



**Exploring Student Perceptions of Smart-Phone Brand Equity at the University of
KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Commerce**

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2018

Declaration

This research has not been received, at any point in time, for any degree at any university.

I Vuyisa Notshweleka do hereby declare that this dissertation is comprised of my exploration and experimentation except where specific acknowledgement has be given.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my appreciation to Alec Bozas, my supervisor, I thank him for his magnanimous guidance which aided me in the undertaking and completion of this study.

To my father, Vuyisa Notshweleka, I would like to thank him for loving, motivating and inspiring me, his undying guidance, belief, patience and efforts have continued to empower me in the undertaking of challenges I encounter.

To my late mother, Nana Notshweleka, I wish to express my appreciation for the abundant love and joy she exerted upon me.

To my family, I would like to thank them for their love, support and many contributions.

Last but not least, I thank God all mighty for making everything possible.

Glossary of Terms

Brand:

Different distinctions exist regarding what is a brand. According to Keller (2013) the American Marketing Association argues a brand is technically a design, sign, name, symbol, term or an amalgamation of them for the purpose of distinguishing and identifying goods. Business and marketing practitioners on the other hand have often referred to brands as more than a brand element such names and logos, the industry concept of a brand is something that has acquired reputation, prominence, awareness, and so on in the marketplace.

Brand Equity:

Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities related to a brand, to the elements of a brand such as the symbol and name that could either increase **or** decrease the value that is being provided by goods or services either or both to a company or to the consumer. In order for assets (or liabilities) to be the basis of brand equity they have to be connected to the symbol or name of the brand.

Brand Loyalty:

Customer or consumer based brand loyalty is considered to be brand equity's pinnacle point. Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) state that brand loyalty is the extent or level of consumer attachment to a brand. If consumers are unattached and distant to a brand, meaning they only purchase with respects to the price and features of the brand with no concern related to the brand itself, the brand can be considered to have very little equity. A consumer base that purchases a brand that has competitors who have superior product attributes, a brand may be considered to hold significant equity because value for the consumer is created perhaps by the brands symbol (Sasmita and Mohd Suki, 2015).

Abstract

Brief statement of the problem: Students often have a purchasing power but they form a large portion of the smart phone consumer market. There was therefore a need to explore student's perceptions of smart phone brands on the basis of brand equity in order to determine which brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students. The research considered what criteria students use to assess brand equity and whether that translates into the purchasing of the brand.

Theoretical/conceptual framework: The brand equity theoretical framework utilised by the study is taken from David Aaker. Aaker's (2009) theoretical framework of brand equity includes dimensions of brand equity. The study seeks to explore student's perceptions of smart phone brand equity and to determine whether they differ from that of Aaker and whether students due to budget constraints compromise on phone of choice when purchasing. The theory of brand equity is justifiable because it provides the basis from which student's perception could resonate.

Methodology: A qualitative approach was undertaken in order to describe data at a level that is in depth with the use of in-depth interviews as an adopted research tool. Data was collected via the undertaking of 15 in-depth interviews and analysed via the process of thematic analysis.

The study has found that brands are an important element of a product as they are valued by students and contribute to the overall achievement of student satisfaction. Findings show that top brands survive or succeed due to their marketing campaigns and support which provide brand credibility and equity. Findings show students lack technical awareness and rely on what they know about brands. Students find strong brands more attractive and valuable which leads to increased attachment and reduced chances of students purchasing other brands.

It was recommended that smart phone firms develop brand equity as it plays significant role with connection to the judgement of smart phone quality by students who find it difficult to separate a brand from a product. It was recommended that smart phone brands undertake integrated marketing for exposure in marketing channels occupied by students. It was recommended that smart phone brands clearly communicate meaningful messages regarding not only their products but also their brand and thereafter appropriately follow in order to develop brand equity.

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Chapter One – Introduction and Overview of the Research

1.1 Introduction

Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities related to a brand, to the elements of a brand such as the symbol and name that could either increase or decrease the value that is being provided by goods or services either to a company or to the consumer. According to Birari and Patil (2014) students typically have limited purchasing power yet form a large portion of the smart phone consumer market and for this reason this study has focused on student's perceptions of smart phone brands on the basis of brand equity in order to determine which brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students, consider the criteria students use to assess brand equity and whether or not that translates into the purchasing of the brand. This study utilised the relevant literature and obtained data from student respondents by means of in-depth interviews in order to answer the research objectives. This chapter introduces this study with the following matters being described: the field study, proposed journal, problem statement, purpose statement, research question, sub questions, objectives, significance of the study, delimitations, scope of study, dissertation chapter outline and concludes with the summary of the chapter.

1.2 Field of Study

This study explored the discipline of brand equity and the building of brand equity. Research focused on establishing which smart-phone brands carry equity in accordance to students perceptions, what criteria students value with regards to brand equity and whether or not that translates into the buying of the brand. The selected research methodology was suitable for the research topic and its objectives, generating results which furnished solid conclusion.

1.3 Proposed Journal

The proposed journal is the Journal of Brand Management which is a fitting journal for this study to be published in, as this study addresses issues regarding brand building.

1.4 Problem Statement

The South African smart phone market is saturated according to press reports and comments received from senior employees at cell phone retail outlets. According to Kim and Mauborgne (2014) a saturated market typically features a high level of competition between similar business companies. With increasing competition, the level of differentiation between the various smart phone products is decreasing as the brands soon imitate innovations introduced by competitors.

Students with limited financial resources form a significant portion of the smart phone consumer market as they are in need of smart phones in order to access the internet and services such as emails. Rosenbaum-Elliott, Elliott, Percy and Pervan (2015) argue that a majority of consumers not only pay close attention to the attributes or practical function of a product, but they also pay attention to the brand.

Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., (2015) claim the marketing scientists and practitioners have placed a significant amount of focus on brand equity with claims that it impacts the perception of potential customers. There are well over ten smart phone brands available on the market. **To understand brand equity influence on consumer judgement and behavior** this research was conducted in order to determine which brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students, what criteria they value in terms of brand equity and whether or not that translates into the purchasing of the brand.

1.5 Purpose Statement

This research was undertaken for the purpose of establishing which brands carry equity according to the perceptions of students, what point of reference they value in relation to brand equity and whether or not that translates into them buying the brand. In addition, this study affords understanding into the nature of branding, the importance of branding and the building of brand equity.

1.6 Research Question

What can one learn from student perceptions of smart phone brand equity that will enlighten one's comprehension of brand equity and the development of brand equity?

1.7 Sub Questions

- What are the student's perceptions of smart phone brands?
- Which smart phone brand/s is owned by the student and why?
- Which specific aspects make the student loyal to a smart phone brand?
- Is the student technically aware of smart phone brands?

1.8 Objectives

- Ascertain the student's perceptions of smart phone brands?
- Determine which smart phone brand/s is owned by the student and why?
- Determine which specific aspects make the student loyal to a smart phone brand?
- Ascertain if the student is technically aware of smart phone brands?

1.9 Significance of Study

The relevance of this study is based on the value in terms of understanding that can be provided with regard to the academic contribution concerning equity and purchase intent concerning smart phone brands. Previous studies may have focused on the same theory, such as the true worthiness of brand equity, but this study directly explores the perception of smart phone brand equity held by the student community from Westville UKZN.

1.10 Delimitation

Limitations with regard to achieving the aim of the study were encountered. The first limitation is the lack of time as the study is being conducted on a limited budget and on a short schedule. Conducting the study on one campus means that student's elsewhere and quite possibly mature students in post graduate studies may have different perceptions of brand equity, an example being medical school students compared to undergraduate students.

1.11 Scope of Study

This was a small-scale qualitative study conducted on the University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville campus.

