on these values, multicollinearity (see Table 4.11) does not pose a problem in this study.

Table 4.11 reports on the regression analysis results wherein brand preference was entered in the regression model as the dependent variable. The other four factors, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality were entered in the regression model as independent variables.

**Table 4.12: Regression analysis – study constructs**

Model 1: Dependent variable (Brand preference)	Standardised Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
Independent variables				Tolerance	VIF
Brand awareness	-.003	-.091	.927	.957	1.045
Brand association	.302	7.343	.000*	.528	1.894
Brand loyalty	.342	7.600	.000*	.442	2.261
Perceived quality	.304	7.309	.000*	.518	1.932
R= .827 R <sup>2</sup> = .684 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .678 (F change= 127.440 *sig at p<.05)					

Overall, the results of the regression model 1 indicated an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.678. This means that approximately 68 percent of the variance in brand preference can be accounted for by primarily three of the four factors, namely brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality.

Brand awareness revealed a coefficient of  $\beta = -.003$  with the p value  $> 0.05$  on brand preference. This suggests that brand awareness (independent variable) does not contribute towards explaining the variation in brand preference (dependent variable). The correlation analysis further revealed weak association between brand awareness and brand preference ( $r = 0.160$ ). This result

contradicts the literature reports on the relationship between brand awareness and brand preference. A plausible reason for such an outcome may be attributed to the notion that store brands are not as popular and intensively advertised when compared to recognised manufacturer brands. Yang (2012:117) puts forward an argument that when store brands are given sufficient exposure or awareness by retailers, the possibility of consumers purchasing store brands will increase. An early study by Nedungadi and Hutchinson (1985:1) states that consumers' awareness of a brand is often a critical factor that leads them to choose a brand. Likewise, a more recent study has also highlighted that brand preference is, in effect, a measure of consumer choice, falling at the edge of the consumer decision-making process (Vogel & Watchravesringkan 2017:519). Moreover, Alamro and Rowley (2011:47) assert that if advertising, which is one of the tools to create brand awareness, is positively evaluated by the consumer, the consumer is likely to form a positive perception of the brand. The higher the positive perception of the brand, the greater the likelihood of a brand being preferred. *H1, which states that there a positive relationship between brand awareness and brand preference, is, therefore, rejected.*

Brand association revealed a coefficient of  $\beta=0.302$  with the p value  $<0.05$  on brand preference. This suggests that brand association (independent variable) contributes towards explaining the variation in brand preference (dependent variable). Correlation analysis further revealed a strong relationship between brand association and brand preference at ( $r=0.679$ ). These results support the hypothesis, *there is a positive relationship between brand association and brand preference (H2)*. This suggests that consumers who hold strong and positive associations towards a brand are more likely to prefer the particular brand. The foregoing statement is supported by Llicic and Webster (2015:168) who state that brand associations consist of brand experience that influences perceptions, brand preferences and customer choices. Store brands often compete with well-known brands within brand categories; therefore, brand association plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer choice. Florack and Scarabis (2006:743-744) suggest that when a customer is faced with multiple brand alternatives, the likelihood that a brand is present in the consideration set and eventually chosen depends highly on the association of the brand within the product category. Furthermore, brand association produces mental representations of the brands that are unique to that brand and differentiate the brand from other alternatives in the category (Jeon & Baek 2016:552).

Brand loyalty revealed a coefficient of  $\beta=0.342$  with the p value  $<0.05$  on brand preference. This suggests that brand loyalty (independent variable) contributes towards explaining the variation in brand preference (dependent variable). Correlations analysis revealed a strong relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference at ( $r=0.709$ ). *H3, which states that there is a positive*

*relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference*, is therefore supported. This suggest that customers who are loyal towards a brand will prefer a particular brand in terms of purchase decisions. This is affirmed by Amoako *et al.* (2017:986) who put forward that brand preference is an outcome of brand loyalty.

