



**Investigating the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in
Durban**

by

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Abstract

Grocery retail shopping apps present a new frontier for organisations as a means of gaining a competitive advantage, as groceries are a mandatory component of household expenditure. With the rise of a hyperconnected society due to advancements in technology and network infrastructure, it has become imperative that organisations understand how customers interact with brands whilst shopping using grocery applications. The influence of branding on the usage and perceptions of customers whilst using these grocery shopping apps has emerged as a crucial factor in determining their adoption and success. The study aims to investigate the factors that influence branding within the context of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban. The available extant literature has been reviewed to reveal insights and findings involving how brand loyalty, brand trust, brand image, and customer experience shape customer behaviour and preferences whilst using grocery retail shopping apps. Using the quantitative approach, through the incorporation of closed question questionnaires, from a sample of 276 participants having used a grocery retail shopping app, the research delves into the role of branding in the purchase decision and revisit intention of consumers. The study also highlights the importance of user-friendly features and app design in enhancing the brand experience. The findings reveal that consumers in Durban gravitate towards brands within grocery shopping apps which match their perceived expectations and are backed by the physical grocery retail stores. Consumers also embrace the omnichannel strategy of grocery retail stores as they prefer multiple touchpoints to perform their grocery shopping activities. The insights gained from this study will assist retailers in the design and development of future grocery retail shopping apps and serve to inform the strategic decisions of grocery retailers, allowing them to develop the market for their grocery retail shopping apps. The study will also provide useful information for retailers to leverage the power of branding to attract and retain loyal customers in a competitive grocery retail marketplace.

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Abbreviations

Ewom- Electronic word of mouth

TAM – Technology acceptance model

UTAUT- Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Groceries are a mandatory component of individual consumption baskets and represent a significant portion of the total household expenditure in South Africa. For the 2023 fiscal year, grocery expenditure, on average, accounted for 31 % of total household expenditure and made up a sizable portion of the household budget (Stats SA, 2023). The food and grocery retail market in South Africa represented a combined value of R 593 billion in 2023, with the grocery e-commerce sector accounting for R 4.7 billion. This market is expected to proliferate, with a projected growth rate of 19.5 percent over the next four years, revealing a new frontier for growth opportunities for retailers (ECDB, 2024).

The rapid advancement and accessibility of mobile devices and communication infrastructure, coupled with lifestyle changes of South African consumers, have been cited as the reason for the explosion in the grocery e-commerce market. Consumers faced with rushed lifestyles brought about by complex socio-economic and socio-cultural environments often seek out products and services that are convenient and accessible. Mobile shopping applications are gaining popularity as convenience is facilitated by the ease of order placement, the ability to identify the best deals, home delivery, greater product availability and selection, and enhanced speed in performing tasks (Malik and Sharma, 2020). It is essential for retailers to understand the perceptions of branding and customer experiences while using shopping apps, as positive experiences are suggested to enhance the customer value proposition. Identifying the factors influencing branding and customer experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps will, therefore, assist retailers in pursuing omnichannel strategies to design and implement apps which enhance customer satisfaction and add value.

1.2. Background to Study

The rapid development of technology and infrastructure in recent years has fueled the advancement of mobile app development and m-commerce (Mobile Commerce) business opportunities. Grocery retailers who previously deployed traditional marketing strategies relied primarily on brick-and-mortar stores facilitated by the concentration and number of shopping

malls in South Africa as a single touchpoint to service their customers. However, an increased demand for convenience and safety by South African consumers have prompted these retailers to expand their channels and touchpoints.

Faced with increased competition, South African retailers must overcome significant technological, organisational, and environmental barriers to develop and implement these mobile applications. Considerable investment in financial and non-financial resources is required to successfully deploy and maintain these grocery retail apps. Developing and maintaining an app can be expensive as retailers must invest in technology, marketing and after-sales support to ensure its success. Even the best designed apps can fail as they rely purely on the adoption and re-usage by consumers. Consumer trust often serves as a barrier to app adoption, which is influenced by customer perceptions about quality and security concerns. Branding strategies, however, can mitigate these challenges by building trust and a strong image in the minds of consumers, enhancing their willingness to use and recommend these apps.

1.3. Context of Study

This study has its roots in the grocery retail sector of South Africa. The South African grocery retail sector is currently dominated by four major retail stores with a wide footprint across the country. The Shoprite Group, Woolworths, The Spar Group and Pick and Pay are significant participants in the grocery retail sector of South Africa, who have launched their mobile grocery retail shopping apps in recent years, to increase their market presence and provide another channel to make their products and services available to consumers. This sector is highly competitive, with the market currently being dominated by the Shoprite group in terms of its store network, sheer sales volume, revenue and growth (BusinessTech, 2024).

Grocery retail shopping apps present opportunities for these retailers to unlock new market segments and expand reach to customers as they demand convenience primarily facilitated by technological advancements and enhanced access to the internet. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into how customers interact with brands and highlighting the customer experiences whilst using these grocery shopping apps.

1.4. Motivation for Study

Most of the previous research on grocery retail shopping apps focused on the adoption of these apps and their impact on customer satisfaction (Moodley and Buthelezi, 2023; Singh and Souderland, 2020). There have also been studies on how grocery retail shopping apps influenced the frequency of grocery shopping among different generations of consumers (Ligaraba, Nyagadza, Dörfling and Zulu, 2023). However, studies concerning branding aspects, including brand image, brand trust, brand loyalty, and customer experience while using grocery retail shopping apps, are limited.

Exploring how branding can assist retailers in building trust and enhancing the customer experience whilst using these apps is highly relevant as it will provide valuable insights to retailers. It is also vital to understand from a consumer point of view, if the image of brands are enhanced or diminished through these apps. This study delves into aspects of digital branding in the grocery retail sector, offering practical recommendations for retailers to succeed in a competitive and dynamic environment.

1.5. Research Problem

The online grocery market has surged in recent years, presenting opportunities for grocery retailers to gain a competitive advantage by identifying new customer channels and segments, unlocking additional revenue streams, and enhancing customer engagement. Although the uptake of online grocery shopping in South Africa was initially slow due to the number and concentration of shopping malls, the advent of COVID-19 forced retailers to re-arrange and reorganise their operations, supply chains, and marketing activities to embrace digital technology. These interventions, coupled with the accessibility provided by technological advancements of mobile devices and enhanced access to the internet, altered the retail shopping landscape in South Africa. This enhanced accessibility led to consumers exhibiting a considerable shift in online shopping patterns and behaviour towards pervasive shopping applications. As a result, grocery retailers, responding to these needs of consumers, redirected their marketing and R&D budgets to develop mobile grocery shopping applications to grow market share and increase company value. Four major grocery retailers dominate South Africa's online grocery shopping landscape. The Shoprite Group, Pick and Pay, The Spar Group and

Woolworths enjoy the largest share of the grocery retail market with substantial investments in app development and accessibility (SAfacts, 2024). Although grocery applications have unlocked numerous benefits for grocery retailers, the design and implementation of these apps need to be constantly updated to meet changing consumer needs and preferences. When customers disengage from apps, there are negative consequences for retailers, as there is a constant risk of redundancy. Increased competition and low switching costs amongst online grocery retailers mean that there is constant pressure to ensure that consumers continue to engage with apps. It has been established that the retention rate by users for downloaded mobile applications after 30 days was a mere 3.2% (Statista, 2024). Retailers have recognised that customer experience is a significant driver in gaining market success and is instrumental in influencing customer satisfaction and the intention to remain loyal to a retailer (Singh and Soderlund, 2019). Literature on branding and customer experience within the online grocery shopping context in South Africa is scattered, with much of the literature focused on grocery shopping app adoption and re-usage (Ligaraba et al., 2022; Redda, 2020; Piarna, Fathurohman and Nugraha, 2020). Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the factors influencing branding and customer experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

1.6. Aim of Study

To investigate the factors influencing branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban.

1.7. Research Objectives

- i. To examine customer perceptions of brand image whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.
- ii. To determine the customer's perceptions of brand loyalty whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.
- iii. To investigate customers' perceptions of brand trust while using grocery retail shopping apps.
- iv. To identify customers' experiences whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

1.8. Research Questions

- i. What are the customer's perceptions of brand image while using grocery retail shopping apps?
- ii. What are the customer's perceptions of brand loyalty while using grocery retail shopping apps?
- iii. What are the customer's perceptions of brand trust while using grocery retail shopping apps?
- iv. What are the customer's experiences with using grocery retail shopping apps?

1.9. Research Methodology

The study is a quantitative study whereby descriptive statistics is used to summarise and organise data to reveal underlying patterns and relationships. Data has been collected with the use of a closed-question questionnaire, based on a 5-point Likert scale format. Data will be analysed using SPSS version 29 based on a final sample size of 276.

1.10. The Significance of the Study

The study will provide additional insight into the factors that influence a customer's experience and perceptions of branding while using grocery retail shopping apps. It also seeks to clarify if positive customer perceptions of branding and customer experience will result in an intention to reuse grocery apps. Perceptions about the branding of the app itself will also provide information which could be helpful in the development and design of grocery retail shopping apps.

1.11. The Delimitation of the Study

Delimitations are limitations consciously implemented by the researchers themselves and relate to the definitions which researchers set as the boundaries of their work to facilitate the aim and objectives of a study (Theofanidis and Foundtouki, 2018).

- The study is confined to participants who have used a grocery retail shopping app in the last two years. The inherent nature of shopping apps means that they are subjected to regular functional and interface updates which ultimately influences the experience of consumers. Therefore, feedback regarding customer experiences going back further than two years may be diminished as a result of these app updates. Moreover, retailers were only able to cement their positions within the grocery app arena in the last two years.
- The sampling method used in this study is judgement sampling. Judgement sampling allows for the selection of subjects who are adequately placed to provide the required information (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Therefore, all participants who have not used a grocery retail app in the last two years have been excluded.

1.12. Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction.

This chapter introduces the research study. The background frames the underlying topic of the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban. The aim, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study describe the primary motivation of the study and how it is beneficial to an existing phenomenon. The methodology and the delimitations have been outlined to provide structure for the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review.

This chapter unpacks the relevant empirical and theoretical studies which have been conducted on the topic. Extant literature is reviewed to identify gaps and patterns to guide the current study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology.

This chapter presents the design of the study, whereby the strategy and framework are laid down to reinforce the quality of the study. It introduces the research paradigm, research design and method. Thereafter, the study setting, population and sampling, the data collection method, instrument and analysis tool are identified. Finally, it outlines measures for reliability and validity, bias, and ethical considerations to ensure that quality is maintained and upheld during the study.

Chapter Four: Results.

This chapter consists of results from the SPSS analysis, where the data is presented using tables and graphs. Factor analysis is used to identify underlying patterns.

Chapter Five: Discussion.

This chapter integrates the data from chapter four and links it with the literature in chapter two to answer the research objectives.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter presents a holistic understanding of the study findings. It entails drawing conclusions based on the findings, proposing recommendations, and identifying areas for future research. This chapter also draws attention to the implications for practice and research.

1.13. Summary

This chapter sets the backdrop for the study and introduces the topic, which relates to the factors that influence grocery retail shopping apps in Durban. It includes a background of the study, the motivation for the study, the research problem, objectives and the breakdown of the research objectives into research questions. The chapter then goes on to outline the significance of the study and the methodology and concludes with the delimitations of the study. The following chapter focuses on the literature review, whereby the extant literature on the factors that influence branding within the context of grocery retail apps is examined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The accelerated generation and accumulation of knowledge in the research arena necessitates a focused and systematic review within an appropriate framework to assess the existing literature and enable the building of theory. The following literature review is vital to synthesise the existing literature and identify gaps in the accumulated knowledge on a subject of interest. This chapter will systematically review the extant literature, revealing the factors that influence and shape branding within grocery retail shopping apps.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. The Technology Acceptance Model

The theoretical foundation for this study resides in the echelons of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Alqudah, El Emran and Shaalan (2021:1) defined technology acceptance as “the psychological status of a person regarding the use of a specific technology”. There are a variety of theoretical models used to examine acceptance and behaviour towards information technology. However, the TAM is viewed as the most widely used and influential model introduced by Davis (1986) to gauge the acceptance of information systems. According to this model, technology users are directly and indirectly influenced by the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of a particular system. According to Davis, perceived ease of use related to the extent to which an individual believed that the implementation of a specific system would be free of effort, whilst perceived usefulness related to the extent to which an individual believed a system would enhance their performance (Asastani, Kusumawardhana and Warnars, 2018).

The Technology Acceptance Model was used to explain the adoption of different technological products and software in various industries and applications over time. It had been used to determine the level of internet usage in older adults (Nayak, Priest and White, 2010) and had been widely applied in the fashion industry, where it was used to examine what drove consumers to purchase clothing online and the adaptation of smart in-store technology where stores were unmanned (Wei, Lee and Shen, 2018; Seo, 2019). It was also widely implemented

in the healthcare sector, where technological advancement is pivotal in providing adequate healthcare solutions (Alqudah, El Emran and Shaalan, 2021:1).

The Technology Acceptance Model proves useful within the context of grocery retail shopping. Shukla and Sharma (2018), in a study relating to how Indian consumers perceived the use and adoption of mobile technology for grocery shopping, found that although people were not used to shopping with a mobile app, adopting the technology itself was not a problem. It was found that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were positively related to attitude and behaviour as a prelude to user acceptance. Therefore, it was suggested that consumer attitude mediated the relationship between perceived usefulness and behavioural intention. Sarika, Preeti, Shilpy and Sukanya (2016), in a similar study, found similar findings by applying the Technology Acceptance Model whilst investigating adoption behaviour for online shopping. It was found that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness resulted in a positive attitude towards the intention to shop online. It was also found that perceived ease of use had a significant impact on perceived usefulness, and trust also played a key role in influencing these two dimensions of the TAM. It was suggested that when consumers display trust and enjoyment facilitated by these two dimensions, the intention to purchase is significantly increased.

2.2.2. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model

The UTAUT model proposed by Venkatesh (2003) was also validated in the online shopping context and was used to explain the degree of purchase intention and actual purchase. This model postulated that adopting new technology was influenced by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Performance expectancy is related to the extent to which an individual believed that using technology would assist in attaining gains and benefits. Effort expectancy is related to the level of convenience associated with using technology, whereby the lesser effort required to use a system enhanced an individual's willingness to use the system. Social influence is related to how individuals accepted influence from others to use the system. Facilitating conditions were the degree to which an individual believed there was sufficient organisational and technical infrastructure to maintain the system's use (Momani, 2020).

The UTAUT was created to address the limitations of previous technology acceptance models and sought to provide a comprehensive framework by creating a unified approach by drawing on aspects from the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Theory of Reasoned Action and the

Technology Acceptance Model. The UTAUT has been validated in various contexts, including the adoption of smartphones and m-commerce, healthcare and education.

Baishya and Samalia (2020) successfully applied to UTAUT at the bottom of the pyramid segment, where the model's validity was checked and verified. It was established that performance expectancy and social influence had a direct positive impact on behavioural intentions to adopt and use smartphones. Tao, Hsu, Cheng, Yang, Lee and Chien (2024) also verified the UTAUT model in a study relating to the adoption of convenience store apps in Taiwan. It was found that performance expectancy, social influence, and price value had a significant positive impact on behavioural intentions and the actual use of apps. It was found that a strong motivation for downloading the apps was related to points awarded through these apps and previous in-store experiences with the app payment methods.

2.3. The Evolution of Marketing Strategy

An organisation's marketing strategy refers to a meticulous plan or approach designed and implemented by an organisation to achieve its marketing objectives. It entails a sequence of actions and choices which facilitate promoting, distributing, and selling a company's products to a designated market (Sudirjo, 2023). Marketing strategy originated as a modified form of managerial marketing and accelerated during the 1920s to 1940s as competition intensified within various industries, prompting a shift towards modern-day marketing strategies, which are regarded as catalysts that allow organisations to operate within multiple markets through the modification of products and tactics. Global marketplaces are characterised by increased competition, technological advancement, diverse global preferences, and cultural and language variations, which necessitate the need for product and service customization to match the specific requirements of the target market.