1.12 Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction and Research Introduction

The research area of study is presented in chapter one along with the study's underlining questions connected to the objectives. References to the delimitation of this study have been provide.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two is composed of literature that is of relevance to this study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The research methodology is presented in chapter three along with the undertaken research approach and design. Target population, sampling size and method, data collection instruments, data quality control and ethical considerations have been presented and deliberated on.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion and Discussion of Findings

The presentation and discussion and discussion of findings introduced in chapter four.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations linked to each of the study's objectives are introduced in chapter five. Suggestions for further studies are also provided.

1.13 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the study. This study was designed for the purpose of gauging which brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students, what criteria they value in terms of brand equity and whether or not that translates into the purchasing of the brand. Key research matters such as the research problem, relevant objectives and the significance of this study were presented. For each of the research objectives, relevant literature from relevant authors are presented in chapter two which follows.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two consists of the literature review of the study. The literature review gives context to crucial terminologies and theories like brand equity and provide insight regarding the development of brand equity through marketing programs. The focal point of the research is undertaken in these disciplines and linked to the objectives of this study. The literature review analyses' whether or not brand equity exists in the minds of consumers, if it is meaningful to consumers, if it is of value to consumers and if it influences the purchase decisions of consumers.

The objective is to accumulate theoretical literature in order to develop a sound study simultaneously with the data that will be gathered in the exploration of the topic. The study examines brand equity in relation to consumer perception through the lens of Aaker's (2009) brand equity model and explores secondary brand association's impact of consumer perceptions with reference being made to Keller's (2013) secondary sources of brand knowledge.

According to Aaker and Biel (2013) brand equity has acquired increased interest from marketing academia and industry in recent times and institutions of marketing science often prioritize brand equity when it comes to research which has resulted in lot of documentation in the field. Marketing practitioners are continuously being presented with new means of developing brand equity as firms procure commercial value from consumer's perception of the brand as instead of solely procuring commercial value from the product or service.

2.2 What a Brand is

When firms engage in the process of branding, they use elements that form as the brand or part of the brand. Different distinctions exist regarding what is a brand. According to Keller (2013) the American Marketing Association argues a brand is technically a design, sign, name, symbol, term or an amalgamation of them for the purpose of identifying goods but business and marketing practitioners have often referred to brands as more than a brand element such names and logos, the industry concept of a brand is something that has acquired reputation, prominence, awareness, and so on in the marketplace.

2.3 Brand versus Product

Keller (2013) states that the relationship between a product and the brand in the eyes of many firms and consumers are inseparable or very difficult to discern as they are tightly related with each affecting the other. Though interrelated, the two concepts are distinguishable as they have different roles or functions to play.

Broadly defined, products may be a physical good such as cereal or vehicles, services such as insurance or entertainment supplied by firms for awareness, purchase, and consumption by a possible target consumer market for the purpose of satisfying a want or need for accumulation of profits for the providing firm (Armstrong, Adam, Denize and Kotler, 2014).

A brand on the other hand is greater than a product as it can contain dimensions that somehow distinguish it from alternative products created for the satisfaction of the same need. The distinction of products can result from rationality or tangibility connected to the brands product performance or it can be more intangible, symbolic and emotional with regards to what the brand stands for or represents (Kapferer, 2012).

2.4 Purpose of Brand

According to Aaker (2009) the purpose of branding is essentially to distinguish products and services of a firm from other firms, more especially when the products or services are similar or of the same category. Branding plays an important role for both consumers and firms as it assists consumers to identify and distinguish products and services being rendered by various firms, while on the other hand, detection and handling of various product is made easier for firms.

Keller (2013) states that for consumers, brands play a number of roles which include identification of the products source, the correct assignment of responsibility to the manufacturer of a product, the reduction of risk, the reduction of search expenses, the bond or bond with the product manufacturer, the signal of product quality and symbolic device. Yoo et al., (2000) further contend that brand equity results in distinctive customer perception after evaluation between the branded and or unbranded products or services with equal level product or service features.

For companies, brands play a variety of roles which includes a means of identification with regards to simplifying product tracing and handling, it provides legal means of protecting product features that are unique, it provides a signal for the level of quality that is satisfactory to customers, provides a means of equipping goods with associations that are unique, it's provides an advantage with regards to competition and it provides returns in terms of finance Keller (2013).

2.5 What can be Branded?

Anything can be branded as branding can be shared and applied amongst various different products as tangible goods like smart phones and services as intangible goods like insurance and creative ideas. Hakala, Svensson and Vincze (2012) argue that what is important with regards to branding is the amplification of consumer ability to not only identify but differentiate among the various brands in the same class or product group. The various differences are linked to the product or services attributes and benefits or connected to the image considerations that are not tangible.

A brand exists in the mind of the consumer and reflects the perceptions of the consumer. Aaker and Biel (2013) state the strong brands continuously provide consumers with information about not only what the product does and reasons why consumers must be interested but also who the product is through the use of brand elements such as names and logos. According to Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., (2015) firms benefit from branding every time consumers are in a situation where a choice should be made as brands play an important role in consumer decision making.

2.6 Brand Equity Definition

Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities related to a brand, to the elements of a brand such as the symbol and name that could either increase or decrease the value that is being provided by goods or services either to a company or to the consumer. In order for assets (or liabilities) to be the basis of brand equity they have to be connected to the symbol or name of the brand.

In situations where the brand elements such as a brand symbol or name is changed, either some of or all of the assets may be influenced or no longer exist, even though others may be changed and given an entirely new symbol or name. Brand equity will be founded on different assets and liabilities with reference to the context (Aaker and Biel, 2013).

2.7 Brand Equity Dimensions

According to Aaker's model (2009) there are four dimensions in brand equity that may provide a basis for consumer perceptions, reaction, choice and preference which include brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality. The fifth dimension, other proprietary brand asset, is a competitive advantage for a firm but does not directly impact consumers **which makes it irrelevant to what the study seeks to determine** and therefore was not be used to answer this study **even though it was discussed.**

2.7.1 Brand Awareness

Most often it is easier and more comforting for consumers to purchase products they are familiar with. The assumption is that familiar brands are reliable, have reasonable quality and will stay in business. Usually the chances of a familiar brand being chosen are higher than one that is unknown. Awareness of a brand is especially important in circumstances where the brand must be considered amongst others for further evaluation (Aaker, 2009).

Hakala et al., (2012) define brand awareness as the capacity of consumer aptitude in identifying the brand based in various conditions. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) say that brand awareness focuses on the firmness of a brands existence in the head of the consumer.

Malik, Ghafoor, Hafiz, Riaz, Hassan, Mustafa and Shahbaz (2013) claim brand awareness is linked to the consumer's ability to recognize that a brand forms part of a specific line of products and or the consumer's ability to recall that a brand forms part of a specific line of products. Brand awareness has often been undervalued by firms because it isn't sufficient in all cases such as creating sales for a new product but it is a step that is important when it comes to building brand equity. Brand awareness is made up of the recognition and recall.

Brand recognition is the ability of the customer to confirm previous exposure to a brand after being served with the brand as a signal (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2014). This looks at the question of whether or not after previous exposure they will have the ability to recognize a given brand when they enter into a store. Brand **recall** on the other hand is linked with the ability of the customer to

recover a given brand from their memory when presented with a product genre or group, the needs satisfied by that product group, or the situation usage as a signal.

According to Aaker (2009) brand awareness as composed of brand recognition and brand recall performance is created through continuous exposure which results in increased familiarity (brand recognition) and associations that are strong with the relevant buying or consumption or suitable product category signals.

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) say the characterization of brand awareness can be via depth and **breadth**: brand awareness depth is with connection to the chances of the brand being recognized or recalled by the consumer; the brand awareness breadth on the other hand is connected diverse conditions of purchase and consumption that the brand appears in the mind of the consumer.

Huang and Sarigöllü (2014) claim brand awareness's role in brand equity will be based on the condition and level at which awareness is accomplished. There is a continuum for brand awareness which ranges from a consumer feeling **of uncertainty** with regards to the feeling of recognition, to the belief **of** the consumer that the brand is the single product in its class. The representation of this continuum can be through three brand awareness levels that are highly distinct.