Perceived quality revealed a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.304$  with the p value  $< 0.05$  on brand preference. This suggests that perceived quality (independent variable) contributes towards explaining the variation in brand preference (dependent variable). The correlation analysis further revealed a strong relationship between perceived quality and brand preference at ( $r = 0.695$ ). These results support the hypothesis, *there is a relationship between perceived quality and brand preference (H4)*. These results affirm that customers who perceive a brand to be of high quality will prefer the particular brand wherein brands with high quality perceptions tend to enjoy high customer preference (Latha 2016:49).

In Table 4.12, brand preference was entered in the regression model 2 as the independent variable while purchase intention was entered in the as the dependent variable.

**Table 4.13: Regression analysis – study constructs**

Model 2: Dependent variable (Purchase intention)	Standardised coefficients beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
Independent variable				Tolerance	VIF
Brand preference	.809	26.004	.000*	1.000	1.000
R= 0.809 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.654 Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.653 *sig at p<0.05					

The result of the regression model 2 indicated an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 0.653. This suggests that approximately 65 percent of the variance in purchase intention can be accounted for by brand preference.

Brand preference revealed a coefficient of ( $\beta = 0.809$ ) with the p value  $< 0.05$  on purchase intention. This suggests that brand preference (independent variable) makes a positive contribution towards explaining the variation in purchase intention (dependent variable). Moreover, the correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between brand preference and purchase intention at ( $r = 0.783$ ). These results support the hypothesis, that *there is a relationship between brand preference and purchase intention (H5)*, thus affirming that customers who prefer a brand will have a high intention to purchase that brand. Florack and Scarabis (2006:743) posit that brand preference is an

important factor that has significant influence on brand purchase. Liu *et al.* (2014:1030) further attest that brand preference has a positive influence on customer brand purchase. Previous research has further shown that brand preference is essential in creating a strong bond between brand and customers' intention to purchase a brand (Chang & Liu 2009:1690 & Soenyoto 2015:101).

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

The chapter presented an analysis of the findings from the empirical study. Through the results presented in this chapter, the researcher was able to ascertain the influence that brand equity has on brand preference and purchase intention. This was made possible using correlation and regression analysis, wherein these two forms of analysis were used to determine relationships among the study constructs.

As per the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the internal consistency of the instrument, whereas content, construct, convergent and predictive validity were used to assess the validity of the instrument. The following chapter addresses the theoretical and empirical objectives of the study, as well as the recommendations, limitations and future research possibilities.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided analysis of the findings emanating from the survey undertaken in this study wherein correlation and regression analyses were employed. The chapter also covered the assessment of reliability and validity. This chapter provides the summary of the study. Based on the review of the literature and empirical study, recommendations are made for both scholars and retailers of store brands, respectively. This chapter also covers limitations of the study, future research possibilities and concluding remarks.

The primary, theoretical and the empirical research objectives of the study are discussed in the foregoing sections to exemplify their fulfilment within the framework of the study. Several theoretical as well as primary and empirical study research objectives were formulated and the outcomes thereof are presented.

#### **5.2 THEORETICAL OBJECTIVES**

##### **5.2.1 To review the literature on the underlying theories of the constructs under investigation**

Underlying theories of the constructs were reviewed namely TPB, SIT and self-congruity theory as follows:

- TPB was undertaken with the aim of understanding the extent to which attitude, subjective norms and perceived control play to the consumer's purchase intention. Knowledge gained from TPB formed an important part of this study towards providing an insight into how consumer's attitude, impact of social pressures and ability in terms of financial resources to purchase store brands play a crucial role towards consumers purchase decisions (refer to Section 2.6.1 of Chapter 2).
- SIT was undertaken with the aim of understanding the extent to which opinions of significant others have on consumer decision making. Knowledge gained from SIT formed an important part of the study as it enabled the researcher to understand how consumers use brands as a way to fit in with in the in-group or significant others. This has an impact on how consumers evaluate and purchase store brands (refer to Section 2.6.2 of Chapter 2).