The digital transformation brought about by the fourth industrial revolution has intensely influenced the marketing function within organisations. The rise of new technologies such as artificial and augmented intelligence, the internet of things, blockchains and advancements in mobile technology and networks mean that the traditional marketing strategy of merely conveying a message to consumers is no longer sufficient to acquire and maintain a competitive advantage. Empowered by these technological advancements, customers are no longer regarded as passive recipients of messages communicated through traditional marketing strategies, prompting more innovative approaches to marketing and communication.

Organisations seeking to respond to these needs have therefore adopted a customer-centric approach to marketing strategy by leveraging technology to allow for quicker, open and continuous interactions, resulting in the adoption of a digital marketing strategy.

Kumar (2021: 421) defined the digital marketing strategy as a “set of marketing activities or promotions using digital media facilitated through the internet”. Digital marketing strategies were conceived within Industry 4.0, where it was essential to interact with consumers quickly and with a broader reach. Yim (2020) proposed a similar view that digital marketing consisted of activities which achieved the marketing objective of an organisation through the application of digital technologies. Digital marketing strategies allow for channels of direct communication with consumers in real time, whereby organisations can gather valuable insights to assist with product improvement. Marketers are able to measure the results of marketing activities in real time, which assists in consumer targeting and the optimisation of advertising and communication. Digital marketing strategies acknowledge that technology access and usage have created more demanding consumers and changed how consumers search and buy products and services. These developments have prompted marketers to consider more than just the product brand but also the consumer experience, which has recently been the focus of marketing research. It was suggested that traditional marketing had moved away from merely creating awareness for a product towards creating experiences around a product that stimulated consumer interaction (Dimitrios, Ioannis, Angelos and Nikolaos, 2023).

However, it was also suggested that companies did not deploy a single digital marketing strategy but rather a mix of digital and traditional marketing strategies to allow maximum consumer reach and interaction. This was supported by Baltes (2016), who suggested that a major drawback of digital marketing arose with the prominence of social media, whereby there was a loss of control over the message companies wanted to convey. It was suggested that 90% of customers read online reviews before making a purchase decision. Therefore, high reliance was placed on other user-generated content, which conflicted with the organisation's message to consumers.

2.4. The Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is ingrained in an organisation's marketing strategy and presents a nexus between the organisation and the marketplace. Wichmann, Uppal, Sharma and Dekimpe (2022) defined the marketing mix as a “set of controllable marketing variables which a company deploys to pursue a desired level of sales in the target market”. Marpaung (2022)

offered a similar view that the marketing mix was a balanced combination of variables or activities that were the core of the marketing strategy. Hanaysha, Shaikh and Alzoubi (2021) suggested that the marketing mix was a set of marketing tools deployed under an organisation's control with the purpose of creating a desired response in a target market. Product, Price, Place and Promotion are the four main elements that underpin the strategies marketers deploy worldwide. Product refers to any product or service offered in the market where quality, design and branding determine how well consumers accept a product or service. Price relates to the subjective value consumers attach to a product or service and is established around the parameters of the product's usefulness, visual appeal, and the customer's need for the product. Price represents one of the basic criteria consumers use to evaluate products. It influences a consumer's purchase decision as consumers tend to avoid products or brands that do not consider their interests and purchasing power. Place refers to where customers access the product or service or get the necessary support they require. It can refer to product placements within traditional brick-and-mortar stores, geographical locations, and distribution channels to reach target customers. Promotion relates to disseminating advertising and product information through television, print media, the internet and radio.

With the rise of digital technology and infrastructure, the traditional marketing mix has been influenced by the adaptation of digital technology by consumers and the trend towards a customer-centric marketing paradigm. Products offered in the digital space are more readily available and easily comparable. Product development is influenced by features that can be easily customised based on feedback from customer reviews and ratings. Products are more competitively priced as consumers can easily compare them due to the ease of comparison offered by the available data which technology provides. The era of big data relating to the volume and detail of information available allows for the harnessing of consumer intelligence, aiding in product improvements. The place element of the traditional marketing mix has undergone a radical shift in how products are offered in the marketplace. E-commerce has facilitated the sale of products directly to consumers through online marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and specialised e-commerce sites. The availability and advancements in mobile networks and devices have primarily driven new channels of making products available to consumers, termed "m-commerce." These factors, coupled with a society constrained by time but with a propensity to spend based on convenience and ease of shopping, have propelled the popularity of mobile shopping applications and websites. The promotion element has been influenced by digital marketing strategies that focus on personalised marketing, which uses data analytics to offer customised product recommendations based on a consumer's browsing

and purchase history. Recognising that the purchase decision is based on interacting with consumers and facilitating positive experiences with technology, companies have leveraged aspects of augmented reality and virtual reality to encourage customer interaction with products.

2.5. The Omnichannel retail strategy and grocery shopping apps

The Place element of the marketing mix is significantly influenced by the channels and locations available to consumers to access goods and services. Traditionally, organisations used brick-and-mortar stores to make these goods and services available, resulting in a single touchpoint for consumers. However, changing consumer behaviour meant that traditional marketing channels had to evolve to meet the increasing demand for convenience and an enhanced customer experience primarily driven by the proliferation of digital mobile devices, enhanced networks, and artificial intelligence (Lim, Cheah, Dwivedi and Richard, 2022).

The omnichannel retail strategy represents a fundamental shift from the multichannel retail strategy previously deployed by organisations. Raman (2022:136) defined the omnichannel commerce strategy as an “integration of online and offline operations that enabled seamless customer experiences across various channels underpinned by technological innovation.” It is further argued that the concept extended beyond the integration of channels whereby touchpoints are infused, facilitating a unified customer experience. The omnichannel retail strategy, therefore, plays a significant role in ensuring operational efficiency and can positively influence customer satisfaction.

Grocery apps have become popular recently as changing consumer behaviours concerning technological advancement, and accessibility means that customers are more connected and, therefore, seek multiple avenues for interaction with an organisation and its products or services. Grocery apps were defined as “intelligent, multistage mobile software which helps customers seek grocery items quickly and safely”(AbdulMalik and Yousif, 2021:94). Mosquera, Pascal and Ayensa (2017) suggested that consumers want to use all available channels simultaneously and not in parallel because they relied on a convergence of channels to make their buying decisions. Furthermore, it was argued that omnichannel shopper's behaviour was exploratory as they valued more variety than consumers who purchased using a single channel. Retailers seeking to embrace new technologies to enhance their customer

experience by creating a more holistic experience have, therefore, turned to apps to enhance their omnichannel offerings by personalising content, offering special offers, and providing a platform for customers to share their experiences through ratings.

2.6. The adoption of grocery retail shopping apps in South Africa.

The uptake of grocery retail apps had been slow prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as retailers relied on the sheer number and concentration of shopping centres nationwide to serve as channels to reach consumers. However, with the advent of COVID-19, retailers were forced to invest heavily in their online channels to ensure continued operations in the face of lockdowns. Dakora and Rambe (2022) suggested that when the pandemic hit, retailers, which included Shoprite, Massmart, Pick and Pay, Woolworths and the Spar group, had some experience in e-commerce infrastructure and were able to leverage their existing infrastructure to intensify their online offerings, albeit at a slow pace. It was suggested that the configuration of the retail industry, logistics and delivery systems and socioeconomic issues were responsible for the lag in the adoption of grocery shopping apps by South African retailers compared to their global counterparts. Grocery deliveries to consumers were a particular concern to retailers, as the large variety of products and logistical infrastructure issues posed a challenge to the efficient delivery of groceries in a cost-effective manner. Another highlighted problem hindering the adoption of grocery retail shopping apps was the high cost of data. This presented a barrier to the widespread adoption of grocery retail shopping apps, especially amongst the lower income populous, as high data costs made it difficult to access and update mobile apps. It was suggested that individuals were more price-sensitive than organisations as they sought value from their purchases. Maziriri, Mapuranga, Mushwana and Madinga (2020:54) argued that Price/Value was an essential component of buying decisions and was defined as a “cognitive comparison between perceived benefits and corresponding monetary costs of using mobile applications”.

Mkansi and Nsakanda (2023), in a study entailing e-grocery challenges faced by South African SMEs, highlighted similar challenges classified under Technological, Organisation, and Environmental challenges in the rollout of e-commerce and m-commerce grocery apps. Environmental challenges included logistical challenges such as transportation and road network infrastructure, which posed a barrier to e-commerce strategy implementation. Technological infrastructure challenges, which included the uneven distribution of internet infrastructure and the high cost of data, also constrained the adoption of mobile shopping apps

despite increased access to mobile devices. Furthermore, organisational challenges such as inventory management systems posed a challenge in accurately forecasting and matching supply with demand.

Checkers Sixty 60 has achieved popularity in South Africa through their clever navigation of the logistical and infrastructure challenges by adopting bikes for deliveries and promising customers, their delivery within 60 minutes. The exploitation of their large footprint of stores and implementation of microservice centres providing customers with enhanced touchpoints as part of their omnichannel strategy has catapulted Checkers Sixty 60 to the number one grocery app status in South Africa (Daily Investor, 2024).

2.7. The definition of branding

The concept of branding has a fascinating history, establishing its origins in the words “to torch” and “to burn.” The concept originated from marking ownership of cattle with a firebrand to deter theft. Early branding evoked “feelings of partisanship, power and excitement because it announced identity and had the potential for beauty, devotion and distinction” (Bastos and Levy, 2012:15). Therefore, the earliest known definition of branding meant to mark as an identifier of ownership.

The evolution of branding began when products initially sold in bulk with no reference to names were individually packed, labelled, and promoted by retailers. Producers showed pride in their products by displaying their names on household items. Prior to the Second World War, the dominance of major brand names was primarily driven by the channels of TV, radio, and print advertising. Signs and symbols formed an early foundation of branding due to the human desire to stand out and present a good reputation. Brands were primarily defined and identified by their names. Marketers asserted that this was the most critical decision of a company as it represented the first touchpoint for consumers and influenced how consumers associated with an organisation (De Lencastre, Machado and Costa, 2023).

After the Second World War, excess production capacity, accumulated capital, and pent-up consumer demand resulted in increased competition among products. This signalled the managers of competing brands to apply psychological theories, insights, and methods to understand their brands better and allow customers to differentiate amongst brands. This led to a greater awareness of the social and psychological nature of products, placing emphasis on

the brand image. As a result, companies invested heavily in emphasising the symbolic nature of products as it was accepted that a brand's image guided consumers.

Logos and images became popular during the 1950s to distinguish superiority and add to their unique appeal. According to Bastos and Levy (2012), logos such as Nike, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Apple, and Starbucks allowed their products to stand out from the competition and offered a deeper meaning to consumers. These symbols transcended the name of the actual companies, becoming iconic and standing on their own as they were not merely a symbol of products but had a deeper meaning attached. Logos were found to have the ability to communicate visually and overcome cultural barriers and were seen as one of the brand elements used to convey a brand's corporate mission and ideology (Williams, Son, Walsh and Park, 2021). Logos have since established themselves as shorthand for the brand's values and personality, cultivating a more cohesive image and presence. Logos were defined as a critical element of brands as they joined a brand name, slogans, packaging and other touchpoints and served as a vehicle for identity, where a logo was a pictorial accompaniment to a brand name, which established a visual narrative for the consumer (Kelly, 2017). The concept of logos significantly influenced the definition of a brand as “a physical or visual identifier that allows consumers to differentiate based on product origin” (Avis and Henderson, 2021:353).

The late twentieth century saw the evolution of brands from simply being a name or logo on a product to brands encompassing much deeper and more multifaceted dimensions, forming the basis of the modern-day brand definition. At the core, the psychology of branding has become significant to all marketers. Brands now strive to create an emotional connection with consumers by tapping into their values, aspirations and sense of identity. Strong brand associations were found to be as powerful as the products themselves. According to (Bastos and Levy, 2012), brands which integrated the purpose of a product (functions) with its human audience (Behaviors) and its impact on its senses (Arts) were able to go beyond ordinary boundaries to achieve quintessential status.

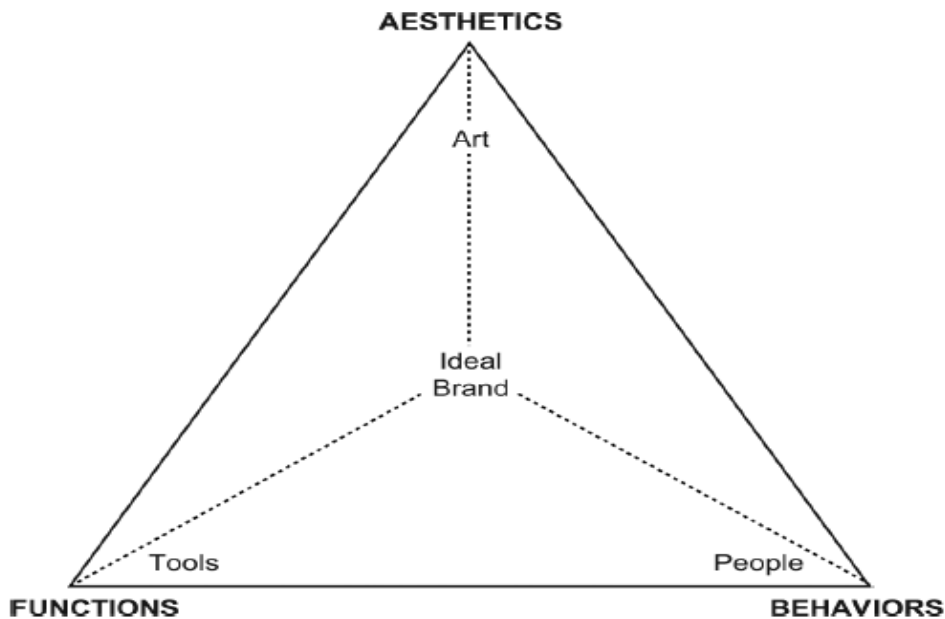


Fig 2.1. The ideal brand pyramid (Bastos and Levy, 2012)

Consumers place importance on a brand's aesthetic values and the distinctiveness of the visual design. It has been found that when a product has a superior aesthetic design, the novelty will attract consumer attention, giving it an edge over competitive products. Luxury products rely on brand aesthetics to signal an image of high quality in the minds of consumers. A cohesive and well-executed aesthetic, which includes logos, colour palettes, typography and overall design, communicates a brand's personality and positioning within the market. Brand aesthetics enhances a brand image by creating a strong first impression in the minds of consumers by fostering emotional and enhancing visual connections with consumers.

The functions of brands also influence a customer's purchase decision, as brands are regarded as tools to satisfy various needs. Brands reduce the consumer's perceived risk by offering a level of assurance of quality, establishing a level of trust in the brand. They also serve as identifiers for consumers as they can reflect consistency, status and membership, allowing individuals to identify or portray themselves in a particular manner.

Brands include more than just logos, colours, and icons but also promises and messages to consumers. They represent a level of assurance to consumers. Therefore, the influence that brands exert on consumers and their resultant behaviour is significant. When consumers become attached to a brand, the deep-seated emotional connection influences them to make repeat brand purchases.

Having considered the three identified dimensions of branding, the following definition of branding has been adopted, “Branding is an asset that reflects the reality of the core product, which includes its features and functions, the visual aesthetics and its cultural existence as an emotional tool that connects customers and society.”

2.8. Brand Equity

Brands present a source of competitive advantage for organisations and are used as tools for differentiation as part of organisational strategy. Brand equity is regarded as a framework established to define the relationship between customers and brands. According to Wood (2000:662), brand equity represented the “total value of a brand as a separable asset, the measure of the strength of the relationship between the customer and the brand and the description of the associations and beliefs between the consumer and the brand”. According to Aaker (1991), brand equity was a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand name or symbol that either enhanced or diminished the value of a product or service to a company. Rahman, Serrano and Lambkin (2019:14) suggested that brand equity was the “additional value that a brand name and its related properties add to a product” It was also indicated that of all the strategic resources an organisation possess, brand equity was viewed as the most significant as it made a substantial contribution to an organisations overall performance. A study investigating the effects of brand equity and marketing innovation on market performance in hospitality found that brand equity had created a long-term product appeal to consumers, providing a sustainable competitive advantage for organisations (Hussain, Mu, Mohiuddin, Danish and Sair, 2020). Brand equity places the brand of a product or service amongst the valuable resources, strengths, and essential assets within organisations. This is consistent with the resource-based view, which suggests that companies consist of tangible and intangible resources that are utilised to create a competitive advantage.