According to Aaker (2009) brand recognition is the lowest level as it is founded on a recall test to aid recognition where respondents via a survey are presented with brand logos from a product category and asked to identify logos they have seen before. Brand recall makes up the following level, founded by asking a respondent to provide the name of a brand in a product genre without aided recall.

According to Malik et al., (2013) top-of-mind awareness is the top level of brand awareness as it is the first brand that comes to mind, a special position dominating other brands in consumer minds. The role of brand awareness in response of the consumer is crucial and corner stone where brand associations can be linked.

2.7.2 Brand Associations

According to Sasmita and Mohd-Suki (2015) the increase of consumer familiarity to the brand will result in brand awareness. Consumer exposure to the brand will produce recognition and the linkage between the product genres, or consumption, or the other fitting purchase signals with powerful association will result in brand recall which is vital in creating brand equity. Buil, Martínez and Chernatony (2013) state that consumers have to initially be aware of the existence of the brand prior to them having various brand associations.

Aaker (2009) claims that brand associations occupy one of the dimensions of brand equity with brand associations being factors connected in memory to a brand. The value of a brand usually finds its basis upon the particular associations that are connected to it. Brand associations comes about when something can be linked to a brand and are in some way meaningful.

According to Severi and Ling (2013) brands representing something meaningful can bring about a positive consumer feeling or attitude. Brand associations that come into existence will also have a strength level, usually stronger when there are a set of organized and meaningful connections supporting it and or with a significant amount of exposure to consumer communication.

Aaker (2009) claims there are various types of associations which include product attribute, intangibles, use/ application, celebrity/person, customer benefits, user/customer, life-style/personality, competitors, relative price, country/geographic area and product class. Brand associations have to be organized into a group in a meaningful way to communicate meaning to a consumer as they are an underlying representation for brand loyalty and decision to buy.

Associations can provide value to a the company and the consumer by assisting in the processing of information, distinguishing between the various brands in a product category, providing consumers with reasons-to-buy based on the attributes of a product or the consumer benefits, creating consumer feelings and or attitudes that are positive towards the brand and for the company the value of the associations can provide a basis for further product extensions (Aaker, 2009).

Keller (2013) describes brand associations as either brand benefits or brand attributes. Brand attributes exist where a product is characterized by features that are descriptive. The personal value and meaning connected with product attributes by the consumer is referred to as brand benefits. What is important is the uniqueness, the strength and the favourability of the brand association sources as consumers must see differences that are meaningful amongst brands. The differential consumer response that gives rise to brand equity occurs when the brand associations in the eyes of the consumer are believed to be strong, favourable and are unique from other brands.

According to French and Smith (2013) the strength of brand associations are simply the degree to which people think about the information of a product and connect it to their knowledge of a brand that exists. The association's personal relevance as well as their continuous presentation to some information over time are factors that strengthen a brand's associations. The strongest brand benefits and attributes usually come about when consumers have had direct experiences and word-of-mouth while marketing efforts can also create them.

Armstrong et al., (2014) claim the brand associations that are favourable are successfully produced by a company when its consumers have been convinced that the attributes and benefits that are pertinent and give satisfaction to consumer needs and desires are possessed by the brand in a manner which produce an overall judgement of the brand that is positive. Not all associations of a brand will be held with equal regard by consumers in various purchase or use situations as the consumer situation and purpose for the consumption or purchase will vary. Keller (2013) states associations may be favoured in one situation but be redundant in other.

Armstrong et al., (2014) state the fundamental foundations with regards to the positioning of the brand has to do with a competitive advantage that is sustainable or is a selling proposition that is unique in order to provide consumers with reasons to purchase the brand. Marketers can fix the highlighted uniqueness upon benefits and attributes that are either product-related or non-product-related. Many brand associations are typically shared amongst competing brands resulting in the establishment of genre membership and the nature in competition.

Keller (2013) argues brand attributes include attributes that are product-related and non-product related. The product related are the products required physical components for the function the consumer expects it to perform while the non-product-related attributes are the products external aspects that's somehow linked in one way or another to its consumption of purchase.

According to Keller (2013) the product-related attributes can be differentiated with regards to the ingredients that are important and the features that are optional to the consumer, they are either needed in order for the product to operate, or made possible for versatility and any further customization for the consumer's personal use.

Keller (2013) states non-product-related attributes does not influence the performance of a product directly but may influence it purchase and the manner in which it may be consumer. The five types of non-product-related attributes include the price of the product, the user and usage imagery, consumer feeling and type of experience with the brand and lastly the personality of the brand. All these attribute do not affect the function of a product but play a role in the consumption and purchase of a brand.

Armstrong et al., (2014) claim the brand benefits which include functional, symbolic and experiential benefits are the other main association. Functional benefits are natural advantages derived from product consumption and are typically connected attributes that are product related. Symbolic benefits are mostly external advantages not derived from the consumption of products with attributes that are non-product-related. Experiential benefits connected to the feeling the consumer acquires when using the product and are connected with non-personal and personal-related attributes.

2.7.3 Perceived Quality

Malik (2012) describes perceived quality as the customer's perception of the entirety of the product or services superiority or quality with regards to the purpose for which it was intended, relative to other alternatives.

Sasmita and Mohd-Suki (2015) argue that it is not necessarily possible for perceived quality to be determined objectively, this is partly because perceptions are based on subjective consumer judgement regarding what is important. Consumer needs, preference and personalities are different and therefore the evaluation of a product cannot be the same. Perceived quality is relatively defined according to an intended purpose and varying sets of alternatives.

Consumer attitudes towards a brand will be founded by intellectual product imagery like the personality and or the symbolism that is shown by a brand. These aspects which add value to product are typically of the outmost importance. There may be no consistency between the evaluation and final judgement of the consumer with the products perceived quality, rather they could be based on methods and determination influences founded on the reputation of a brand or features like color or smell (Keller, 2013).

According to Buil et al., (2013) perceived quality is related to the customer feeling towards a brand as it would be informed by brand awareness and brand associations. Perceived quality is a consumers feeling of a brand in its entirety and it is therefore intangible, though its basis will typically be the underlying dimension such as the brand products characteristics like the product performance as a product quality dimension.

Aaker (2009) claims perceived quality is consumer based perception with differences from concepts that are related, namely: the manufacturing quality, actual or objective quality and the product based quality. Keller (2013) states that research includes primary ingredients along with supplementary features as dimensions that categorize the ways in which consumers create their opinions about the specific attributes of a products quality.

Supplementary features and product ingredient general dimensions include the products design and style and the products durability, reliability and its serviceability. The brands quality is typically defined by the belief of the consumer with regards to these characteristics and as a result the consumers attitudinal and behavioral approach towards a given brand will be affected (Keller, 2013).

According to Aaker (2009) the evaluations of consumers regarding perceived quality is founded upon the dimensions of quality. Their judgements are influenced by the dimensions of quality in the context of a product and a service.

Trentin, Perin and Forza (2012) say that there are general product quality dimensions that influence perceived quality with the inclusion of the product fit and finish, product durability, product performance, product reliability, product features, product serviceability and product conformance qualities. According to Aaker (2012) there are also some general service quality dimensions which include service tangibles, service responsiveness, service competence, service empathy and service reliability quality.

Aaker (2012) states the quality of a product is based not only on its function but it also includes its performance such as the accuracy, speed and the delivery and installation of the product. With regards to services the degree of assistance the swiftness, courtesy and a high level of assistance provided by the training and customer service. The repair service of a product is also of high importance.