- Self-congruity theory was undertaken with the aim of understanding the extent to which congruency between store brands image and consumers' self-concept has an impact towards customers' purchase intentions of store brands. The knowledge gained from self-congruency theory provided an insight into the motives behind consumer expenditure on store brands (refer to Section 2.6.3 of Chapter 2).

## **5.2.2 To develop a literature synthesis on the selected elements of brand equity**

Consumer-based brand equity elements were reviewed, namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality.

- **Brand awareness**

This objective was accomplished under Section 2.7.1 of Chapter 2. This section provided definitions of brand awareness. This section also provided a pyramid of brand awareness and elaborated on the components of the pyramid.

- **Brand association**

This objective was addressed under Section 2.7.2 of Chapter 2. This section provided definitions of brand association, described and elaborated on the categories of brand association. This section also covered studies on the influence of brand association and highlighted the benefits of brand association with specific attention to the benefits received by the retailer of store brands receives.

- **Brand loyalty**

The objective was accomplished under Section 2.7.3 of Chapter 2. This section provided definitions of brand loyalty and described and elaborated on the determinants of brand loyalty. Under this, brand experience was elaborated upon, wherein the four dimensions of brand experience were thoroughly elaborated upon.

- **Perceived quality**

The objective was addressed under Section 2.7.4 of Chapter 2. The sections provided definitions of perceived quality and elaborated on the intrinsic and extrinsic product attributes. This section also covered the concept of cue utilisation, wherein customers use brand cues to form quality judgement regarding products.

### **5.2.3 To critically provide an analysis of brand preference**

The objective was accomplished under Section 2.7.5 of Chapter 2. The section provided definitions of brand preference and elaborated on the close relationship between brand preference and perceived value.

### **5.2.4 To review the literature on purchase intentions**

The objective was addressed under Section 2.4.6 of Chapter 2. The section provided definitions of purchase intention and covered the role of brand familiarity towards purchase intention. A review on the role of price fairness to purchase intention was also covered.

## **5.3 EMPIRICAL OBJECTIVES**

The empirical objectives as set out in Chapter 1 of this study, are revisited in the next sections.

### **5.3.1 To determine the association and influence of brand awareness on brand preference towards purchase intentions of store brands**

The association between brand awareness and brand preference towards purchase intention is outlined in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4 (correlation analysis). Correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between brand awareness and brand preference and brand preference towards purchase intention. In addition, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand awareness predicts brand preference. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand preference predicts purchase intention.

### **5.3.2 To determine the association and influence of brand association on brand preference towards purchase intention of store brands**

The association between brand association and brand preference towards purchase intention is described in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4 (correlation analysis). Correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between brand association and brand preference and brand preference towards purchase intention. In addition, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand association predicts brand preference. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand preference predicts purchase intention.

### **5.3.3 To determine the association and influence of brand loyalty on brand preference towards purchase intention of store brands**

The association between brand loyalty and brand preference towards purchase intention is illustrated in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4 (correlation analysis). Correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference and brand preference towards purchase intention. In addition, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand loyalty predicts brand preference. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand preference predicts purchase intention.

### **5.3.4 To determine the association and influence of perceived quality on brand preference towards purchase intentions of store brands**

The association between perceived quality and brand preference towards purchase intention is outlined in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4 (correlation analysis). Correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived quality and brand preference and brand preference towards purchase intention. In addition, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which perceived quality predicts brand preference. Furthermore, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand preference predicts purchase intention.