Brand equity creates value for an organisation, enhancing customer loyalty and creating expanding opportunities, resulting in higher negotiating power and increased profitability. This was supported by a study investigating the impact of rebranding on brand equity and firm performance in South Africa. It was suggested that high levels of brand equity and positive customer experiences enhanced an organisation's financial performance. It was found that high brand equity convinced customers to pay a premium price for a product and positively

influenced favourable word of mouth by consumers, resulting in enhanced brand performance (Nana, Tobias and Chiliya, 2019).

Two predominant brand equity models dominate marketing literature and are essential in establishing the value of brands from an organisational perspective as well as from the perspective of the consumer.

2.8.1. Aaker's brand equity model

Aaker's (1991) brand equity model is regarded as a comprehensive brand equity framework that incorporates five vital elements of brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand perceptions, brand association, perceived quality, and propriety brand assets. Brand awareness relates to the consumer's ability to recognise or recall a brand. Brand loyalty refers to the extent to which customers are committed to the brand, often leading to repurchase. Brand associations relate to the attributes or qualities consumers link to a brand. Brand qualities relate to the overall quality of the product, and lastly, propriety brand assets relate to patents, trademarks and channel relationships, which provide a competitive advantage. The Aaker (1991) model suggested that these components collectively lead to brand equity and, if managed well, could enhance customer satisfaction by adding value to the product, therefore providing benefits to organisations. This model is regarded as a vital tool for marketers aiming to build and sustain strong brands in today's competitive environment. Hoo, Xin and Moosa (2024) tested the Aaker brand equity framework in the Malaysian toy industry and found significant positive effects of brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality on brand equity, resulting in repeat purchases by consumers, which was essential to a brand's success.

2.8.2. Kellers Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

Keller's model was recognised as an extension of the Aaker brand Equity model and represented the introduction of a Customer-Based Equity Model. According to Keller (1997), a customer's response to a brand was directly related to the information the customer had about the brand when it was marketed. This approach suggested that customer-based brand equity would occur when the consumer had a high level of awareness and familiarity with a brand, leading to strong, positive associations in the consumer's mind. Keller's Brand Equity Model

emphasised the importance of the customer-centric approach to brand building whereby organisations which understood and influenced how customers thought and felt about a brand could create strong, resilient brands that stick out in the marketplace.

Keller's Model was structured as a pyramid with four key levels: brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and brand resonance. Brand identity formed the base of the pyramid and was crucial in ensuring customers recognised and recalled a brand, as a strong brand identity helped create a clear and consistent image in the minds of consumers. Brand meaning represented the second tier and focused on building brand associations and perceptions through product performance and imagery. How well a product met a customer's needs and how well the imagery reflected the brand's personality and values shaped how customers perceived a brand offering. The third tier, brand response, was related to eliciting the right responses from customers, including judgments and feelings, where judgements were related to customer's perceptions about the brand's quality, credibility, and superiority. Feelings related to the emotional responses a brand evoked incorporating positive judgements and emotions which were regarded as essential elements for building customer loyalty and trust.

Brand resonance occupied the top of the pyramid and represented the ultimate goal of brand building, where customers had a deep, psychological bond with the brand. At this stage, customers were not only repeat buyers but were also promoters or advocates of the brand, as they were willing to engage and share positive experiences with others.

2.9. Brand Image

2.9.1. Definition and Advantages

Building an admirable image in consumers' minds is pivotal to the success of any product or service as it offers protection for a brand against similar products offered by competitors. Brand image was defined as the "perception of a brand that reflects the consumer's memory of association with the brand" (Mahmud, 2021:383). Brand image was also defined as an "image, or an impression of a particular brand" engrained in the minds of consumers (Benhardy, Hardiyansyah, Putranto and Ronadi, 2020:3426). From these definitions, it is evident that brand image originates in the consumer's mind, which significantly influences consumer behaviour.

Brands that create a positive image within the consumer's mind are shown to be more accepted by consumers, which leads to consumers purchasing a product or service. A strong brand image forms the basis for organisations to expand and enhance their brands, as a powerful brand image allows for synergy that shapes a company's market presence. A strong brand image fosters consumer trust and loyalty, which can be leveraged to develop brand development strategies leading to sustained growth and a competitive advantage. A study relating to brand image as a source of competitive advantage in a higher education setting found that a positive brand image resulted in an increased reputation, which was positively related to the satisfaction level of students, giving rise to both tangible and intangible benefits to the academic institution. It was found that brand image formed an important source of differentiation, as academic institutions offered the same service offerings (Panda, Pandey, Bennett and Tian, 2018). Similar findings were achieved in a study involving the purchase decisions relating to bottled water in Indonesia. It was found that although bottled water was readily available due to the concentration of competitors in the market, consumers repeatedly purchased a famous brand of bottled water due to the positive brand image portrayed by that product (Foster, 2016).

A strong brand image also allows organisations to develop a brand of products from one market segment to another through brand extension. Brand extensions enable organisations to significantly reduce the cost of new product introductions and allow easy access to new market segments. It is a widely used marketing strategy whereby the established equity of existing brands is used to leverage new products or services. This strategy allows brands to capitalise on their reputation, consumer trust and loyalty to facilitate entrance into new markets.

Brand image consists of multiple dimensions comprising various factors that collectively shape how consumers perceive a brand. Functional attributes relate to the practical benefits of a brand's features or uses and include aspects such as packaging and ease of use. Emotional attributes relate to the beliefs, feelings and associations a brand evokes in consumers. These include emotional responses such as trust, love and nostalgia towards a brand. Another dimension of brand image relates to the symbolic attributes, which refer to the values and lifestyles a brand represents. Experimental attributes relate to the sensory experiences the brand provides, such as the visual appeal, packaging and user experience. Social attributes relate to a brand's social image and influence, which includes peer opinions, celebrity endorsements and online reviews.

2.9.2. Relationship between brand image and brand equity

Brand image pertains to the extrinsic properties, including the brand's social and psychological associations. A positive brand image can significantly enhance brand equity by fostering favourable brand associations in the minds of consumers. These associations can be related to the brand's attributes, benefits, and overall personality. For instance, a brand that is consistently perceived as innovative and high-quality will likely enjoy strong brand equity because these positive associations enhance customer loyalty and satisfaction. Moreover, a well-crafted brand image can differentiate a brand from its competitors, making it more memorable and attractive to consumers. This differentiation is essential in crowded markets where consumers have numerous choices.

In Keller's model, the ultimate goal was to achieve brand resonance, where customers had a deep, psychological bond with the brand. A strong, positive brand image is a foundational element in reaching this stage, as it influences how customers respond to the brand and their level of engagement. When customers have a favourable image of a brand, they are more likely to exhibit behaviours such as repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and a willingness to pay a premium price. Therefore, managing and nurturing a positive brand image is vital for building and sustaining brand equity, according to Keller's CBBE model. This holistic approach ensures that all aspects of the brand are aligned to create a cohesive and compelling brand narrative that resonates with consumers on multiple levels.

2.9.3. Brand image and grocery retail shopping apps

A study of an e-grocery brand in Indonesia found that brand image played a mediating role in the decision between EWOM and the purchase decisions of a popular grocery shopping app. It was also found that brand image had a positive effect on the purchase intention of consumers, significantly influencing EWOM and brand awareness. It was suggested that high levels of brand image sparked greater consumer buying interest and, at the same time, increased EWOM (Kurniawan, Yusuf, Manueke, Norvadewi and Nurriqli, 2022). Another study entailing the effect of trust and brand image on the repurchase intention during online shopping found that because the brand image was a perception of a product held in the consumer's mind, the brand image originated at the point when a brand could satisfy the needs and wants of the consumer. It was also found that customer satisfaction arose when satisfied customers generally developed

a higher perceived value of a brand, therefore enhancing the brand image (Wijaya and Astuti, 2018).

Araujo, Pereira and Santos (2023), in a study of the relationship between brand image and brand equity, suggested that when consumers developed a positive cognitive image of a brand, their intention to repurchase that brand increased significantly. Therefore, it is imperative that organisations build a positive brand image for themselves, their brands and brand extensions, as consumers who are faced with a myriad of choices such as name, price, and product attributes will tend to choose the brand first before any consideration of price.

Brand image influences the adoption and use of grocery retail shopping apps as it is a decisive factor in consumer behaviour and preference. When a grocery retailer has a strong and positive brand image, it influences the consumer's willingness to download and use its app as a well-established brand image fosters trust, reliability and credibility, which becomes engrained in a consumer's memory. A study entailing the influence of brand image on the adoption of QR code e-wallets in Malaysia found that consumers placed more trust in the security of the financial payment system when the brand associated with the e-wallet service was a recognised brand which had a positive reputation (Hamzah, Ramli and Shaw, 2023). Therefore, the brand image serves as a differentiator in a crowded market as familiarity and positive perceptions associated with a reputable parent brand provide a sense of security as consumers expect the same standards of service and product quality associated with the parent brand.

2.10. Brand trust

2.10.1. Definition

Brand trust is a crucial factor that influences consumer and brand relationships. Brand trust is vital in the consumer decision-making process as consumers decide to purchase brands where the quality has been established historically. Brand trust is often built over a period through consistent performance, reliability, and positive customer experiences. It is difficult to establish as it requires time, transparency and consistent positive customer interactions. As brand trust is based on a brand-customer relationship, there have been various definitions regarding the concept. Dam (2020) suggested that brand trust was a consumer's readiness to rely on a brand to deliver its declared goal. Haudi et al. (2022: 241) defined brand trust as a brand's "perceived

reliability and satisfaction in meeting customer expectations based on experience”. Brand trust is the “willingness of a consumer to rely on the ability of a brand to perform as intended.” It was suggested that trust represents the most important variable in developing and establishing successful brands as it was created through a series of interactions with a brand. These interactions can reinforce brand position in the market when the interactions result in the fulfilment of expectations through product performance and satisfaction. Atulkar (2020) defined brand trust from a risk point of view, suggesting that trusted brands were purchased more frequently when the perceived risk of purchasing a brand was low. From these definitions, it is clear that brand trust occurs when customers are satisfied due to the brand’s actual performance and the consistent fulfilment of their perceived expectations.

2.10.2. The influence of customer satisfaction and perceived value on brand trust

Customer satisfaction and perceived value are pivotal in building and maintaining brand trust. When customers are consistently satisfied with a brand’s products or services, it fosters a sense of reliability and dependability. This satisfaction comes from meeting or exceeding expectations through quality, service, and overall experience. Prameka, Do and Rofiq (2020) suggested that customer satisfaction was the pleasure derived from a product exceeding and outperforming a customer's initial expectation. It was also suggested that it was an emotional reaction to the differential between what a customer expected and received. Customer satisfaction was found to be a mediator between perceived value and brand trust in studies pertaining to the hospitality industry in Indonesia, where it was found that perceived value, directly and indirectly, influenced brand trust through customer satisfaction. A satisfied customer was more likely to trust the brand because their positive experiences reinforced the belief that the brand will continue to deliver (Atulkar, 2020).

On the other hand, perceived value is about the customer's assessment of the brand’s offering relative to its cost. Atulkar (2020: 64) defined perceived value as a “consumer's perceived utilitarian value of a product based on previous experiences with the product”. A consumer's utilitarian value is the utility gained by consumers for their investment in the product. It includes functional benefits such as excellent customer service, cost savings and time savings, significantly influencing brand trust amongst consumers. Prameka, Do and Rofiq (2016:75) took the view that perceived value was the result of a trade-off between the perceived benefit

and sacrifice by a consumer where the benefits received consisted of economic, social and relationship benefits, whilst the sacrifices included price, time, effort and convenience. When consumers believed they were getting good value for their money, their trust in the brand deepened. This perceived value was not just about price but also encompassed quality, convenience, and emotional benefits. Therefore, when a brand acquires a balance between these factors, it creates a strong perceived value that encourages consumer loyalty and trust.

Together, customer satisfaction and perceived value create a robust foundation for brand trust. A brand that consistently delivers satisfaction and provides perceived value generates a loyal customer base that is likely to advocate for the brand, further enhancing its reputation and trustworthiness in the market. Once established, trust becomes a significant asset supporting the brand's long-term success.

2.10.3. Brand Trust and grocery retail shopping apps

With the increasing popularity of mobile shopping apps amongst customers, organisations face a challenge to enhance the adoption of these apps to encourage self-service. Consumers experience different levels of risk whilst using e-commerce platforms than traditional brick-and-mortar stores whilst shopping. This level of risk influences a customer's trust towards online shopping apps. According to Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar (2020), customers perceived a lower level of risk when they were more proficient in online commerce platforms and would, therefore, be more inclined to trust online transactions. It was suggested that previous experience using innovative technologies enhanced the trust and adoption of these technologies, as more experienced users displayed more confidence in shopping apps. Consumer trust plays a significant role in the use of shopping apps, as consumers do not use apps that they do not trust. The propensity to adopt significantly influences the trust placed on grocery retail shopping apps, as innovative individuals will perceive a lower risk of using mobile apps. Therefore, when individuals are comfortable using online platforms, they are more likely to trust the apps and the brands associated with them.

2.10.3.1. Determinants of Brand Trust of Grocery Retail shopping apps

Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are significant antecedents in the TAM and are relevant to the level of trust consumers place in grocery retail shopping apps. If mobile technology is viewed as a mechanism that will assist in performing their shopping tasks better and enhance their performance, they are more likely to trust these apps and the brands associated with the apps. This includes aspects like time savings, access to exclusive deals, and the ability to track orders in real time. Perceived ease of use refers to how effortless and intuitive users find the app's interface and functionality. If the mobile shopping app was easy to navigate, less complex, and had a user-friendly interface, this would result in an enhancement in the level of trust by consumers (Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar, 2020).

An organisation's reputation also represents another crucial primary contributor towards customer trust. It has been found that a positive company reputation results in trustworthy associations with consumers. From an e-commerce point of view, organisations which enjoy a positive reputation tend to receive favourable reviews, feedback and recommendations on online and third-party communities. A study on the effects of credible online reviews on brand trust dimensions and willingness to buy in Vietnam found that credible reviews positively influenced the intentionality and reliability of brand trust (Tran, Nguyen and Luong, 2022). Therefore, consumers with no previous experience in dealing with an organisation are likely to transact with an organisation based on its online reputation, which inspires consumer trust in an organisation. This was supported by a study on online travel agencies in Brazil, where consumers were faced with a strong sense of risk and uncertainty due to the nature of the travel industry. It was found that a good reputation increased a customer's trust in a company and served as an essential indicator of quality (Falcão, Da Costa and Ferreira, 2020).

The perceived quality of apps also indicates the extent to which app users trust a mobile application. If the app has stable, reliable, and flexible features, the perceived quality of the app will be good, resulting in higher trust in the brands associated with the app. It was suggested that apps which were designed with seamless app characteristics, offered high information formats and content, resulting in a superior perceived quality of information, which therefore encouraged users to interact and trust the app (Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar, 2020). Albayrak, Rosario, Caber and Karasakal (2023), in a study entailing the use of mobile apps for travel bookings, however, found that when information was available on websites, there was a lesser influence of information format on brand trust. It was found that when information was

available elsewhere, system quality and service quality had a positive impact on brand trust when using shopping apps.

Consumers tend to place more reliance and trust in organisations that display both an online and offline presence in the marketplace. Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar (2020) suggest that online buyers often suffer from a lack of trust but are reassured when there are traditional brick-and-mortar stores to back up their online presence. When consumers connect with a brand's offline or brick-and-mortar stores, they tend to advance their online purchases. The omnichannel approach by organisations, therefore, supports the consumer's decision to make online purchases by offering them the option to choose channels of transaction, personalisation options, and the option to communicate with the organisation freely. It shifted the decision-making powers from the store to the consumer, empowering consumers and thereby enhancing the degree of trust between consumers and the store (Lim et al., 2022).

2.10.4. The Influence of Brand Image and Brand Trust on Brand Loyalty

The relationship between brand image, brand trust and brand loyalty are recognised as an essential concept in marketing, as these relationships shape consumer behaviour and are necessary for a brand's long-term success. Brand trust arises from positive experiences and interactions with a product or service, resulting in a deeper emotional connection when compared to brand image.