Wells, Valacich, and Hess (2011) suggest several ways in which value can be provided by perceived quality, these include: reason-to-buy which influences the brand considerations process, channel member interest as a brand with perceived quality is meaningful to channel members like retailers, differentiation/positioning of a brand in the mind of the consumer following their assessment of its dominance in the market space, brand extensions where new products are introduced using the brand name and a price premium with the option of charging more.

2.7.4 Brand Loyalty

Customer or consumer based brand loyalty is considered to be brand equity's pinnacle point. If consumers hold no regard for a brand name, look at brands without distinction, perhaps solely focused on the products quality in function, price, performance, convenience and design, it is most likely that the brand holds insignificant equity. A consumer base that purchases a brand that has competitors who have superior product attributes, a brand may be considered to hold significant

equity because value for the consumer is created perhaps by the brands symbol (Sasmita and Mohd-Suki, 2015).

Yoo et al., (2010) state that brand loyalty is the extent or level of consumer attachment to a brand, created by the experiential satisfaction of a consumer after purchase or use. Brand loyalty demonstrates the likelihood of a consumer to change to another competing brand, more so when changes such as features, performance and prices occur. If consumers are unattached and or distant to a brand, meaning they only purchase with respects to the price and features of the brand with no concern related to the brand itself, the brand can be considered to have very little equity.

Buil et al., (2013) state that if customers prefer a brand rather than its competition who have better prices and features, the brand can be considered to have substantial value that could perhaps be linked to the symbol of the brand and therefore potential customers show more favourable responses.

Aaker (2009) points out that brand loyalty can be measured using various approaches. One approach of determine brand loyalty, more especially behaviour that is habitual, is by looking at the purchase patterns of the consumer. Measures that can be used include the repurchase rates, percent of purchases and the number of brands purchased by the consumer. The other approaches are founded upon the constructs of brand loyalty which are commitment, switching costs, liking and satisfaction of buyer.

Aaker (2012) distinguishes between the various levels of brand loyalty which include the bottom loyalty level which inhabits the non-loyal buyer, the second level where the buyer is satisfied with the service/product or is at least not dissatisfied, the third level has buyers who in addition to being satisfied have switching costs, the fourth level have buyers who have a true liking for the brand and the last level or top level holds the committed buyers with the highest level of brand loyalty.

Sasmita and Mohd-Suki (2015) argue the consumer base loyalty towards a brand decreases the brands openness to risk of competitive efforts. Competing brands may be less motivated in their

efforts to attract customers that are satisfied by another brand. The higher the degree of loyalty to a brand results in higher leverage in trade as consumers believe the brand will never be unavailable.

For the firm, brand loyalty is a strategic asset, providing important value especially with regards to competition. Value is provided as brand loyalty enables brand to decrease their costs in marketing, provide a firm with leverage in trade, gives a brand some time to react to efforts of competitors and lastly it assists with regards to **maintaining and defending their customer base from competing firms that seek to attract their consumers** (Aaker, 2009).

2.7.5 Other Proprietary Brand Assets

The last dimension of brand equity is inclusive of other proprietary brand assets. According to Wheeler (2017) proprietary brand assets include trademarks, channel relationships and patents. Brand Assets are of importance to a company as they assist in preventing competing firms from dissolving a firm's customer base and customer loyalty (Aaker, 2014).

According to Stim (2017) a trademark provides protection for brands from competing firms that may attempt to use similar symbols, packages and names in order to confuse consumers. A relevant trademark that is strongly recognized tends to prevent direct competition from imitators. A brand may have the ability to control a distribution channel due to a brand performance history. In order to be relevant these assets must be incorporated with the brand. If a trademarks value can be transferred easily to any other brand name, the contribution of the trademark to brand equity is low (Wheeler, 2017).

The other proprietary assets such as trademarks **were therefore not used to answer the study but were discussed in this study**. Aaker (2009) states other proprietary assets do not increase or decrease any value that is being provided by a good or service to consumers but rather they **may increase the value derived from the** goods and services **for** the company which manufactures **and renders them**.

2.8 Brand Positioning and Repositioning for Building Brand Equity

Buil, et al., (2013) say from the customer's point of view the equity of a brand is based on their evaluation towards the value of the brand products or service. Armstrong et al., (2014) final

analysis is that brands and their equity exist in consumer minds with a strong brand having a large amount of equity. Customer-based brand equity, according to Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2013) is the distinctive impact of brand knowledge, as the consumer memory structure, in connection to the manner in which a brand is marketed.

Armstrong et al., (2014) describe brand position as the position or location occupied by a brand in the mind of the consumer. Brand positioning is essentially the practice of designing the image and offer of a firm in order to occupy a position that is valued and distinct from other brands in the minds of the consumer. The firm's purpose in practicing brand positioning is to assist consumers in placing the product or service brand in the desired position of the consumers mind with the position being distinct and valued by consumers.

Keller (2013) claims in order for the brand to successfully acquire a desired brand position in consumer minds, it must successfully communicate the relevant offer and image that enables consumers to position the brand amongst other available brands in the market. Business/marketing practitioners firstly need to be know: the market they are targeting, their competitors, the points-of-parity with competitors and their points-of-difference with competitors.

2.8.1 Brand Positioning and Repositioning Guidelines

According to Jalkala and Keränen (2014) for competitive brand positioning it is essential for a brand to define and communicate a competitive frame of reference in order to establish the product or service genre membership for the brand to communicate to consumers the product benefits especially if a product is new and the category membership of the brand isn't clear. Once the brand has determined the group of product or service it belongs to, it must establish its points-of-parity and its points-of-difference.

It is essential that an established brand be able to reposition itself at the right times with the necessity being inevitable. A brands position should be altered very infrequently and during times where the effectiveness of points-of-parity and points-of-difference are significantly reduced (Keller, 2013). In the process of brand positioning there should be a reflection of the challenges and opportunities in the market with there being alterations in the points-of-parity and points-of-difference.

Brands may be presented with a common market opportunity characterized by the need to further deepen the brand meaning in order to permit expansion, this is referred to as laddering. A brand may be exposed to the challenge of responding to competitive actions that provide a threat to a positioning that exists, this is referred to as reacting (Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia and Taylor, 2014).

2.8.2 Benefits of Brand Positioning

Brand positioning can benefit from defining and communicating itself to consumers to differentiate themselves from other brands, making themselves desirable and easier to identify. Brand positioning can separate a brand from wider competition, reduce direct competition, and be located in a higher position in consumer minds. Brand repositioning can reinforce and revitalize a brand in the mind of the consumer through marketing activities of a brand. Brand positioning strategies can lead to bigger customer base and more revenue (Keller, 2013).

A firm can grow its brand equity through successful brand positioning and repositioning.

2.9 Secondary Brand Associations

Keller (2013) states secondary brand associations can indirectly develop brand equity as it features the borrowing of brand equity from another brand or other organizations. As illustrated in figure 2.1 labeled as Secondary Sources of Brand Knowledge, organizations can include companies, brands, events, countries, other third party sources, characters, channels of distribution, and spokespersons. Unique, strong and favourable brand associations will positively contribute to brand equity.