### **5.3.5 To determine the association and influence of brand preference on purchase intention on store brands**

The association between brand preference towards purchase intention is outlined in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter 4 (correlation analysis) and Section 4.3.4 of Chapter 4 (regression analysis). Correlation analysis was employed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between brand preference and purchase intention. In addition, regression analysis was employed to assess the extent to which brand preference predicts purchase intention.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analysis of the literature review and analysis of the findings emanating from the survey employed in the study, the following recommendations are made to retailers of store brands.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations regarding the association and influence of consumer-based brand equity towards brand preference**

Brand equity elements namely brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality explain 67.8 percent of the variance in brand preference (refer to Section 4.3.4 of Chapter 4). This result suggests that elements of consumer-based brand equity significantly contribute towards building consumer brand preference towards the intended brand. It is recommended that retailers of store brands should invest more in brand awareness. This could be done through running advertising campaigns that focus on the in-house brands of the store. Other means of creating awareness could be through running branded hashtags on social media in order to encourage consumer participation with the store and with the in-house brands of the store. Additionally, retailers of store brands should build positive word-of-mouth through superior product quality.

The results show that brand association significantly contributes to building brand preference. Fostering strong and positive links (or associations) such as, healthy, fresh, tasty or good quality store brands will be a strategic move that will better position store brands. Store brands compete in the FMCG industry and as such, store brands are consistently fighting for attention and a share of the consumer's wallet over multiple similar alternative brands (Grigaliunaite & Pileliene 2017:210). Associations act as a filter when it comes to purchase decision, because associations represent the desired benefits that customer's hope to obtain through the act of purchasing the intended brand.

Perceived quality is another element that significantly contributes towards building brand preference. The strategy to be applied by retailers of store brands in relation to perceived quality should be to build an image of high quality of the brand. Customers do not rely on objective quality to make purchase decisions, in most cases they do not have the technical know-how to test the real quality of a brand, but they rely on brand cues that form their perception of quality in order to make purchase decisions (Yang 2012:1115). Therefore, it is recommended that retailers should develop superior packaging of store brands, as this will be indicative of superior quality. Furthermore, retailers of store brands could raise the price of store brands relative to national brands. Consumers use the price of a brand to determine its quality, thus a high-priced brand is deemed as being of higher quality than the less expensive ones (Herbst, Leary & McColskey-Leary 2013:54).

#### **5.4.2 Recommendation regarding the significance of brand loyalty towards brand preference**

Amongst all the variables, brand loyalty made the strongest unique contribution towards building brand preference (refer to Table 4.11 of Chapter 4). Given the strong association between loyalty and preference, it is recommended that retailers of store brands pay special attention to strengthening brand loyalty of store brands, which could be achieved by implementing customer loyalty programs (CLPs) to build and strengthen customers' loyalty towards store brands.

CLPs refer to various marketing incentives (reward cards, gifts cards, discounts to members, tiered service and dedicated support contacts) designed to engage customers' long-lasting relationship (Bruneau, Swaen & Zidda 2018:145). CLPs have emerged as one of the most crucial and prevalent instruments for businesses aiming for effective loyalty management (Kreis & Mafael 2014:590). It is observed that the major retailers mentioned in this study (refer to Section 2.2. of Chapter 2) are yet to employ CLPs as a strategic tool to reinforce or strengthen customer loyalty towards store brands. As such, the study proposes that retailers of store brands should introduce store brands loyalty programs as a means to effectively manage customer loyalty. The loyalty programme should include a variety of mechanisms such as, customers earning a point for each store brand bought, personalized discount on selected store brands items and special prices on new arrivals store brands.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendation regarding the association and influence of brand preference towards purchase intention.**

Brand preference strongly contributes towards creating purchase intention. The analysis of results from the survey validated the study's proposed model that hypothesised that consumer-based brand equity elements influence brand preference (refer to Figure 1.1 of Chapter 1). It is recommended that retailers of store brands should apply the given strategies for each of the brand equity elements in order to build customer preference, which will facilitate the creation of purchase intention. The need to create preference for store brands in the customer's mind is important as brand preference is, in effect, a measure of customer choice, which falls at the edge of the decision-making process (Vogel & Watchravesringkan 2017:519).