Liang (2022) found that brand satisfaction and trust positively influenced brand loyalty, while brand experience and commitment had a stronger effect on behavioural loyalty. It was suggested that while a positive brand image could attract new customers, trust was vital for retaining customers and fostering loyalty. Another study by Araújo, Pereira and Santos (2023) emphasised that corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives enhanced brand image and equity, positively impacting consumer satisfaction and trust. This indicated that CSR can be a strategic tool to build trust and loyalty by aligning the brand with consumers' values. Consistent with these findings (Tran, Nguyen and Luong, 2022) found that both brand image and brand trust positively influenced brand loyalty; however, brand trust was found to have a greater positive influence over brand loyalty.

A strong brand image attracts customers, but without trust, these customers may not return. Conversely, even if a brand has a solid trust foundation, a negative image can deter potential

customers. Therefore, brands must continuously manage and align their image and trust-building efforts to foster loyalty. This involves consistent communication, delivering on promises, and engaging with customers to understand and meet their needs. In essence, the interplay between brand image, trust, and loyalty enhances brand equity and ensures long-term success.

2.11. Brand Loyalty

2.11.1. Definition and advantages

Brand loyalty represents a pivotal part of brand equity. When an affinity for a brand is seated in the minds of consumers, their commitment towards a brand increases, making it difficult to switch to alternatives. From an organisational point of view, brand loyalty results in many advantages in the marketplace. Zia, Younis and Mirza (2021) suggested that a loyal customer base served as a barrier to entry for competitors, increased market share, resulted in new customer acquisitions, and lowered product promotion costs. Eslami (2020:35) defined brand loyalty as “a deep commitment by a customer to repurchase a brand in the future,” resisting competitor marketing actions aimed at changing consumer behaviour. Ebrahim (2020:478) suggested that brand loyalty referred to a “consumer's psychological predispositions, including attitudes, preferences and commitment towards a brand.” It was suggested that brand loyalty arose from a consumer's commitment to buying a brand regardless of situational factors. These definitions show that brand loyalty refers to a customer's consistent preference for one brand over others, often demonstrated through repeated purchases.

Brand loyalty originates in a consumer's mind from an assessment of the quality of a product or services received based on expectations that have been internalised in the consumer's mind. This assessment gives rise to either a satisfied or dissatisfied customer. When the quality of a brand meets a consumer's expectations, customers feel satisfied; however, if it falls short, it leads to dissatisfaction. Satisfied consumers are more likely to display loyal behaviour towards brands, often resulting in the repurchase of brands as the perceived expectation is met by the actual performance of a brand. Cuong (2020) found that satisfaction significantly influenced brand preference and loyalty in a study of different laptop brands. Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2020) examined the relationship between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. They postulated that customer satisfaction formed the basis of an emotional attachment to a brand,

which influenced the strength of a consumer's bond with a brand. It was established that when customers developed a strong, sentimental bond with a brand, they developed an emotional attachment to the product. This strong emotional attachment was referred to as brand love, which increased their propensity to be loyal towards a brand. It was found that brand love was the strongest antecedent towards brand loyalty as customers developed emotional responses to a brand and were more likely to repurchase that brand.

2.11.2 Brand Loyalty and Repurchase Intention

Vazifehdooost and Negahdari (2018) argued that the repurchase intention represented the likelihood that a customer would repurchase the same brand's product in the future and could be viewed as a behavioural element where consumers displayed eagerness and ongoing interest in purchasing a brand. When customers are satisfied with their past purchases and have developed trust in the brand, their intention to repurchase is naturally higher. The relationship between brand loyalty and repurchase intention is critical for businesses because it translates to predictable revenue streams and reduced marketing costs. Loyal customers are more likely to buy new products from the brand, participate in loyalty programs, and engage with the brand on social media, further amplifying its reach and reputation. Moreover, they often act as brand ambassadors, providing Word-of-mouth and EWOM recommendations that can attract new customers. Semadi and Ariyanti (2018) suggested that the recommendation component of a brand was vital in determining brand loyalty because the more a product or service was recommended to others, the higher the levels of brand loyalty.

By nurturing brand loyalty, companies can enhance repurchase intentions, ensuring long-term success and competitive advantage in the market. In essence, brand loyalty fuels repurchase intention, reinforcing and strengthening the loyalty loop and driving sustained growth.

2.11.3 Customer experience and brand loyalty

Nuseir and Elrefae (2022:18) defined customer experience as “the cognitive, emotional, sensory, behaviour and social responses for consumer buying habits.” Online transactions make it difficult for organisations to deploy their marketing efforts due to the lack of face-to-face interactions usually present in traditional brick-and-mortar stores. Therefore, it becomes

vital that organisations ensure effective online communication and processing systems to ensure a better experience for customers, which fosters trust and loyalty.

The antecedents of the customer experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps consist of two primary dimensions apart from the ease of use and perceived usefulness indicated in the Technology Acceptance Model. The utilitarian dimension refers to delivering convenience, efficiency, cost savings and enhancing the overall shopping experience. Redda (2020:333) defined utilitarian consumption values as “attributes that were directed towards the achievement of goals and related to the utility or functional value of an object.” Puspitasari, Rusydi, Nuzulita and Hsiao (2023) suggested that the utilitarian features of grocery apps were features that allowed for time-saving and efficient task completion. Efficiency and convenience features such as a broader product selection, information availability on product specifications, efficient delivery and payment services entice consumers into buying products through shopping apps. Cost savings and discounts also constitute a consumer's utility consumption value. Therefore, apps that allow for cost-saving features such as discounts, promotions, and loyalty rewards enhance the utilitarian value to consumers.

The hedonic consumption values were defined as “the experiences of sensory appeals, which consisted of emotion and gratification” (Wang, 2020:289). Therefore, it was argued that features of grocery retail apps, which included the ability to entertain, the ability to add adventure and exploration, the ability to allow social interactions and allow for shopping for gratification, enhanced a customer’s experience (Redda, 2020:334).

Olaleye, Ukpabi, Sanusi and Juga (2022), in a study on the influence of hedonic app features on the use and continuous use of mobile retail apps, found that hedonic app features enhanced the continuous use of mobile shopping apps, where enjoyment features built into apps provided a strong emotional pool to the app, making it difficult to resist. It was also found that consumer data security was a concern for consumers, whereby embedding security-enhancing features positively influenced usage and re-usage.

Wang (2020) suggested that apps which were mainly focused on managing their functional (utilitarian) attributes failed to take cognisance of the customer's emotional attributes, therefore, making it difficult to establish loyalty amongst consumers. It was suggested that hedonic values played a more important role than utilitarian values in users' purchase intentions and continued use of apps. Kumar, Sikdar, Gupta, Singh and Sinha (2023) argued that when retailers considered the design of apps, they should have taken into account both the utilitarian

and hedonic values of consumers. It was found that features such as online tracking, online rating and review, design aesthetics and perceived security risk were crucial antecedents to app development and implementation. Online rating or review, and online tracking featured amongst the top two determinants of user satisfaction and loyalty as consumers placed importance on an accurate, reliable, and user-friendly online tracking facility. It was also suggested that reviews and ratings featured second amongst user satisfaction and retailers should offer integration of social media tools such as Instagram handles for the sharing of content such as reviews and recommendations, community tools for the sharing of experience regarding delivery and checkout comments with regards to ease of payment. It was suggested that these tools would assist users in recommending a brand to another user, consistent with the resonance tier in the Keller brand equity model, resulting in brand equity.

2.12. Gaps and Future Directions

The literature reviewed has provided significant information on the evolution of branding with the rise of technology. The literature that exists with regards to branding within the grocery app context is extensive. However, there are still gaps in the literature.

One of the common gaps found in the literature is that most studies are based on the cross-sectional design, which only measures customer's responses to technology and apps at a point in time. Customers' responses are based on the functional elements and their emotional dispositions towards brands. Therefore, customers' perceptions of brands need to be measured over a period of time to understand how technological changes and app interventions facilitate trust and loyalty amongst consumers. As limited studies exist which examine the influence of branding of grocery retail shopping apps over time, a longitudinal study is recommended to fill this gap.

Another highly relevant gap to this study is that most research is conducted in developed countries with little focus on emerging market countries. It would be helpful to examine how emerging economies and, in particular, organisations implement and respond to consumer's perceptions of branding and their experiences in the area of app development and design that is relatively recent, as the uptake of grocery shopping apps in South Africa only gained traction after COVID-19.

2.13. Summary

This chapter began with an understanding of how branding has evolved over a period of time to meet consumers' emotional and functional expectations in a world characterised by rapid technological change and rushed lifestyles. The discussion on the marketing strategy and marketing mix was expanded upon considering the technological-driven environments organisations find themselves within. After that, the aspects of brand image, trust and loyalty were elaborated upon within the context of technological change represented by grocery shopping apps. The latter end of this chapter also considered studies on customers' experiences whilst using grocery shopping apps and their propensity to revisit or repurchase based on their experiences, perceptions of trust and loyalty towards brands associated with the app and the app itself.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

A research study represents a systematic approach to addressing a phenomenon in a structured manner. It entails identifying and investigating societal problems through a scientific process, which results in the acquisition and accumulation of scientific knowledge. The research methodology is based on a system of beliefs and philosophical underpinnings that guide the formulation and understanding of research questions and the selection of the research method to be used.

3.2. The Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is regarded as the framework that forms the foundation of any research. Khatri (2020:1439) defined the research paradigm as a “comprehensive belief system and world view that guide the researcher to frame the research process in a certain pattern.” This fundamental philosophy integrates a researcher's worldview, which refers to the perspective or school of thought that guides research in a particular field.

The following three components comprise the research paradigm:

Positivism relates to a reality that exists independent of human's perceptions and senses. Positivists try to project the cause-and-effect relationships found in nature in the social world. Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) suggested that positivists focus on the underlying laws that govern social phenomena, which can be formulated and presented in factual statements using scientific methods. The positive approach is related to quantitative studies as it involves measuring and observing facts (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). Interpretivism rejects the notion that one single reality exists independent of human perceptions and senses. Interpretivism is based on individuals' interpretations of social phenomena they interact with and is based on multiple socially constructed realities. Qualitative research is linked to Interpretivism as it is based on qualitative data, where the researcher identifies patterns and themes before the data collection process (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). The approach is inductive, whereas the quantitative approach is deductive. The pragmatic approach to research combines positivism and interpretivism and is grounded on the practicality of results. Pragmatists believe that the

best way to understand a problem is by employing a mix of methodologies. Also known as the mixed method approach, this approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a fuller picture.

This study uses the positivist approach to research, where empirical data collection and statistical analysis are used to identify patterns.

3.3. The Research Design and Method

3.3.1 Research Design

Sekaran and Bougie (2016:95) referred to the research design as a “blueprint or plan for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.” It was suggested that decisions relating to the research strategy, the extent of researcher interference, the location, the level at which data will be analysed, and time horizons are integral to research design. A research design can be broadly classified as exploratory, descriptive, or casual. Exploratory designs include historical research, phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, and action research. Descriptive research designs include observation studies, developmental designs, and surveys. Causal research designs include true experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational research designs.

This research incorporates a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. A survey design is very popular in business research as it allows the researcher to collect vast amounts of qualitative and quantitative data on many types of questions. The survey instruments are typically arranged into self-administered questionnaires that a respondent completes by themselves either on paper or electronically. This research design is appropriate to allow the researcher to collect vast amounts of data from the respondents in a structured manner within appropriate timeframes. It facilitates data collection where populations are large and often dispersed using a mix of face-to-face and electronically administered questionnaires. This research is also cross-sectional, whereby cross-sectional research involves collecting data once at a single point in time over a period of days, weeks, or months.

3.3.2. Research Method

The research method represents a fundamental component of any research to be conducted. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) identified three types of research methods that are included in the research design: (i) Quantitative research method, (ii) Qualitative research method, and (iii) Mixed method.

Quantitative research approaches result in the quantification of the data collected. It entails collecting numerical data but also regards the relationship between theory and research as deductive. The primary focus is uncovering relationships and patterns between variables, which aims to provide objective and replicable findings. It follows the natural science approach (Positivism) and adopts an objectivism ontological orientation (Bryman and Bell, 2019).

Qualitative research seeks to understand social reality as it is and provides a rich description of people and their interactions in natural settings (naturalism). It is used to develop a deep, contextual understanding of complex social processes, cultural phenomena or individual experiences that quantitative methods cannot measure. It also seeks to understand how social order is created through talk and interaction. It includes an interpretivist epistemological orientation and a constructionist ontological orientation (Bryman and Bell, 2019).

Mixed methods research is regarded as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. This method is used to leverage the strength of each method and provide a deeper understanding of the research problem. It involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a holistic understanding of a research problem.

This study uses the quantitative research method as it focuses on identifying relationships between variables and is based purely on the quantification of data collected.

3.4. Study Setting

The study will be conducted at a popular local retail fresh produce and grocery store in Durban. As this research focuses on the grocery retail segment, this store presents the ideal location for conducting this study as the foot traffic enables access to participants familiar with grocery shopping on a regular basis. Also, the store is centrally located, close to universities and households, which means access to different age groups is easily secured.

3.5. Population and sample for the study

Precisely defining the target population represents the first step in sampling. The target population is generally defined in terms of elements, geographical boundaries, and time (Sekeran and Bougie, 2016:240). Durban is a major port city in the eastern half of South Africa, with a combined population of just over 4.2 million residents and over 1.1 million households (StatsSA, 2024). As one of South Africa's major urban centres, Durban offers a unique backdrop for such a study due to its diverse population, varying socioeconomic statuses, and developed technological infrastructure.

3.6. Sample Size

The researcher estimated the population size of grocery retail app users in Durban using a total of 4 500 000 downloads of the dominant grocery retail app Checkers, Sixty 60, in 2023 (Neethling, 2024). A ratio of 6.8 % was then calculated by taking the population size of Durban (4 239 901) and dividing it by the total population in South Africa (62 027 503) (StatsSA, 2024). The researcher, therefore, arrived at a population size of 306 000 grocery retail app users in Durban by multiplying the number of 4 500 000 downloaded Checkers Sixty 60 grocery shopping apps by the calculated ratio of 6.8%.

To satisfy the increasing need to identify a sample size that represents the population, Krejcie and Morgan developed a table with sample (S) sizes corresponding to the number (N) in the population (Bukhari, 2021). Krejcie and Morgan (1970) suggested that as the population increases, the required sample size increases at a diminishing rate and remains constant at the required sample size of 384 above a population of 75 000. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table below, the required sample size for the population of 306 000 is therefore 384. A final sample size of 276 was achieved in this study, indicating a response rate of 72%.

Table 3.1: Krejcie and Morgan table

TABLE 1
Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note.—*N* is population size.
S is sample size.

3.7. Sampling Method

Probability and non-probability sampling represent the two major types of sampling design. In probability sampling, the elements of the population have some known or non-zero chance of being selected. In non-probability sampling, the elements do not have a known chance of being selected. Sekaran and Bougie (2016:241) outlined the following types of probability and non-probably sampling techniques:

Simple random sampling is a sampling method where every element of the population has a chance of being selected, whilst complex random sampling is a type of sampling method used to ensure that the sample represents the population, when the population is diverse and extensive. Complex random sampling consists of stratified, cluster, and systematic sampling. Stratified sampling entails segregating the population into sub-groups known as strata, followed by a random selection of subjects from each stratum. Cluster sampling involves dividing the population into clusters, followed by random sampling drawn from each selected cluster. Systematic sampling consists of selecting every *n*th member of the target population after a random starting point. Convenience sampling, judgmental sampling, and quota sampling represent non-probability sampling techniques. Convenience sampling refers to collecting information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide it. Judgmental sampling is a form of purposeful sampling where there is a limited number or group of people who possess the information being sought, whilst quota sampling is a type of purposive sampling that ensures that certain groups are adequately represented through the implementation of a quota.

A non-probability sampling technique was selected for this study, which will entail using judgmental sampling. Non-probability sampling represents an efficient and inexpensive way to obtain preliminary information about a particular topic. Judgement sampling is a form of non-probability sampling which involves the choice of subjects “who are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016:48). It is also suggested that judgmental sampling is used when a limited number or category of people have the information that is sought. For this study, only persons who have used a grocery retail shopping app in the last two years will be selected, which forms the justification for this sampling method.