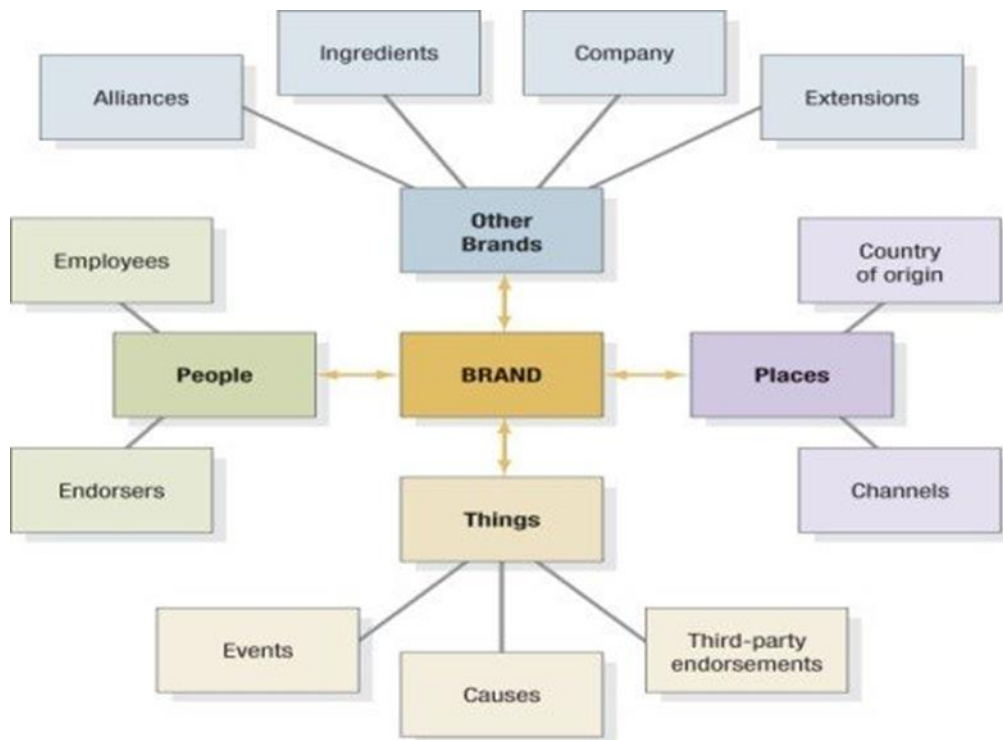


Figure 2.1 Secondary Sources of Brand Knowledge

Source: Keller (2013)

2.9.1 New Brand Associations

According to Singh, Kalafatis and Ledden (2014) brands that are connected to another organizations may be able to establish new associations. Brands that link to another organization can result in consumer creation of mental associations which resonate from the brand to the organization concerned, as a result, to one or more associations, perceptions, feelings, and the like connected to the concerned organization. Keller (2013) claims secondary brand associations are likely to influence consumer assessment of products that are new when consumers are short of ability or motivation to judge aspects that are related to the product.

2.9.2 New Brand Associations Effects on Existing Brand Knowledge

Connecting a brand to another organization can affect the brand association that is already in existence. When consumer knowledge of the organization exists and the connection between the brand and the organization has been identified by consumers, consumers may conclude that certain

associations, evaluations, or feelings that portray the organization may also portray the brand (Singh et al., 2014).

2.9.3 Consumer Behaviour Influence on Consumer brand Choice

According to De Mooij (2010) consumer behavior deals with the process of selection, buying, utilization or disposing of goods and services by the consumer. Armstrong et al., (2014) state the consumer behavior will be informed and influenced by the stimuli as inputs derived from the marketing stimuli and other stimuli. Following the stimuli input, the buyer characteristics and buyer decision process come into play and change the stimuli into consumer buyer responses.

According to Armstrong et al., (2014) the first stimuli inputs are derived from the marketing stimuli which are marketing efforts undertaken by firms and include product, place, promotion and price stimuli. The second stimuli inputs are derived from other stimuli which are forces that are within the environment of the buyer and include political, economic, cultural and technological stimuli. After the stimuli input, the buyer characteristics and buyer decision process come into play.

The buyer characteristics is made up of psychological, social, personal and cultural characteristics. The buyer decision process is made up by the evaluation of alternatives, post purchase behavior, information search, purchase decision and need recognition. The change of the stimuli by the buyer characteristics and buyer decision process can be explained in two stages (Armstrong et al., 2014).

The first stage involves the buyer's characteristics which influences the consumer's perception and reaction to the stimuli. The second stage involves the buyer's decision process which affects the consumer buyer's response. The end result after the two stages involving the stimuli inputs, buyer characteristics and buyer decision process will be the consumer buyer response. The consumer buyer response includes the consumer product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase timing and purchase amount (Armstrong et al., 2014).

2.10 Marketing Programs for Building Brand Equity

Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2013) specify that the key ingredient passages to consumer based brand equity is constituted by the distinctive consumer response that is derived from consumer brand knowledge and experience and lastly the distinctive consumer response that constructs brand equity manifests itself from consumer perceptions, favouring and response linked to every aspect of the marketing activity.

Armstrong et al., (2014) state marketing activities that are complimentary and well integrated into the brand can produce brands awareness, amplify the image of the brand through associations that are unique, strong, and favourable, generate positive responses to the brand due to high degree of perceived quality and further consumer attachment towards the brand.

Marketers of ideal brands have had to come up with creative solutions for the smooth integration of brand building solutions along with personalized experiences that celebrate the individual consumer's power. Experiential and relationship marketing are concepts that have been seen as the solution to the marketing personalization along with the strengthening of a brand (Keller, 2013).

There are numerous unique means which marketers can use for the strengthening of a brand. According to Keller (2013) strategic marketing activities that feature more specifically product, channel, communication, and pricing programs can increase the equity of a brand. Products and services along with various marketing programs that are compatible will form the bases for the growth of a brand equity.

2.10.1 Distribution Channel Strategy

According to Aaker (2014) the means of distribution have a huge impact on not only the equity of the brand but also the success of its sales. Stevenson and Sum (2015) describe marketing channels as a consortium of interdependent establishment incorporated in the process of delivering a service or product use or consumption. Johnson (2014) argues the strategy of a channel is inclusive of the design and management of channel intermediaries such as distributors, wholesalers, retailers and distributors.

Armstrong et al., (2014) state there are multiple types of channels and orchestrations in existence categorized into direct or indirect channels. Direct channels feature selling through the use of a companies or firm's possible contact to prospective consumers via in-person visits phone, mail, etc. Indirect channels on the other hand is when one is selling through the use of a third party external agent or broker rep such as wholesalers and distributors, retailers or business dealers.

According to Verhoef, Kannan and Inman (2015) today there are an increased number of channel designs with successful channel strategies having well integrated shopping experiences for consumers involving not only physical stores and catalogues as today they typically include the internet and phones. Today, more than ever before, marketers utilise both the two major marketing channels.

2.10.1.1 Indirect Channels

Indirect channels are characterized by multiple forms of intermediaries with the most common being business retailers or business dealers. Keller (2013) claims retailers are channels which are often the most visible to consumers, have the most contact with consumers and because of that they are the channel with the most opportunities to influence brand equity. Due to factors such as product or service availability, quality and price amongst others, consumers can hold a variation of associations to any sole retailer.

Retailers seek to develop brand equity of their own via the establishment of brand awareness and its brand associations strength, uniqueness, and favourability. A stores image along with the retailed products brand image are important factors. Assumptions with regards to quality of goods, degree of merchandise value amongst others can be made by consumers (Jones and Morgan, 2014).

- **Push and Pull Strategy**

According to Shankar, Kleijnen, Ramanathan, Rizley, Holland and Morrissey (2016) retailers, through methods of merchandising, displaying and selling products, are able to directly add or detract from the equity of brands they sell which is why manufacturers have adopted roles in assisting retailers in adding value to their brands.

For this reason, shopper marketing has accumulated great interest for marketers. Shopper marketing gives emphasis to producer and retailer collaboration with respect to marketing in-store such as displays and other activities which aim to build the brand and spur sales. Successful marketers such as Apple and Nike have been able to skillfully utilise the push and pull strategies (Shankar et al., 2016).

Keller (2013) argues manufacturers are said to adopt pull strategies when allocating marketing endeavors for the product consumer. This strategy is undertaken when consumers can influence the retailers with respect to pulling the brand product through the channel as consumers hold buying power.

On the other hand, the push strategy is undertaken in circumstances where the goal of marketers is to sell incentives directly to partners of the channel for product merchandising and selling to consumers. In the push strategy the aim of the manufacturer is to push the product through the distribution chain in order to reach the consumer (Keller, 2013).