### **5.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

The study relied on a self-reporting questionnaire, although it is a popular instrument of data collection in behavioural (or social) science and has a couple of advantages such as collecting a large amount of data in a short space of time, representing a cost-effective way of collecting large

amounts of data and allows for generalisation of the findings (Demetriou, Ozer & Essau 2015:2). It is, however, inherent with a major disadvantage, which is the honesty of respondents when answering the questionnaire; at times respondents may want to protect their image and thus provide biased responses as a result.

As per the above-mentioned limitation, future research on this topic may consider employing a mixed method approach wherein the researchers can employ both questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews to enable the researcher to probe for a detailed response and triangulate the data.

Given the scope of the study (refer to Section 1.5 of Chapter 1) and limited access to resources, the study sample was restricted to students within the Vaal region only. Therefore, careful consideration must be made when drawing conclusions from these results as a larger and more comprehensive sample could provide alternative results.

As per the above-mentioned limitation, future research can explore this topic in a broader sphere by including members of generation X. The majority of members of this age cohort are likely to be earning a salary as compared to students, which makes them more appealing as some of them purchase store brands when they do their grocery shopping.

The study employed non-probability convenience sampling wherein the researcher relied on personal judgment and availability of sample members. This could have implications regarding sampling error. Although a number of demographic questions were raised in an effort to assess how representative the sample was to the target population, the results should be viewed with caution when generalising and drawing conclusions to a wider population.

## **5.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

The framework developed in this study extends the current knowledge regarding the relationship between consumer-based brand equity elements, brand preference and purchase intention towards store brands. The study presented the significant contribution of consumer-based brand equity elements towards brand preference and consequently purchase intention. One of the major contributions towards the body of knowledge resulting from this study, is the determination of the unique contribution that loyalty makes towards explaining brand preference. This leaves room for further research to be conducted in order to determine extensively the relationship and effects of loyalty and brand preference.

The study made significant strides in broadening the knowledge of store brands, its origins, evolution and current status within the South African context. The informational contribution of this study is not only restricted to scholars and academicians but also to industry players in order for them to understand the relationship between consumers and store brands.

## **5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) market, is a rapidly changing and fiercely competitive market with many substitute alternative brands. Most store-owned brands compete in this sector and the literature records that store brands present real opportunity for the retailer in terms of profit margins (Levy & Gendel-Guterman 2012:89; Aldouseri, Yasmin, Ab Yajid & Ahmed 2017:72). However, consumers' confidence towards these brands still leaves a little doubt in consumers' minds regarding quality (Aldouser *et al.* 2017:72).

Based on the above, it is crucial that retailers of store brands implement the proposed strategies provided in this study, as means to alter customers' perceptions of store brands and stimulate customers' confidence in these brands. Lastly, customers' purchase of store brands does not only benefit the retail outlet, but also impacts on the local economy through job creation, because the majority of store brands are locally produced and owned, as opposed to national brands.

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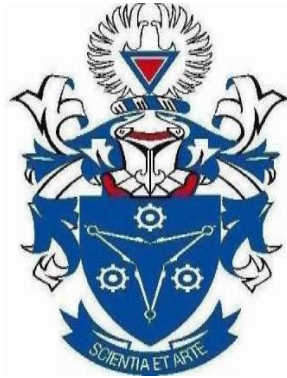
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## ANNEXURE A: COVER LETTER FOR MAIN SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



### VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Dear participant

I am a Master's Degree student in the Sports and Marketing Department at Vaal University of Technology. In fulfilment of the requirement of the degree, I am conducting a study titled **the influence of selected consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intentions on store brands**. The purpose of the study is to examine the consumer's perception of the influence of consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intentions within the major supermarkets store brands in Emfuleni district.

I therefore invite you to complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your participation to this study is completely voluntary and such you are free to withdraw from participation at any given time. It should take you approximately nine minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your anonymity and confidentiality is assured. The responses will be used for academic purposes only.