The emphasis on respondents who used the app within the last two years was due to two main reasons. Firstly, although the adoption of grocery shopping apps was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, grocery retailers have only been able to solidify this adoption in recent years. For example, the Checkers Sixty60 app reported their most significant growth in sales of 149% in 2022, and a growth of 81% with an expansion to 466 stores in 2023 (Illidge, 2024). Furthermore, other grocery shopping apps such as Spar 2U were only introduced in early in 2022, enhancing the alternatives available to consumers. Secondly, functional aspects of grocery shopping apps influence customers experiences. As technology and user interfaces evolve quickly there is a need for continuous updates and features to fix bugs in apps to enhance

the user experience. Ceci (2023) suggests that the highest ranking Android apps available in the Google play store were updated on average every 58 days. Therefore, feedback in relation to customer experience going back further than two years may offer diminished relevance due to the frequency of new app updates and feature enhancement.

3.8. The construction of the instrument.

The data collection instrument consists of a structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of six parts, where part one consists of biographical information. Part two comprises questions relating to the usage and preferences of grocery retail shopping apps. The remaining four parts consist of the actual research questions based on brand image, brand trust, brand loyalty, and customer experience in the form of a five-point Likert scale, which range from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly agree.

3.9. Data Collection

Data collection will be conducted through personal, face-to-face administered questionnaires and, in some instances, e-mailed to app users who meet the predetermined criteria.

A simple, well-structured, closed-answer questionnaire will be developed using Microsoft Word and Google Forms, which will include demographic information as well as questions relating to branding and customer experience through the utilisation of a 5-point Likert scale in a closed-question, horizontal format. A Likert scale is a convenient instrument for measuring a construct, providing an ordinal measure of a respondent's attitude. Creswell et al. (2018:187).

Careful consideration of confidentiality and anonymity will be engrained in the questionnaire design by coding respondents' names at the data collection stage. The coding and de-identification of respondents from the onset will inspire confidence that anonymity will be guaranteed throughout the research.

3.10. Data Analysis

This study will follow the framework of Sekaran and Bougie (2016:272), who provided the following sequence for the handling of raw data once the collection process is finalised:

- i. Coding the responses: assigning a code to participants' responses using numbers. The researcher will check the coding for accuracy by testing a sample of the coding.
- ii. Entering the data: entering coded responses into a database using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or SPSS Data editor.
- iii. Editing the data: handling blank responses in a consistent manner, checking for inconsistent data, and identifying the illogical or illegal data omissions to be edited.
- iv. Transforming the data: transforming the data to change its form from numerical representations into another value.

Statistical software will be used to transform the data into meaningful results. SPSS version 29 will be used for this study, focusing on tests to examine the relationship between the variables.

3.11. Validity and Reliability of the Study

3.11.1. External Validity

External validity relates to the generalisability of a study's findings to the external environment. It examines whether results can be applied to settings or populations outside the study conditions.

3.11.2. Internal Validity

Internal validity refers to the degrees of confidence in causal effects. It ensures that the study results are due to the factors being tested and not influenced by external variables. Construct validity is commonly used in research to “assess how well the results obtained from the use of a measure fit the theories for which the test is defined” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016:222). Convergent and discriminant validity comprise construct validity. Convergent validity arises

when a high correlation exists between the results of two different instruments measuring the same concept. In contrast, discriminant validity occurs when two variables are predicted to be correlated based on the underlying theory, supported by the scores obtained by measuring these variables. The following tests are associated with establishing content validity.

- (i) Correlational analysis is used to assess the strength and direction of a relationship between two or more variables.
- (ii) Factor analysis is a multivariate technique that helps understand the structure of the data. It confirms the dimensions of a concept that has been operationally defined and identifies which items are most appropriate for each dimension.
- (iii) Multitrait-Multimethod matrix provides a framework that measures how well instruments capture the intended traits, ensuring measures are accurate and distinct.

3.11.3. Reliability

Reliability is concerned with whether another experimenter would obtain similar results if they replicated the study under the same conditions.

The researcher has used Cronbach's alpha to assess the quality and consistency of this research survey. Cronbach's alpha is a widely used test of internal reliability which ranges from 0.00 (no reliability) to 1.00 (perfect reliability). Cronbach's alpha provides a single index value and calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients (Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.674, which was regarded as within the acceptable range.

3.12. Bias

Careful consideration of bias should be taken at each stage of the research process, as bias can distort the accuracy of research findings and result in inaccurate conclusions. If bias is present, it makes the replication and generalisability of findings increasingly difficult. Ensuring that research is free from bias enhances ethical standards and the study's usefulness.

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) identified the following variations of bias throughout the research process:

- **Selection and Sampling Bias**

Selection bias occurs when the participants selected for the study are not representative of the entire population, affecting the generalisability of the results. It also occurs when the selection criteria are not standard and varies between groups.

Sampling bias is a type of selection bias that results in an inaccurate or non-representative sample. Sampling bias occurs during the research planning stage and can arise when sampling methods lack randomness and inclusivity.

- **Design Bias**

Design bias occurs at the planning stage of research and results in systematic errors in how a study is constructed or structured. Design bias can arise when formulating research questions, selecting study participants or groups, and determining methods used for data collection and analysis. Errors resulting from design bias can significantly impact the validity and reliability of research findings.

- **Measurement Bias**

Measurement bias occurs in the implementation stage of research. It relates to inconsistencies in data collection procedures. A typical measurement bias occurs when questionnaires or surveys contain ambiguous, leading and poorly worded questions. Measurement bias can result in skewed results that can affect the validity of a study.

- **Response Bias**

Response bias presents a challenge, especially in questionnaire-based studies, where the participants' answers are influenced by answers unrelated to the questions being asked. For instance, participants may feel a response is more socially desirable and acceptable than expressing their true feelings. This type of bias is known as social desirability bias.

- **Reporting Bias**

Reporting bias entails the selective reporting of results and outcomes based on the researcher's own expectations. Publication and outcome reporting bias are types of reporting bias. Publication bias occurs when studies with positive outcomes or findings take precedence over studies with negative findings or outcomes. Outcome reporting bias occurs when specific outcomes are reported over others, where significant results are favoured and reported, while unfavourable results are omitted.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) suggested that ethical considerations are an integral part of the research process and should be continually revisited throughout the study to ensure compliance with strict ethical standards. It was suggested that ethical principles revolve around recurring issues which involve:

- (i) Whether there is harm to the participants?
- (ii) Whether there is a lack of informed consent?
- (iii) Whether there is an invasion of privacy?
- (iv) Whether there is deception involved?

Prior to the commencement of the study, consent was sought from the ethics research committee of UKZN. The researcher has complied with the guidelines set by the committee to ensure that high ethical standards were upheld. Permission has been sought with the informed consent of participants, and it was explained that they had a right to withdraw at any time from the study. Confidentiality has been guaranteed and upheld at all stages of the research by coding participants to ensure anonymity. Careful care and consideration has been taken to ensure that data was collected and processed ethically. Data stored on electronic devices and questionnaires emailed to participants has been password protected. The only persons allowed access to collected data was the researcher and the supervisor, whereby the supervisor had access to a password-protected folder on the researcher's Microsoft One Drive cloud platform. Data collected will be disposed of in an ethical manner after a period of five years in accordance with the University's data management policy.

3.14. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a systematic and methodological approach to determining the factors that influence the branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban. By employing the quantitative approach, this research ensures a scientific-based approach to the study area. The choice of appropriate sampling methods, data collection instruments, and analytical software was meticulously selected to facilitate the answering of the research objectives. This chapter also highlighted the adherence to ethical considerations, ensuring credibility and integrity were

upheld at all stages of the study. Furthermore, limitations, delimitations, and biases have been addressed to enhance the reliability and validity of the results. The chapters that follow include the results, discussion, and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the study pertaining to the factors that influence the branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban. This chapter introduces the demographic data, then proceeds to questions based on the type of shopping app and frequency of use and concludes with the analysis of the constructs based on 16 items which are investigated. Reliance is placed on descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis to establish underlying relationships or patterns between each item and the constructs.

4.2. Demographic Data Analysis

Table 4.1. Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	85	30.8%
Female	191	69.2%
Total	276	100.0%

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of the respondent's gender. Results show that 69.2% (n = 191) were female, while 30.8% (n = 85) were male.

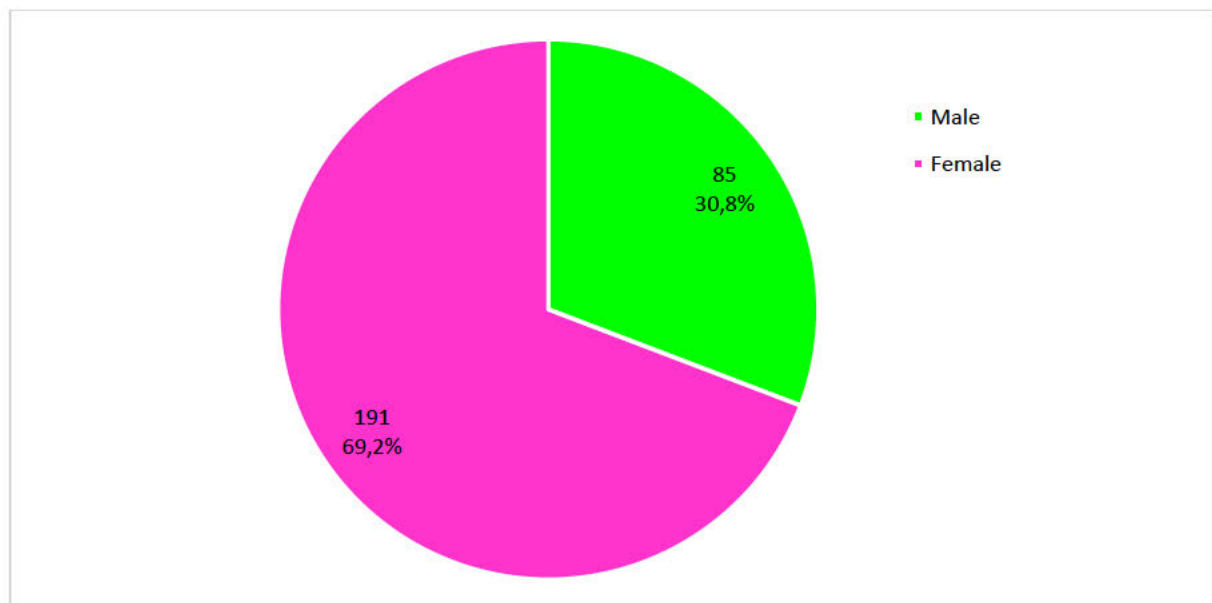


Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

Table 4.2: Age group of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percent
20-30	89	32.2%
31-40	88	31.9%
41-50	66	23.9%
51-60	29	10.5%
61-70	4	1.4%
Total	276	100.0%

Table 4.2 presents the respondents' distribution by age. Findings show that 32.2% (n = 89) were aged between 20-30 years, followed by the 31-40 age group (31.9%, n = 61234) and the 41-50 years age group (23.9%, n= 66).

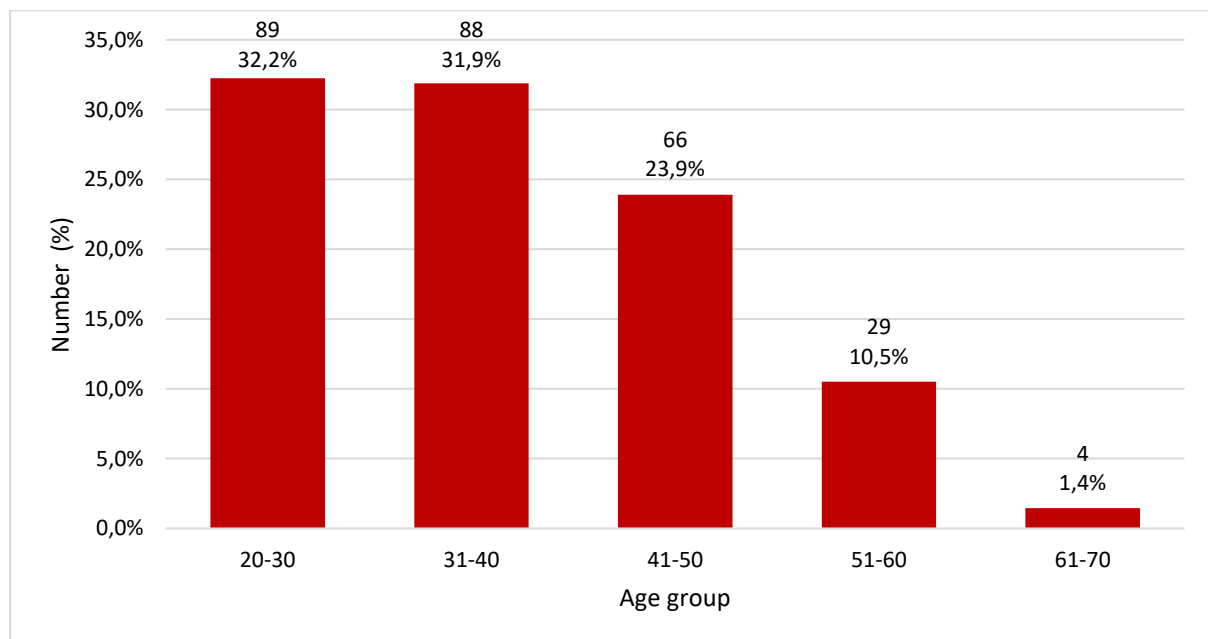


Figure 4.2: Age group of respondents

Table 4.3: Education level of respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percent
High School	94	34.1%
College Diploma	58	21.0%
University Degree	86	31.2%
Post Graduate degree	25	9.1%
Other	13	4.7%
Total	276	100.0%

Table 4.3 depicts the respondent’s level of education. The majority were high school level (34.1%, n = 94), followed by university degree (31.2%, n=86) and college diploma (21.0%, n=58).

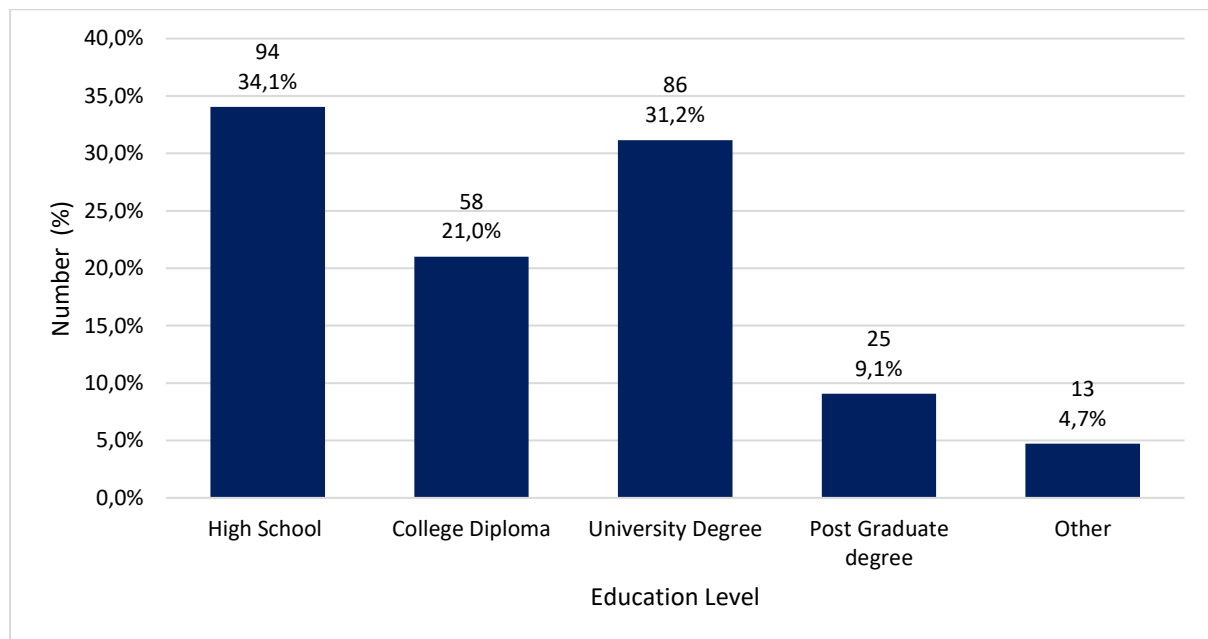


Figure 4.3: Education level of respondents

4.3. Shopping application preferences and frequency of use

This section relates to the type and preference of grocery retail shopping apps used and the frequency of use.