- **Channel Support**

Yang, Hong, and Lee (2014) state manufacturers can provide services to channel partners in an effort to prevent channel partner breakups and keep them happy. Manufacturers can offer retail partners incentives or special access to new or unreleased product lines as resellers usually have high maintenance costs to deal with like paying staff. Manufacturers usually incentivize retailers for sticking to the manufacturer's recommended selling price, sharing benefit with retailers who comply as compliance strengthens the manufacturer's brand.

There are two vital components of partnership strategies with the first being segmentation activities where segments are created for the placement of retailers into unique and fitting segments or the customization of retailer treatment to provide brand support due to their unique capabilities and needs in marketing. Resellers may require special delivery systems, unique product blend, promotions that are customized and other unique sorts of arrangements (Fernie and Sparks, 2014).

According to Verhoef et al., (2015) co-operative advertising programmers is the other major means of channel support and brand building with manufacturers paying some of the retailers advertising expenses as retailers promote products by manufacturers. Cooperative advertising provides manufacturers with an opportunity to have increased relevance to the consumer as well as more selling impact to the consumer.

2.10.1.2 Direct Channels

Sales via direct channels have a variety of different implications on brand equity. Armstrong et al., (2014) explain direct channels feature company owned stores which exist when firms establish their own retail store, this allows them to create their own sales system, control the sales process and mend stronger relations with their consumers as they are directly in contact with the consumer.

- **Company-Owned Stores**

According to Keller (2013) companies that are skillful in retail and have company owned stores can optimize their retail outlets capability to build the brand through brand building marketing efforts, while unskilled firms may take away from the equity of their brand. Manufacturers must also be careful of not being seen as competition to third party distribution channel partners who sell their brand.

- **Store-Within-A-Store**

Farrell (2014) claims that other than establishing their own retail outlets, some marketers seek to develop their outlets inside major department outlets such as malls, this arrangement is referred to as a store-within-a-store. This can offer them the benefit of conciliating retailers while also enabling the company to keep its control of the design and execution of the products exhibition at the point of purchase.

These types of arrangements can aid retailers to increase foot traffic to their outlets while also developing their image as they would be situated closer or be in publicly known partnerships with more established and savvy brands (Paul, Sankaranarayanan and Mekoth, 2016).

- **Other Direct Channel Means**

MacKenzie, Meyer and Noble (2013) state other channels include directly selling to consumers via the use of electronic tools or devices such as cell phones and or email amongst others. For years catalogues have been utilised in sales, but direct sales methods also aid the strengthening of brand equity by growing the consumer brand awareness of the brands associated product line and raising consumer apprehension of the products main benefits.

- **Online Strategies**

Keller (2013) claims more and more firms are adopting the combination of physical channels such as buildings and online retail channels which are virtual. Many consumers prefer making orders online or over the phone as convenience is of much value to them, while others may prefer to visit a store to purchase or return goods purchased in a store or through online or phone retail channels offered by the company.

Armstrong et al., (2014) state many consumers become aware of the brands products via the online retail channel and further more conduct their research with respect to the product brand and where to find it. Research has found that multi-channel retailers were able to accumulate more revenue, spend less, and make more profit by having multi retail channels.

2.10.2 Major Marketing Communication Options

There are numerous marketing communications options that are already in existence and being undertaken by marketing practitioners from firms in various industries for the purpose of developing brand equity. According to Keller (2013) four major marketing communication options used for the development of brand equity include: advertising, promotions, online marketing communications, and events and experiences.

2.10.2.1 Advertising

Advertising as a nonperson type of exhibition and promotion of products, services, or ideas by a recognized sponsor. Advertising is a powerful way of developing brand awareness and brand associations that are unique, strong, and favourable and also triggering perception and feelings that are positive (Moriarty, Mitchell, Wells, Crawford, Brennan and Spence-Stone, 2014). Many research studies have found brand sales benefiting from increased investments in advertising.

Aaker and Biel (2013) claim there are many different channels of advertisement which include the use of television, radio, print, direct response, and place advertising. Different roles are played in marketing by advertising communication options for the strengthening of brand equity. Marketing communication aid the development of brand equity as it brings about brand awareness, connects the various brand associations, ignites perceptions that are positive, and raises stronger brand attachment and resonance between consumer and brand.

2.10.2.2 Promotions

Promotions usually work simultaneously with advertising. Khan (2014) states sales promotions endorse consumer trial of company products and or services by incentivizing their purchases. There are different types of sales promotions and unlike advertising which presents consumers with reasons to purchase, it provides consumers with incentives to purchase. Marketers can focus on some of the specific aspects that are connected to trade and consumer promotions.

According to Neha and Manoj (2013) trade promotions are developed in order to change trade behavior in order for the brand to be carried and supported by the trade which features distribution channel partners like retailers. Consumer promotions are also used to adjust consumer behavior in order to get them to start purchasing the brand product for trial and continue purchasing the brand product repetitively which will increasingly be the case if the consumers experience with the brand was positive.

2.10.2.3 Online Marketing Communications

Online marketing communications have become an important means of growing brand equity. According to Li and Kannan (2014) many marketing communication goals can be achieved using online marketing's various forms of communication and they have become valuable in connection to developing strong relationships with consumers. According to Keller (2013) there are three important tools used for brand building online which include websites, social media, and online advertisements and videos.

Keller (2013) claims well-designed websites can communicate valuable information about the brand and products to the consumer while also providing the consumer with a positive experience

associated with the brand. Online advertisements and videos can communicate the positioning of the brand in consumer minds in a manner that is persuasive and ignite perceptions and feelings that are positive by using broadcast media.

Keller (2013) argues social media is important for brand communication as it allows brands to create active engagement with consumers which will also enable marketers to strengthen the brand relations with consumers. Armstrong et al., (2014) state companies that are able to skillfully combine online marketing communications that are relevant to the brand can amplify the growth of the brand as these communications can increase the consumers understanding and experiences with the brand.

2.10.2.4 Events and Experiences

Smilansky (2017) claims events and experiences contribute to brand building in the dimension of the physical world such as local and international events and or stores. The various types of events and experiences will bring about brand engagement with the consumers imagination and senses while changing the consumer's knowledge of the brand.

According to Stevenson and Sum (2015) experience marketing occurs when brands engage consumers using experiences that are founded on the degree and type of consumer involvement and can include entertainment, aesthetic, escapist, and educational experiences. Brands that are able to provide the relevant experiences to the customers will be able to strengthen consumer attachment to the brand.

Event marketing comes into existence when there are activity or event public sponsorships. Event sponsorships offer marketers communication options for brands. Brands can widen and strengthen their relationship with the consumer market they target when they sponsor events as they play a role in delivering a valuable moment in the life of their consumers (Smilansky, 2017).

Keller (2013) argues relevant and well-designed event sponsorships can aid marketers in sharing the brand identity with their target market, increase brand awareness, create or strengthen consumer judgement of major brand image associations, supplement corporate image, create

experience and bring about feelings, express commitment to what they value, reward customers or employees and to permit opportunities for merchandising and promotions.

2.10.2.5 Mobile Marketing

Shankar et al., (2016) claim consumers are increasingly using smartphone devices for the gathering of information, to communicate, and to access entertainment, this presents marketing opportunities as smartphones are being handled by consumers at the point of sale or at the point of consumption.

According to Armstrong et al., (2014) mobile marketing is a broad communication option that has increasingly play a role that is more significant in the development of a brand. Some consumers prefer making purchases via their smart phones which increases the likelihood of contact occurring between the consumer and brand messages that can draw consumers into an engagement with the brand and as a result lead to the increase of the consumers brand awareness.

2.10.3 Product Strategy

Ponnam and Balaji (2015) claim the experience consumers will have with a brand will primarily be influenced by the brand product, their learnings from others regarding the brand, and what they have been told by the merchant firm concerning the brand. For a great brand to exist there must be a great product integrated into it. The experience of the consumer with the brand product has to meet or exceed the expectations of the consumer in order to bring brand loyalty into existence.