I thank you for your time and effort in completing the questionnaire. For inquires pertaining to this study, kindly contact the person below:

**Name of Principal Investigator:** Vusimuzi Makhubela

**Name of Supervisor:** Prof. B.A. Mokoena

Cell: 063 1059 875      Email: [paulvmoecketsi@gmail.com](mailto:paulvmoecketsi@gmail.com)

## ANNEXURE B: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### Consumer perceptions of the influence of consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intentions: A study of major supermarkets store brands in Emfuleni Municipality.

For the purpose of the study store brand (SB) are described as brands that bear the trademark of the store and are owned and sold by the retailer. Please familiarize yourself with the concept of store brands by referring to some of the images below as examples.



### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANT

This section seeks background information about you. Please place a cross (x) in the block applicable to you.

<b>A1</b>	<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female
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<b>A2</b>	<b>Age group</b>	18-26	27-35	36-44	45-53	54+
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<b>A3</b>	<b>Race</b>	Black	White	Coloured	Indian/Asian
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<b>A4</b>	<b>Monthly income category</b>	R500 or less	R501- R1000	R1001- R2000	R2001- R3000	R3001+
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<b>A5</b>	<b>Educational qualification</b>	Grade 12/Matric	Diploma/Degree	Post-Graduate
		Other (please specify)		

## SECTION B: BRAND AWARENESS

This section seeks to determine your awareness towards store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

B1	I am aware of store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
B2	I can recognize store brands in comparison with competing brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
B3	I know how store brands looks like.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
B4	I can quickly recall symbols or logos of store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
B5	When advertised, some characteristics of store brands come to my mind quickly.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

## SECTION C: BRAND ASSOCIATION

This section seeks to determine your association store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

C1	Store brands have their own personality.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
C2	I like store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
C3	Store brands are excellent brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
C4	I am proud to buy store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
C5	I trust the supermarket that sells store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
C6	I trust store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

## SECTION D: BRAND LOYALTY

This section seeks to determine your loyalty towards major retail store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

D1	I usually refer store brands to other people.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
D2	I usually choose store brands as my first choice, in comparison to other brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
D3	I will not switch to a competitor brand the next time I do grocery.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
D4	I am satisfied with store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
D5	I will recommend store brands to my friends.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

## SECTION E: PERCEIVED QUALITY

This section seeks to determine your perceived quality towards major retail store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

E1	Store brands are of high quality.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
E2	The expected quality of store brands is extremely high.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
E3	The likelihood that a store brand will be functional is high.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
E4	The likelihood that a store brand is reliable is very high.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
E5	Store brands must be of very good quality.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

## SECTION F: BRAND PREFERENCE

This section seeks to determine your brand preference towards major retail store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

F1	I like store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
F2	My overall opinion on store brands is positive.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
F3	I think store brands are good brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
F4	I will choose store brands the next time I do grocery.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

## SECTION G: PURCHASE INTENTION

This section seeks to determine your purchase intention towards major retail store brands. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements crossing (x) in the relevant block. Whereby 1= (Strongly disagree) and 5= (Strongly agree).

G1	I will purchase store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
G2	I am definitely intending to purchase store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
G3	I am highly interested in purchasing store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
G4	I am definitely going to purchase store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree
G5	I will probably purchase store brands.	Strongly disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly agree

**Thank you for your time and effort. Your views are highly appreciated.**

## ANNEXURE C: LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR



English language editing

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07 March, 2020

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, have language edited the dissertation/theses of

**Vusimuzi Paulus Makhubela**

for the degree

**Magister Technologiae: Marketing Management**

entitled:

*The influence of selected consumer-based brand equity elements on brand preference and purchase intention towards store brands*

The responsibility of implementing the recommended language changes rests with the author of the document.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Linda Scott', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Linda Scott