Table 4.4: Most recently used grocery shopping app

Grocery app	N	Responses (%)	Cases (%)
Checkers Sixty60	228	47.9%	82.9%
Pick and Pay ASAP	119	25.0%	43.3%
Woolies App	85	17.9%	30.9%
Spar2U	35	7.4%	12.7%
Other	9	1.9%	3.3%
Total	476	100.0%	173.1%

Table 4.4 indicates that the most recently used grocery apps in the last two years are Checkers Sixty60 (49%), Pick and Pay ASAP (25%), Woolies App (17.9%), Spar2u (7.4%) and Other (1.9%).

Table 4.5: Preferred Grocery Shopping App

Grocery app	N	Responses (%)
Checkers Sixty60	181	65.6%
Pick and Pay ASAP	38	13.8%
Woolies App	37	13.4%
Spar2U	13	4.7%
Other	7	2.5%
Total	276	100.0%

Table 4.5 indicates that the majority of respondents prefer Checkers Sixty60 (65.6%), followed second by Pick and Pay ASAP (13.8%), followed third by the Woolies app (13.4%), followed by Spar2U (4.7%) and Other comprising (2.5%).

Table 4.6: Frequency of Use

Frequency of app use	Frequency	Percent
Once a month	124	44.9%
Twice a month	79	28.6%
Three times a month	43	15.6%
> Three times a month	30	10.9%
Total	276	100.0%

Table 4.6 indicates that most respondents use the grocery app to shop once or twice a month.

4.4. Reliability Statistics

4.4.1. Cronbach's Alpha

Table 4.7: Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.674	16

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is one of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency of the scale. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.00 (no reliability) to 1.00 (perfect reliability). Cronbach's alpha provides a single index value and calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.674, which falls within the acceptable range. This implies the presence of an acceptable level of internal consistency amongst the items, indicating these items consistently measure the same concept.

4.5 Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Validity of the construct

Factor analysis (FA) is a statistical technique that is used to analyse the underlying covariance structure between variables to identify their underlying structure. Principal component analysis and exploratory factor analysis are methods used to interpret data into a reduced number of variables called factors to identify underlying relationships. (Bartholomew, Knott and Moustaki, 2011).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) can also be used to measure construct validity, i.e. to measure the underlying relationships between questionnaire items and the factors (“constructs”) measured by a questionnaire. By observing the scores of a given instrument, factor analysis can be used to determine if the test is measuring the variables it’s supposed to.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is a statistic which tells whether you have sufficient or adequate data for the factor analysis. Bartlett’s test is used to determine if the correlations between the variables are large enough to warrant a factor analysis. For this test to be appropriately used, P must equal <0.05 , indicating significance.

To determine the number of factors to extract, different criteria are suggested i.e.

According to Kaiser’s criterion, only factors with eigenvalues (λ) exceeding unity will be retained. A priori criterion where the number of factors to extract is known based either on previous work or when testing a theory or a hypothesis,

The percentage of variance criterion determines the number of factors to retain based on an evaluation of the amount of total variance in the data that each factor accounts for. Approximately 60% or more can be regarded as satisfactory. Scree plot test criterion where the optimum number of factors that can be extracted is identified before the amount of unique variance begins to dominate the common variance structure. Only the factors to the left of the point of inflexion are retained.

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007:646) argue that “Perhaps the best way to decide between orthogonal and oblique rotation is to request oblique rotation [e.g., direct oblimin or promax from SPSS] with the desired number of factors and look at the correlations among the factors.” If the factor correlations ≥ 0.32 , this suggests that there is a 10% (or more) overlap in variance

among factors, enough variance to warrant oblique rotation unless there are compelling reasons for orthogonal rotation.

4.5.1 Principal component analysis (PCS) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results

Table 4.8. Brand Image scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.615
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	150.376
	df	6
	Sig.	< 0.001

Results indicate that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.615, which is adequate, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large p-value < 0.001 ($\chi^2 = 150.376$, df = 6) and is statistically significant.

Table 4.9. Total Variance Explained- Brand Image

Total Variance Explained			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.873	46.813	46.813
2	1.037	25.921	72.735
3	0.569	14.216	86.951
4	0.522	13.049	100.000
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			

Table 4.9 above shows the initial number of components for **Brand Image scale**, initial Eigen values, the proportion and cumulative proportion of variances explained. The first two (2)

components have Eigen values greater than one and explain 72.735% of the variation. The Kaiser’s criterion (Eigen values > 1) suggests the extraction of two (2) components.

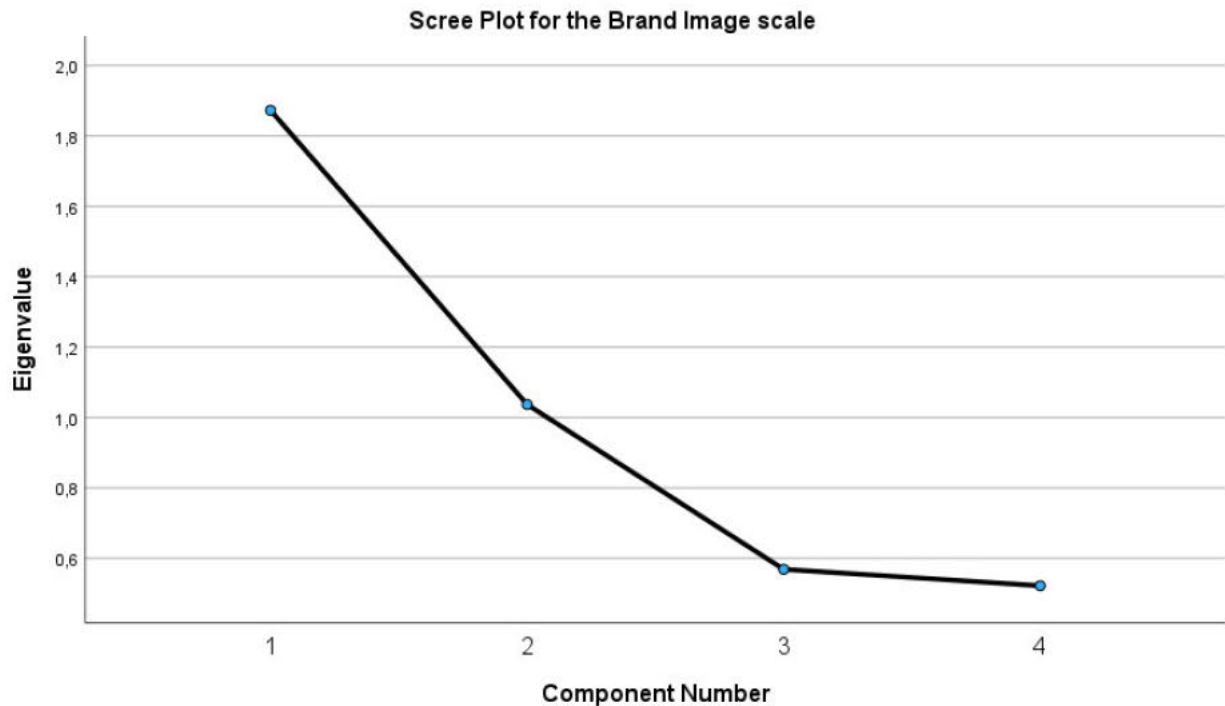


Figure 4.4 Scree Plot for the Brand Image Scale

Figure 4.4 shows a scree plot of eigenvalues. The scree plot criterion suggests the extraction of two (2) components.

Table 4.10. Factor correlation matrix -Brand Image

Factor Correlation Matrix		
Factor	1	2
1	1.000	0.320
2	0.320	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 4.10 above shows the Factor Correlation Matrix after running a two- factor EFA followed by a direct oblimin rotation. The correlation between the two factors = 0.320. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007:646), if the factor correlations ≥ 0.32 , there is

enough variance to warrant oblique rotation; otherwise, the solution remains nearly orthogonal, suggesting an orthogonal rotation.

Table 4.11 Pattern Matrix- Brand Image

Item	Factor	
	1	2
3.2 The grocery store has quality products and good service, which is translated into the grocery shopping app design and features.	0.768	
3.4 The values of the grocery retail store in relation to quality, value and service are represented by the grocery shopping app.	0.584	
3.3 The interface of the grocery shopping app reminds me that it is not the same as shopping in a physical store.		0.631
3.1 The grocery shopping app has the same look and feel as the physical store, therefore it is merely an extension of the store	0.374	0.494
"Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization."		

Both the Kaiser criterion and the scree plot criterion suggested retaining two factors. **Table 4.11** depicts the two factors extracted using the *Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization* rotation method since the factor correlations ≥ 0.32 . All items that load on to factor should have a score of greater than 0.40 on the pattern matrix. The results show that items 3.2 and 3.4 loading highly onto Factor 1 (Product quality). In contrast, items 3.3 (which was reversed) and 3.1 load highly onto Factor 2 (Shopping experience/perception).

Table 4.12. Brand Trust scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.617
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	204.319
	df	6
	Sig.	< 0.001

Table 4.12 indicates that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.617, which is adequate, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ($\chi^2 = 204.319$, $df = 6$) and is statistically significant.

Table 4.13. Total Variance Explained- Brand Trust

Total Variance Explained			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.981	49.519	49.519
2	0.910	22.749	72.268
3	0.767	19.184	91.452
4	0.342	8.548	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4.13 above shows the initial number of components for the **Brand Trust scale**, initial Eigen values, the proportion and cumulative proportion of variances explained. The first one (1) component has Eigen values greater than one and explain 49.519% of the variation. The Kaiser's criterion (Eigen values > 1) suggests the extraction of one component.

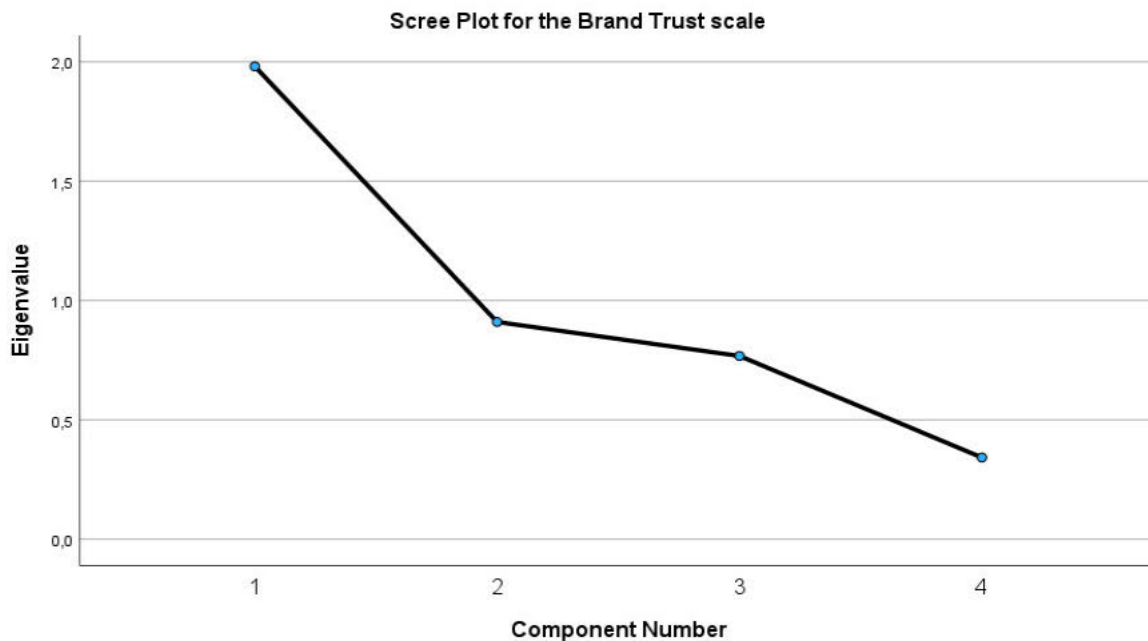


Figure 4.5 Scree Plot for the Brand Trust Scale

Figure 4.5 above shows a scree plot of eigenvalues. The scree plot criterion suggests the extraction of one component.

Table 4.14. Brand Loyalty scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.637
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	104.770
	df	6
	Sig.	< 0.001

Results indicate that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.637, which is adequate, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large p-value < 0.001 ($\chi^2 = 104.770$, df = 6) and is statistically significant.

Table 4.15. Total Variance Explained- Brand Loyalty

Total Variance Explained			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.744	43.593	43.593
2	1.004	25.088	68.681
3	0.682	17.054	85.735
4	0.571	14.265	100.000
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			

Table 4.15 above shows the initial number of components for **Brand Loyalty scale**, initial Eigen values, the proportion and cumulative proportion of variances explained. The first two (2) component has Eigen values greater than one and explain 68.681% of the variation. The Kaiser's criterion (Eigen values > 1) suggests the extraction of two (2) components.



Figure 4.6 Scree Plot for the Brand Loyalty Scale

Figure 4.6 above shows a scree plot of eigenvalues. The scree plot criterion suggests the extraction of two components.

Table 4.16 Factor correlation matrix -Brand Loyalty

Factor Correlation Matrix		
Factor	1	2
1	1.000	0.174
2	0.174	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Table 4.16 above shows the Factor Correlation Matrix after running a two- factor EFA followed by a direct oblimin rotation. The correlation between the two factors = 0.320. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007: 646), if the factor correlations ≥ 0.32 , there is enough variance to warrant oblique rotation; otherwise, the solution remains nearly orthogonal, suggesting an orthogonal rotation.

Table 4.17 Pattern Matrix- Brand Loyalty

Item	Factor	
	1	2
5.1 I tend to use the grocery shopping app indicated above the most because it satisfies my needs.	0.672	
5.2 I use the grocery shopping app of the grocery retail store that I frequent the most.	0.632	
5.4 My preferred grocery shopping app belongs to the grocery store, which understands my needs and tailors its product offering specifically towards my buying habits. Hence, I always use this grocery shopping app.	0.521	
5.3 If the preferred grocery shopping app is not working, I immediately use another grocery shopping app.		0.330
"Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization."		

Both the Kaiser criterion and the scree plot criterion suggested retaining two factors. **Table 4.17** depicts the two factors extracted using the *Varimax with Kaiser Normalization* rotation method since the factor correlations < 0.32 . The results show that items 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4 loading highly onto Factor 1 (Customer satisfaction). In contrast, item 5.3 (which was reversed) loads highly onto Factor 2 (Shopping app working).

Table 4.18. Customer Experience

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.617
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	67.245
	df	6
	Sig.	< 0.001

Table 4.18 indicates that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.617, which is adequate, and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large p-value < 0.001 ($\chi^2 = 67.245$, $df = 6$) and is statistically significant.

Table 4.18 Total Variance Explained- Customer experience

Total Variance Explained			
Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.603	40.071	40.071
2	0.970	24.262	64.332
3	0.793	19.837	84.170
4	0.633	15.830	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4.18 above shows the initial number of components for **Customer Experience scale**, initial eigen values, and the proportion and cumulative proportion of variances explained. The first component has Eigen values greater than one and explains 40.071% of the variation. The Kaiser’s criterion (Eigen values > 1) suggests the extraction of one component.