Keller (2013) argues the amplification of consumer based brand equity requires benefits that are both tangible and intangible to be embodied by the product and all marketing activities that are desired by consumers and the deliverables of the marketing program. The product experience of the consumers along with the after marketing activities are becoming more essential as the delivery of value to consumers prior to, during, and after purchasing the brand product adds to consumer based brand equity.

2.10.3.1 Perceived Quality

Aaker (2009) describes perceived quality as the consumer's judgement of the product or service quality or its supremacy in its entirety in comparison to other products or services in connection to the purposes for which it is intended to serve. Primarily due to continuous further product

development over time, bringing about consumer satisfaction in respect to perceived quality has proven to be more difficult as the levels of consumer expectations have risen.

According to Keller (2013) research studies have found specific attributes of product quality under these general elements: primary ingredients and supplementary features, product reliability, product serviceability, product durability, product style and product design. The belief held by consumers with regards to features generally validate quality and as a result they affect the attitude and behavior of consumers towards brands.

Product quality doesn't merely depend on the products functional performance but also on the performance considerations such as accuracy, speed, product delivery, and product installation level of assistance such as quickness and care of customer service and training, and lastly the repair service quality (Keller, 2013). If a brand can successfully communicate these aspects it may be enough to attract consumers to purchasing without the consumer checking and comparing specifications of between brand products,

Often of high importance to the equity of a brand are supplementary features of products such as personality that is represented by the brand or what is symbolized by the brand as this product imagery influences consumer attitudes towards brands. Judgements by consumers may not solely be in line with product perceived quality and may come from decisions made with lower levels of thoughtfulness, like unsophisticated heuristics and decision rules founded upon their relationship with brands, reputation of brands or features of products such as color (Beneke, Flynn, Greig and Mukaiwa, 2013).

2.10.3.2 Product After-Marketing

Murali, Pugazhendhi, and Muralidharan (2016) argue both the purchase and consumption of goods and services should be focal points in the product strategies in order to bring about a brand image that is desirable and will result in consumer trial and repetition of purchases. The consumer's product experience is essential for the development of brand equity. Companies have noticed the positive effects of after marketing on brand equity and as a result they have adopted various after marketing activities.

According to Raja, Bourne, Goffin, Çakkol and Martinez (2013) after marketing, in its basic form, is a marketing effort that is undertaken after the consumer has made a purchase, as a result, this is an extension of the relationship between the consumer and the firm occurring after the purchase and during the consumer consumption process. The extension of the relationship between consumer and company is necessary for the supplementation of the consumer's product experience.

Murali et al., (2016) state even though there are other means required to achieve the desired brand status, after marketing efforts such as customer service programs, user manuals and loyalty programs are a necessity. There has been an increase in the use of after marketing activities by firms as they identify the positive effects on the development of brand equity.

Keller (2013) claims it is necessary for marketers to produce user manuals consisting of clear and comprehensive instructions providing explanations of the product or service capabilities and how to achieve the benefits of the product or service. It is important for these manuals to be easy to use in order to provide the best possible assistance to the consumer.

User manuals were traditionally delivered a small manual document folded in the package consisting of the product, but manuals have become more deliverable and accessible to users through online and multimedia platforms where users can get help not only through written instructions but also receive visual demonstrations. Some firms send customer service representatives to homes for first time users to assist with installation and diagnosis of any issues encountered by customer (Keller, 2013).

Customer service programs are important in building brand equity as they play an essential role in sustaining a relationship with the customers through retention activities like customer communication programs. Research has found that two in three customers have changed companies because of mediocre or unsatisfactory customer service. Customer service programs supplement the value of the principle product via aftermarket support such as service plans, repair services and other unique services (Chen, Liu and Chang, 2013).

According to Kang, Alejandro and Groza (2015) loyalty programs are another method undertaken by marketers strengthen their relations with customers. Loyalty programs are conducted in many industries by various firms. Loyalty programs can include incentives, specialized services, premiums, and newsletters for consumers. Loyalty programs are meant to increase retention rates of consumers and raise the firm's share of purchases from consumers.

Breugelmans, Bijmolt, Zhang, Basso, Dorotic, Kopalle and Wunderlich (2015) assert even though there may be concerns with regards to privacy by consumers as they may be required to provide sensitive information such as banking details, these deals can be too lucrative for consumers to turn down. Building loyalty programs that are to be effective requires the brand to know its audience, constantly update the loyalty program in order for it to maintain relevance to the audience, listening to its most strategic customers, and engage customers to make them want to join the program.

2.10.4 Price Strategies

Ferreira and Coelho (2015) say there is a connection that exists between quality and price. Consumers typically place brands in rankings in accordance to price gradations in a product or service groups. From a brand equity perspective, price premiums are benefits obtained by firms with high levels of brand equity according the consumer perspective.

Keller (2013) states that in accordance with the perspective of brand equity, the price of a brand must be considered fitting and fair by consumers when taking into account the benefits the consumers experience from the product whether tangible or intangible and its respective advantages in connection to competitive offerings. The recognition of the importance on the preferences and perceptions of consumers, firms have adopted price setting approaches such as value-pricing and everyday-low-pricing.

Töytäri, Rajala and Alejandro (2015) say the value pricing approach seeks to fittingly combine the products quality, cost, and prices in order to satisfy the consumer's needs and wants and achieve the firms profit goals. Value pricing has been adopted by numerous firms as a number of firms

have come to realize the unwillingness of their consumers to pay price premiums if consumers judge the value of the brand to be inferior to the set price premium.

Danziger, Hadar and Morwitz (2014) claim that over time more attention has been directed to everyday low pricing as a way of establishing price reductions and promotions. Rather than chopping and changing prices by increasing and reducing them, marketers favour a more regular base price for products. Advocates of everyday low pricing claim establishing low prices consistently can aid the development of brand loyalty (Keller, 2013).

Keller (2013) claims price is used by consumer as an indicator and superficial cue for product quality. Researchers have suggested that price is not solely utilised as a sacrificial sign for product or service render, but it is a signal of product quality as well. Brands that are premium priced have typically been perceived by consumers to have a higher degree of quality and provide protection from price reductions from competitor brands that are lower priced.

Keller (2017) says price has a positive connection with consumer based brand equity as price is connected with perceived quality. One cannot assume price develops consumer brand attachment. Aaker (2012) explains loyal consumers do not utilise price as a criteria for the evaluation of a service or product, further more consumers are not influenced by considerations for prices.

According to Aaker (2012) consumers that are loyal to a brand will not be sensitive to price changes, in other words, they will not feel any less attached to a brand due to changes in prices as they are committed buyers without switching costs. There is also no direct connection between brand associations and price due to the fact that both high and low priced brands can be connected to benefits, tangible or intangible, delivered to consumers.

2.11 Theory Underpinning Study

2.11.1 Brand Equity Theory

The brand equity theoretical framework that will be utilised by the study is taken from Aaker's (2009) theoretical framework of brand equity which includes four dimensions that address customers: brand loyalty levels, the customers brand awareness aspects, the customers various brand associations and lastly the product quality which is perceived by the customer.

Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., (2015) say interest from business/marketing practitioners relating to brand equity as a concept is due to the belief that it enhances sales and therefore it is used by companies for the benefits. Brand equity has also been used by academic/scientific practitioners who conduct research on business and or marketing to test the theory.