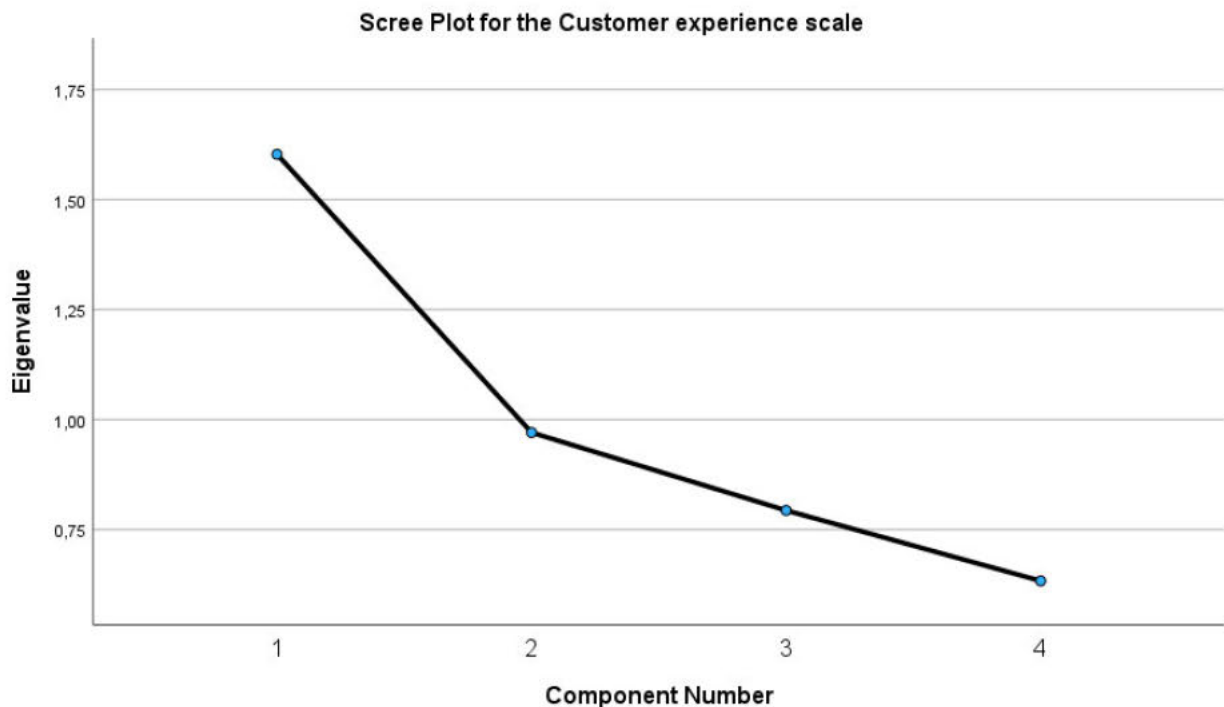


Figure 4.7 Scree Plot for the Customer Experience Scale

Figure 4.7 above shows a scree plot of eigenvalues. The scree plot criterion suggests the extraction of one component.

4.6 Aggregate Scores

Aggregate scores were computed for each construct by calculating the mean for its constituent items and then first tested for normality. Many of the statistical methods, such as correlation analysis, linear regression, t-tests, and ANOVA, follow the premise that the data is normally distributed. Non-parametric or “distribution-free tests” are applied, based on the assumption that the data does not follow a normal distribution.

4.6.1. Tests of Normality for the aggregate scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Product quality (Brand Image)	0.938	276	< 0.001
Shopping experience-Quality (Brand Image)	0.966	276	< 0.001
Brand Trust	0.958	276	< 0.001
Customer satisfaction (Brand Loyalty)	0.946	276	< 0.001
Shopping app working (Brand Loyalty)	0.894	276	< 0.001
Customer experience	0.981	276	0.001

The Shapiro-Wilk’s test for normality shows that all the computed aggregate scores deviated from normal distribution (p-values < less than the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$)

4.7 Summary statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	IQR	Skewness
Product Quality	3.78	0.86	4.00	1.5	-0.47
Shopping Experience (Quality)	3.14	0.98	3.00	1.5	-0.02
Brand Trust	3.86	0.71	4.00	0.8	-0.55
Customer Satisfaction	3.93	0.72	4.00	0.9	-0.55
Shopping app working	2.97	1.37	3.00	2.0	0.01
Customer Experience	3.28	0.75	3.25	1.0	-0.28

Descriptive statistics plays an important role in the process of organising data in a meaningful way to reveal underlying patterns and relationships. The mean and median are measures of central tendency that can provide significant insights into the typical values within a dataset. Measures of dispersion, such as the standard deviation and range, offer valuable insights into the spread of the data points.

The findings indicated the median scores for product quality, brand trust and customer satisfaction = 4, implying that respondents generally agree with the constructs.

The median scores for the shopping experience in relation to quality and the shopping app working = 3.0 indicated that respondents were generally neutral, and for customer experience, the median = 3.25 suggested that they were between neutral and agree.

4.8 Conclusion

The statistical analysis in this chapter revealed a comprehensive analysis of the collected data. The descriptive statistics, which included the mean and standard deviation, revealed significant patterns and relationships with regards to branding and customers experience whilst using grocery shopping apps. A comprehensive discussion of the findings is presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings

5.1. Introduction

The grocery retail landscape in South Africa has experienced significant change and increased competition, as the rise of e-commerce and m-commerce has altered the marketing and communication channels between grocery retailers and consumers. The proliferation of mobile devices and increased access to technological infrastructure has profoundly impacted the way consumers perform their routine grocery shopping tasks and interact with the store brand, brands associated with the store and the branded grocery retail app itself. The objective of this study is based on the factors that influence the branding of grocery retail apps, focusing on how branding influences user perceptions and their shopping experience as they navigate these apps to perform day-to-day shopping activities.

This chapter presents the findings from statistical analysis, reflecting the outcomes of the data collected during the study. The responses for the constructs will provide significant insights into customer perceptions, experiences, values and their emotional connections to brands within the context of the grocery retail shopping app. The results which are based on the four research objectives are explored and presented in a sequence of the stated research objectives, beginning with a discussion on brand image, followed by brand trust and brand loyalty and finally concluding with the customer experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps. Each objective will be dissected to identify underlying trends, similarities or disparities with recent studies, allowing for a contribution to extant literature.

5.2. Discussion

The following discussion is divided into four sections, which aim to elaborate on how customers perceive and interact with the brand constructs of brand image, brand trust, brand loyalty and customer experience. Each objective will be matched with the results from the data collected and elaborated upon to answer the research questions. Results will be compared to previous research with similar backgrounds and findings.

5.2.1. Objective 1: to examine the customer perceptions of brand image whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

The responses to questions 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4 provided insights into how customers perceive the quality of the products and brands of the physical store being translated into the grocery app. These questions centred explicitly around the quality of products and services provided by the app and how the feel and look of the grocery apps resonate with shopping physically at a grocery store.

The majority of respondents (68 %) agreed that the quality of the products sold within the store is represented by the features and design of the grocery app, supported by a median score of 4. This means that customers believe that the grocery app adequately communicates the product's salient features and quality aspects through product descriptions and banners reinforcing the product and service quality. Also, the median score of 3 represents a neutral perception in relation to the look and feel of the physical store brand being translated through the app design and interface in support of the values of the physical store.

Quality of products and services: Respondents felt that the quality of products and services provided through the app were the same as those provided in the physical store, reinforcing the brand image of the store and the product brand. This is consistent with findings by Ahmadian, Sahraei and Khosro (2023). They postulated that the brand image significantly influenced the perceived quality of products and services; therefore, as customers could not identify any difference in products and services between the physical store and app, these apps reinforced the brand image of the store and the products sold by these stores. The responses in relation to the quality of products indicate that consumers are satisfied with the products and services offered through the grocery app as they meet their expectations, resulting in higher customer satisfaction, which enhances the brand image. Wijaya and Astuti (2018) concurred with these findings, which found that e-service quality had a positive influence on brand trust and brand image, positively influencing the repurchase intention of consumers. Tahir, Adnan, and Saeed (2024) had similar findings, whereby customer satisfaction was significantly influenced by a brand's perceived quality and value, where the match between expectations and experience was influenced by the quality of the product and service offering.

5.2.2. Objective 2: to examine the customer perceptions of brand trust whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

The responses from questions 4.2 to 4.4 demonstrate the level of trust customers place in the grocery retail shopping app and the grocery store. These responses centre around whether the parent brand (the retail store) facilitates trust amongst online shoppers through the ability to provide sufficient after-sales support in resolving problems with the product or service. It seeks to understand how the trust which customers place in the physical store influences the reliance on and the use of the grocery app.

The respondents overwhelmingly agreed (78 %) with the questions relating to trust placed in grocery apps supported by physical grocery retail stores. The median score of 4 illustrates that respondents trust the physical store and the ability of these stores to fulfil their shopping needs. Respondents also agreed (70 %) that they view shopping apps and the physical grocery store as one, whereby the grocery shopping app is merely an extension of the physical store.

Brand Extensions: The brand extension strategy is used by organisations with high brand equity to introduce new products and services which are highly reliant on the name of an organisation. Purchasing decisions by consumers are often influenced by their trust in the parent brand. Consequently, brand extensions originating from the parent brand play a crucial role in determining the success of a new product or service. Grocery retail shopping apps in South Africa have been successful in recent years, attributed to the reach and size of the parent retail brand (physical store) that supports their design and implementation. Respondents indicate a level of trust in the parent brand as these retail stores are established within the grocery retail sector. Pandya and Istiharani (2024) support these findings as they found that consumers generally used apps based on their previous knowledge and experiences with the parent brand. The dominant grocery retail stores identified in this study have a significant history of providing access to groceries through their broad footprint and presence in shopping centres across South Africa. These stores enjoy high levels of brand equity, which could be cited as a reason for the respondents enhanced level of trust in the parent brand whilst using grocery shopping apps.

Store reputation: Store reputation is widely regarded as a significant contributor to brand trust. Positive reputations of stores often generate a substantial level of customer trust whilst

interacting with these stores through grocery apps. However, a poor store reputation usually results in levels of distrust among customers. The findings are consistent with (Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar, 2019), who found that when customers interacted online with a store they had physically visited, they were more likely to display a higher level of trust in the brands associated with the shopping app. It was also found that for mobile apps to succeed, they must provide sufficient accurate information to support the customer's buying decisions. Furthermore, it has been established that apps which facilitated reviews and ratings by peer customers further enhanced the trust levels of customers. This is supported by (Albayrak et al., 2023), who found that mobile apps relating to travel bookings relied on reviews and ratings based on reputation and previous experiences to foster brand trust amongst customers.

5.2.3. Objective 3: to examine the customer's perceptions of brand loyalty whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

The responses in relation to questions 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 pertain to aspects of brand loyalty whilst using grocery apps. These items consider whether customers are loyal to apps which satisfy their needs. These questions also incorporate the design and configuration of these apps in terms of tailoring product offerings to customer's needs, which are viewed through the lens of brand loyalty.

The respondents agreed (69 %) with the items measuring brand loyalty within the context of customer satisfaction, the relationship with the physical store and the customisation of products and services offered by grocery apps to meet the needs of customers. A median score of 4 indicates that customers seek apps that satisfy their online shopping needs. These results also suggest that customers gravitate towards grocery shopping apps that offer products and services which are tailored to their shopping needs.

Utilitarian values: Brand loyalty is vital to marketers and the organisation, as it unlocks revenue streams and can result in reduced marketing costs, which forms the basis for competitive advantage for organisations. Respondents agreed (68 %) with the items relating to the functional value sought whilst interacting with grocery shopping apps. This is consistent with the findings of Redda (2020), who found that customers gravitated towards apps that fulfilled the primary function of grocery shopping by matching customers' needs with the necessary products and services. The utility value which customers seek while using grocery

apps influence the customer experience, which in turn influences a customer's loyalty to the brand. This is supported by (Rauf, Pamolango, Uloli and Tjomo, 2023), who suggested that when customers are happy with the experience of using a product or service from a brand, they are likely to remain loyal to a brand as the brand provides value which cannot be found in any other competing brands.

Satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is a significant antecedent to brand loyalty and determines the level of emotional attachment a customer develops with a brand. Customer satisfaction is regarded as a feeling of satisfaction derived when perceived expectations are met and surpassed by an organisation. Organisations need to exploit and enhance brand loyalty within their customer base as it is widely believed that acquiring new customers is a much more expensive exercise than developing existing customers. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (73 %) that their preferred grocery shopping app satisfied their needs and that their choice of grocery app belongs to the grocery store they frequent the most. This is consistent with findings by Cuong (2020), who found that satisfaction positively influenced brand preference and loyalty when customer expectations were constantly aligned with actual brand performance. Similar findings by (Sinemus, Zielke and Dobbelstein, 2022) suggested that satisfaction and loyalty levels were higher for multichannel customers than single-channel customers, which indicated that shoppers displayed higher satisfaction levels when shopping in both online and offline contexts. These findings also suggested that consumers tend to trust online grocery apps which were backed by stores with a physical presence, which ultimately influenced the level of loyalty towards the branded app as customers perceived these apps to be merely an extension of the parent brand (Kaushik, Mohan and Kumar, 2020).

5.2.4. Objective 4: to identify the customer experiences while using grocery retail shopping apps.

Questions 6.1 to 6.4 are based on the ease of use and the customers' perceptions of cost savings, product variety, discount benefits and security concerns. The items focus on the customer's utilitarian values, which they seek from apps to enable the efficient completion of tasks. The primary reason customers seek grocery shopping apps is the convenience they offer, together with the perceived value attached to these apps.

The responses indicated that consumers were neutral about their experiences pertaining to the variety of products, discount benefits and security concerns, with a total median score of 3.25. However, it is noted that there was a strong agreement (67 %) with the question relating to the ease of use of the grocery shopping app.

Singh and Soderand (2020) suggested that product variety and cost savings provided customers with options to meet their diverse needs, enhancing their satisfaction level, which in turn resulted in positive online shopping experiences. Puspitasari, Rusydi, Nuzulita and Hsiao (2023) postulated similar sentiments. They found that the utilitarian values of online customers were driven by value-added initiatives by grocery retailers, which influenced their experience with grocery shopping apps. It was suggested that this initiative supported the primary function of task completion and positively influenced the repurchase intention of customers. Kim (2021) indicated that although service levels were a significant indicator of satisfaction amongst online shoppers, cost savings and discounts kept the consumer engaged and satisfied. The responses from this study suggest that online grocery apps do not reflect the cost savings and discounts available at the physical stores. Another reason for this is that there are minimal differences between store prices and online apps, and although in some instances online apps may be 5% cheaper, the factoring in of delivery fees erodes these savings and affects customers' perceived value of cost savings and discounts (BusinessTech, 2018).

However, it is accepted that consumers' primary utilitarian motivation for using grocery retail shopping apps is task completion and the value placed on the efficiency with which tasks can be completed. This relates to how quickly goods are purchased and delivered to customers. Respondents agreed that it is easy to use the app and more convenient than shopping in the physical store, which suggested that consumers value convenience and ease of use above other utilitarian values. According to Raaba'i (2020), customers sought to purchase groceries online due to the avoidance of queues and driving to the physical store to purchase groceries. It was suggested that travel time associated with traditional grocery shopping was a crucial factor when deciding to use a grocery shopping app. It was found that situational factors also influenced the customer's experience whilst using online grocery apps, as customers with rushed lifestyles, being unable to commute and having children gravitate towards utilitarian factors such as ease of use and speed of deliveries from grocery shopping apps.

5.3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the guiding aim of the study will provide a reference point to provide insights into the findings. Understanding the factors that influence the branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban is the study's primary focus, guiding the research questions.

The influence of digital technology has profoundly influenced how customers interact with brands within the context of grocery retail shopping apps. The grocery retail industry is highly competitive, with grocery apps presenting opportunities to gain a competitive edge, which retailers must exploit.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into consumers' perceptions and behaviour and what they expect from these grocery shopping apps. The proliferation of technology and its subsequent adaptation have presented multiple channels through which to shop and interact with grocery retail stores. It is evident that consumers in Durban seek support from the parent brand (the grocery store) when using grocery apps. This points towards the fact that consumers have a long-standing relationship with the retail stores in South Africa and have become accustomed to the quality of products and service levels of the physical store. Therefore, they place a high reliance on the parent brand to resolve issues with the grocery app, thus positively influencing the level of trust in the grocery app and the products sold by the apps.

Regarding the customer experience construct and the utilitarian values of customers using grocery shopping apps, customers displayed a higher propensity to accomplish the task above other utilitarian values of cost saving and discounts. This could be because consumers have rushed lifestyles and seek convenience as their primary motivation to use these grocery shopping apps. The findings also suggest that Checkers Sixty 60 is the dominant grocery shopping app and is highly favoured amongst consumers. This correlates with consumer's need for convenience and efficient task completion as Checkers Sixty 60 promises the speedy delivery of goods, within 60 minutes.

Perceived quality factors and experience with the physical store factor highly in respondent's responses, indicating that customers seek the same quality products as you would find in the physical store as they view grocery apps as an extension of the store. This suggests that they value and trust the parent brand who consistently matched their perceived expectations with actual performance.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

The final chapter of the study presents a synthesis of the findings and conclusions, providing a basis for recommendations. This chapter will highlight the implications for practice and research based on the findings and put forward recommendations to facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject based on the research objectives. Limitations regarding the research are also identified, along with areas for future research.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

This study concludes that customers' perceptions of brand image whilst using grocery retail shopping apps are influenced by the quality of the products offered by these apps. This means that perceptions of quality regarding the products which are associated with the app has an influence on the brand image of the parent brand. Moreover, the perceived quality of the products available on the grocery app supports the theory that quality has a positive influence on brand image.

Regarding customers' perceptions of brand loyalty while using grocery retail shopping apps; it can be concluded that the level of customer loyalty is positively correlated with higher levels of customer satisfaction. This level of satisfaction occurs when the products offered by the grocery app and the related parent brand consistently meet the expectations of customers. This aligns with the theory that brand loyalty is indeed strengthened by consistent brand performance, resulting in satisfactory customer experiences and positive emotional associations with the brand.

This study reached two significant conclusions regarding customers' perceptions of brand trust in the context of grocery retail shopping apps. Firstly, it was found that customers exhibited high levels of trust in both the products featured within the grocery shopping app and the app itself when there was substantial after sales support from the physical grocery store. Secondly, the reputation of the grocery store played a crucial role in influencing the level of trust that consumers placed on the grocery shopping app and its products. These findings suggest that the reputation and support of the physical grocery store are pivotal factors in building brand

trust among consumers. This aligns with the theory that consumers develop higher levels of trust when there are multiple touchpoints available for interaction with the parent brand.

In relation to customer experiences whilst using grocery retail shopping apps, it was concluded that customers valued task completion above the other utilitarian values of cost savings and discounts. Respondents placed emphasis on the ability to quickly and easily order groceries through grocery shopping apps that are designed to facilitate ease of use and task completion.

The study's findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).

According to the TAM perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are key determinants of technology acceptance. This study concluded that established brands featured in the grocery app and the parent brand of the grocery store leverage their reputation to build trust and loyalty. It was found that when brands are associated with higher quality, users perceived the grocery app as being useful and are likely to adopt and revisit the app. This is supported by the finding that respondents perceived their shopping experience with the grocery shopping app and the physical store as the same; whereby these apps were viewed as brand extensions of the physical store. Therefore, strong brands reduce perceived risks, amplify usefulness and enhance the adoption of grocery shopping apps through trust and familiarity.

Regarding the UTAUT model, findings confirm that when grocery shopping apps feature brands known for consistent and superior quality, the level of performance expectancy increases. Additionally, the results suggest that respondents trust the grocery shopping app more when its design and feel emulate the experience of shopping in a physical store. Consequently, respondents perceived the grocery app as easy to navigate and free of effort because these apps were developed and supported by long-established grocery retailers, resulting in the adoption and reusage of these apps.

6.3. Implications of the study

This study delves into the factors that influence the branding of grocery retail shopping apps at a time when organisations seek to enhance and expand their marketing channels through technology. It, therefore, provides significant insights into the continuous design improvement of apps, promoting brand values and trust and enhancing the user experience.

6.4. Implications for practice

6.4.1. Continuous app design improvement

The rate of technological change is significant and continuously impacts the operational and marketing strategy of grocery retailers. Grocery shopping apps present a new frontier as a source of competitive advantage for brands in the grocery retail landscape and, therefore, need to be continuously updated. The findings of this study reveal that consumer behaviour is evolutionary and influenced by a mix of functional and emotional motives. The inherent nature of grocery apps means that they need to be continuously updated to respond to changes in consumer's hedonic and utilitarian specificities. With a mere 3.2% retention rate after a 30-day period, it is imperative that app developers seek to keep consumers engaged and interacting with apps. The study findings indicate that customers perceive the quality of brands sold by the app based on the design and features of the app itself. Mariano, Silva, Mello and Santos (2022) posited similar views and suggested that mobile apps strongly influenced a company's brand image; therefore, they needed to be constantly modified to match the organisation's performance standards.

6.4.2. Promoting brand values and trust

The level of trust consumers place in brands whilst interacting with grocery shopping apps is dependent on how the app represents the values of the physical store. The results of the study showed that customers feel comfortable using apps where the values of the grocery retailer are translated into the design and features. Therefore, grocery retailers can enhance the level of consumer trust by aligning certain features with the brand's core values, which can assist in improving consumer trust levels. For instance, if the retail store focuses on being a cost leader, the app's design should highlight savings gained by the customer on each purchase, reinforcing the store's values.

6.4.3. Enhancing user experience

Consumers seek grocery apps that are easy to navigate and support their hedonic and utilitarian values. To enhance customer engagement whilst using grocery apps, grocery retailers should ensure that users are supported at all stages of their shopping journey. The responses indicate that consumers seek the support of the physical store whilst using grocery apps, and they display significant levels of trust for retail stores that have many touchpoints with which customers can interact. Therefore, grocery retailers should ensure that adequate and alternate channels are available to support customers on the grocery shopping journey. One of the reasons for this is that customers develop a sense of loyalty to the physical store based on past experiences with the grocery store. Grocery retailers should also implement continuous improvements to apps, which will enhance customer trust in the brand as it demonstrates a commitment to meeting the customer's shopping needs, thereby ensuring that their apps remain relevant to the market.

6.5. Implications for research

6.5.1. Other areas of marketing

The study focused on branding, which represented one area of marketing pertaining to the use of grocery retail shopping apps. The area of consumer behaviour could provide significant insights into changing consumer preferences and how it shapes the online grocery shopping journey. Other areas of marketing, such as customer relationship management, which entails the use of data to manage customer relationships, improve customer satisfaction and create personalised experiences, could provide a deeper understanding of customer experiences and interactions with grocery shopping apps.

6.5.2. Quantitative study

The study is a quantitative study, which has its limitations. To enable a deeper understanding of the depth of human experiences and perspectives, a mixed-method approach can be undertaken to understand how customers feel about brands and their emotional attachment to

brands. This can be achieved through gaining qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups to understand the hedonic values of customers whilst using grocery shopping apps.

6.5.3. The scope of the research

The research has provided valuable insights into the influence of branding and customer experiences whilst using grocery shopping apps. The scope of the study was limited to the city of Durban. Therefore, a broader scope and sample are recommended to determine if these findings could be validated and replicated across other cities and provinces in South Africa. This broader scope will assist researchers with a deeper understanding and insights into the online grocery retail landscape of South Africa.

6.6. Recommendations

The recommendations suggested below aim to provide actionable insights to enhance the practical application of this research based on the findings of the preceding chapters. Concerning the outcomes of this study, the following areas are suggested for future exploration:

6.6.1. Maintaining touchpoints

In this study, respondents indicated that they placed greater trust in the grocery shopping app and the products sold by the app if it was supported by the parent brand (the physical store). They believe that should they encounter problems with the shopping app, or the brands sold by the app, they can always approach the grocery store to resolve their issues. Respondents also perceived products sold on the apps to be of higher quality if they were the same products sold in the physical store. Therefore, grocery retailers should ensure that grocery shopping apps are always backed by the physical store. This can be achieved by reminding consumers about various offline channel options and features available to them, thereby promoting cross-channel interactions. This could also prove useful to grocery retailers seeking to expand the reach of these grocery shopping apps by establishing micro centres to provide additional touchpoints for consumers in areas not serviced by large shopping centres and malls.

6.6.2. Improving efficiency

The responses indicate that consumers seek to perform their tasks quickly and efficiently and focus primarily on task completion over other utilitarian values such as cost savings and discounts. Retailers and app developers should seek ways to improve efficiency, speed of delivery, and payment services to improve consumer satisfaction levels. Regular app updates and newer user interfaces should be communicated to app users to reinforce the grocery retail store's commitment to enhancing the user's experience. For example, a short video demonstrating the retail store's commitment to providing a seamless experience when users open the app will enhance trust in the app and the grocery retail store brands. Leveraging artificial intelligence to provide accurate information on product availability will also assist consumers in performing their tasks more efficiently.

6.6.3. Enhancing the communication of values

Grocery retailers should consider a greater representation of the store's values on grocery shopping apps via interventions such as push notifications and social media platforms. Using social media influencers who represent the core values to market the core value proposition of the retail store will enhance the level of trust of app users and convince offline users to download and use the grocery app. Values can also be communicated to offline customers through advertising within the physical store to persuade offline customers to download and use the app and reinforce the store's values with existing app users.

6.7. Limitations of the study

Despite a study's careful design and implementation, there are always limitations that need to be identified and acknowledged to facilitate a transparent study that strengthens contextual understanding and provides a balanced interpretation of results.

The sample size represents a limitation which influences the generalisability to a broader population and other cities in South Africa. Furthermore, although the sample size was adequate in relation to establishing patterns in responses, the sample size suggested by the

Kricjic and Morgan table could not be attained due to time constraints and low response rates. To overcome this, future research should consider larger samples from various metros across the country to enhance generalisability and not limit these findings to one city.

The cross-sectional nature of the study presents its limitations and does not consider changes in the perceptions of customers as they engage with grocery apps over a period of time. This limitation does not allow for the assessment of technological change and the evaluation of years of experience using grocery apps, which could provide valuable insights into how experienced users perceive branding whilst purchasing through grocery apps. Therefore, an investigation over a period of time can provide useful insights into the relevance and sustainability of grocery apps over the long term.

The study also focused on the utilitarian value derived from grocery retail shopping apps when investigating customer's experience whilst using grocery apps. Therefore, it is recommended that a more holistic view be considered, including hedonic values, to understand customers' emotional perceptions and values whilst interacting with grocery shopping apps.

6.8 Future studies

Although this study provided valuable insights into customers' perceptions of branding and experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps, it is necessary to recommend future studies to provide deeper insights into the subject.

6.8.1 Distance and app usage

There is limited research as to how physical distance from the retail store affects the adoption, usage and level of trust customers place in shopping apps. Home-to-store distance may change how customers perceive brands associated with shopping apps. As shopping trip frequency strongly correlates with the distances customers have to travel for groceries, further research will provide insights into the adoption and customer experiences of grocery apps based on geographical dispersion.

6.8.2 Mixed method approach

This study is quantitative in nature which has its limitations. Therefore, it is recommended that to enable a deeper understating of the cognitive and emotional relationship customers have with brands whilst using grocery apps, a mixed method be utilised. This could prove valuable to understand the customer's perceptions of brands from a hedonic perspective.

6.8.3 Longitudinal Study

This study is cross-sectional and, therefore, measures customer's responses at a point in time. However, a study which observes the same participants over multiple points in time will assist with the identification of trends and causal relationships. This is important as technological trends change over time which will influence consumer preferences in relation to branding whilst using grocery apps. Also, considering the fierce competition experienced by the grocery retail industry, it will be useful to understand how increased competition over time influences customers' perceptions of branding and their experiences whilst using the grocery app.

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Appendix One: Informed Consent Letter

Informed Consent Letter 3C

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

Dear Respondent,

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Vishay Heeralal ([REDACTED])

Supervisor: Professor Bibi Zaheenah Chummun (031-260 8943)

HSSREC Research Office: Tel. 031-2608350/4557; Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

I, Vishay Heeralal, am currently a Master of Business Administration student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership at the University of KwaZulu Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **Investigating the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban**. The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban.

Through your participation, I hope to understand how branding influences the use and intention to repurchase and revisit mobile grocery shopping apps. It will also contribute to understanding customer experiences whilst interacting with brands and organisations.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The survey should take you about 20 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Yours Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

This page is to be retained by the participant.

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

MBA Research Project
Researcher: Vishay Heeralal (██████████)
Supervisor: Professor Bibi Zaheenah Chummun (031-260 8943)
HSSREC Research Office: Tel. 031-2608350/4557; Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT

I.....(full names of participant)
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project,
and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

This page is to be retained by the researcher.

Appendix Two : Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Investigating the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban.

1. Demographic information

The below section relates to the participant's biographical information.

1.1 Gender

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Non- Binary
- Other: _____

1.2 Age

Mark only one oval.

- 20-30 years old
- 31-40 years old
- 41-50 years old
- 51- 60 years old
- 61-70 years old

1.3 Education level

Mark only one oval.

- High School
- College Diploma
- University Degree
- University Post Graduate degree
- Other: _____

2. Type of shopping application and frequency of use

This section relates to the type and preference of grocery retail shopping apps used and the frequency of use.

2.1 Have you used a grocery shopping application in the last two years?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

2.2 Which of the following grocery apps have you frequently used in the last two years? (you can select more than one option)

Check all that apply.

- Checkers Sixty60
- Pick and Pay ASAP
- Woolies App
- Spar2U
- Other:_____

2.3. Which of the following grocery apps is your preferred grocery shopping app?

Mark only one oval.

- Checkers Sixty60
- Pick and Pay ASAP
- Woolies App
- Spar2U
- Other:_____

2.4. How often do you make use of a grocery shopping app over a monthly period?

Mark only one oval.

- Once a month
- Twice a month
- Three times a month
- More than three times a month

3 Brand Image

The questions below relate to Brand Image within the context of grocery retail shopping apps presented on a 5-point Likert scale with the following options :1 - Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral,4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

3.1 The grocery shopping app has the same look and feel as the physical store, therefore it is merely an extension of the store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3.2 The grocery store has quality products and good service, which is translated into the grocery shopping app design and features.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3.3 The interface of the grocery shopping app reminds me that it is not the same as shopping in a physical store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3.4 The values of the grocery retail store in relation to quality, value and service are represented by the grocery shopping app.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4 Brand Trust

The questions below relate to Brand Trust within the context of grocery retail shopping apps presented on a 5-point Likert scale with the following options: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral,4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

4.1 The quality of products sold on the grocery shopping app is not the same as those you buy in-store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4.2 If I experience problems with the grocery shopping app, I can rely on the parent brand (Retail Store) to resolve this issue promptly.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4.3 I trust the brand of the physical store; therefore, I also trust the grocery shopping app.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4.4 I have faith in the grocery store brand; therefore, I feel the grocery shopping app is merely an extension of this brand.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5 Brand Loyalty

The questions below relate to Brand Loyalty within the context of grocery retail shopping apps presented on a 5-point Likert scale with the following options: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral,4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree.

5.1 I tend to use the grocery shopping app indicated above the most because it satisfies my needs.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5.2 I use the grocery shopping app of the grocery retail store that I frequent the most.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5.3 If the preferred grocery shopping app is not working, I immediately use another grocery shopping app.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5.4 My preferred grocery shopping app belongs to the grocery store, which understands my needs and tailors its product offering specifically towards my buying habits. Hence, I always use this grocery shopping app.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6 Customer experience whilst using grocery retail shopping apps.

The questions below relate to the experiences of customers whilst using grocery retail shopping apps represented by a 5-point Likert scale with the following options: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral,4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

6.1 I find that the design of the grocery shopping app facilitates ease of shopping and convenience over purchasing groceries in the store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6.2 The grocery shopping app does not have a variety of products to choose from when compared to the physical store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6.3 I feel that my security concerns are addressed by the grocery shopping app, whereby it feels safer to purchase on the app than in the physical store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6.4 I feel that there are discount benefits and cost savings from using the grocery shopping app over the physical store.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Appendix Three : Ethical clearance letter



16 July 2024

Vishay Heeralal (223112552)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear V Heeralal,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007276/2024

Project title: Investigating the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 25 June 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 16 July 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix Four: Gatekeeper letter

THOIBA TRADINGccT/A



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Reservoir Hills
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Tel: 031 262 0221
Email: [REDACTED]
C/K 2005/120001/23
Vat No: 453 026 5943

30 April 2024

Attention: Professor Bibi Zaheenah Chummun

Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Westville Campus
Durban
3630

Dear Professor Chummun

**VISHAY HEERALAL (STUDENT NUMBER: 223112552)
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

This letter serves to confirm that I, Yusuf Raiman, Manager of Premier Fresh hereby acknowledge and approve the research of Vishay Heeralal, student number 223112552 within our premises for the completion of his thesis in pursuit of his Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degree, specifically, his research topic of "Investigating the factors that influence branding of grocery retail shopping apps in Durban."

Please contact the writer if you need any further information.

Yours faithfully
On behalf of Premier Fresh

[REDACTED]

Yusuf Raiman
Manager

[REDACTED]
031 262 0221
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VAT: 4530265943
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THOIBA TRADING t/a PREMIERFRESH