Armstrong et al., (2014) define a brand as a company's source of identification through the use of brand elements such as the symbol of the brand or the name of the brand. Potential buyer's place a brand as a highly important aspect of what is being sold by an enterprise as it will assist them in distinguishing between the different sellers of products in the same genre. Keller (2013) states a favourable reaction from consumers towards a brand will be due to the resonance the brand has with the customer. The dimensions of this theory are shown in figure 2.2 below:

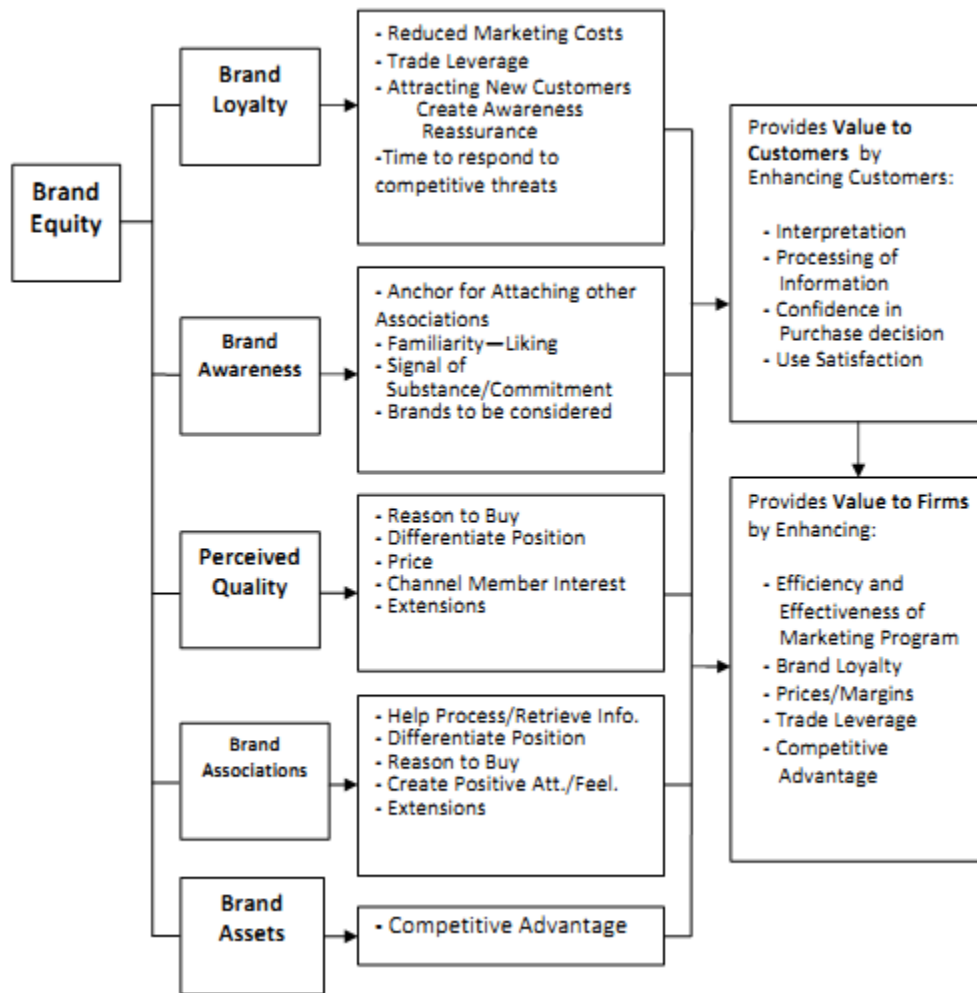


Figure 2.2 Brand Equity Theoretical Framework

Source: Aaker (2009)

1st Construct: brand awareness; Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) claim brand awareness is an asset that is typically undervalued, it has however been shown to have some effect on customer perceptions. Keller (2013) claims people are prepared to ascribe positive attitudes to products they are familiar to.

2nd Construct: perceived quality; Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) state perceived quality owes its referral of a special type of association to its effects on profitability and influence on brand associations.

3rd Construct: brand associations; According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) brand associations are elements in which customers have a connection to. Armstrong et al., (2014) say elements can include imagery, symbols, organizational associations, product attributes, brand personality and use situations.

4th Construct: brand loyalty; Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012) claim the brand loyalty concept is with regards to the strengthening of the size and intensity of every segment of loyalty. A customer base that is small in size but is intensely loyal can hold equity that is significant.

Aaker (2014) explains that brands are assets that can provide a competitive advantage for companies. Assets are derived from the dimensions of brand equity and these assets add to the equity of a brand. Profitability in the long run and advantage in competition can result from a brand that is powerful.

2.11.2 Application of Theory

Keller (2013) states a favourable reaction from consumers towards a brand will be due to the resonance the brand has with the customer. The study seeks to explore student's perceptions of smart phone brand equity via the lens of the following brand equity dimension from Aaker (2009):

1st Brand awareness; this construct will be adopted to explore the influence of brand awareness on Westville University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Perceptions of Smart Phone Brand Equity

2nd Perceived quality; this idea will be used to study the influence of perceived quality on Westville University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Perceptions of Smart Phone Brand Equity

3rd Brand awareness; using this construct investigate the influence of brand awareness on Westville University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Perceptions of Smart Phone Brand Equity

4th Brand loyalty; this construct will be used to explore the influence of brand loyalty on Westville University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Perceptions of Smart Phone Brand Equity

2.11.3 Significance/ Importance/Contribution of Study

The relevance of this study is based on the value in terms of understanding that can be provided with regard to the academic contribution concerning equity and purchase intent concerning smart phone brands. Previous studies may have focused on the same theory, such as the true worthiness of brand equity, but this study directly explores the perception of smart phone brand equity held by the student community from Westville UKZN.

The smart-phone industry is chosen over other industries due to the growth in sales, the large number of smart phone users, significant growth in smart phone users and the significant advantage of reputable smart-phone brands against smart-phone brands with the same or similar products but less equity and smaller consumer base.

Smart phone manufacturers and retailers in the region will have greater insight as to how students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal perceive the brand equity of various smart phone brands. This study will guide manufacturers and retailers on what to focus on when developing and when marketing the smart phone brands.

Understanding what features and issues give rise to a sound level of brand equity will enable retailers to stock and sell phones that meet student needs and should help them to develop a competitive advantage and thus greater sales and profits. To a lesser extent, manufacturers could learn from the research in order to provide what the market requires.

In addition to the above the research may yield aspects of brand equity that are not factored into Aaker's model.

2.11.4 Justification of Study

The study was conducted to provide insight and understanding to business/marketing practitioners the importance of building their brand equity looking at the benefits which include competitive advantage in their industry, increasing revenue/sales and bigger share in the market. If this study was not conducted business practitioners would not be provided with more information regarding

importance of building brand equity for increase in sales and growth in market share which should be the primary objective of business.

2.12 Conclusion

The literature review has given context to essential terminologies and theories such as brand equity and provided insight in relation to the creation of brand equity via marketing programs. The focus of the research is undertaken in these departments and connected to the objectives of this study. From the assessment of the literature in Chapter two it can be said that due to a number of different mechanics brand equity does exist in consumer minds, typically holds meaning to consumers, is of value to consumers and influences the purchase decisions consumer.

Theoretical literature data was accumulated for the purpose developing a sound study simultaneously with data gathered for the exploration of the topic. The study has examined brand equity in relation to consumer perception through the lens of Aaker's brand equity model and explored secondary brand association's impact of consumer perceptions with reference to Keller's secondary sources of brand knowledge.

According to Aaker and Biel (2013) brand equity has acquired increased interest from marketing academia and industry in recent times and institutions of marketing science often prioritize brand equity when it comes to research which has resulted in lot of documentation in the field. Marketing practitioners are continuously being presented with new means of developing brand equity as firms procure commercial value from consumer's perception of the brand as instead of solely procuring commercial value from the product or service. Chapter three, presents the research methodology and methods that have been undertaken in the study.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The third chapter presents the research design as well as the methods utilised to undertake the study. This chapter also explains how the relevant information dealing with the research question was accumulated and analysed. The reasoning behind the choice of research design, research approach, target population, data collection and the details as to how techniques for the analysis of data used will also be provided in each of the sections. The chapter presents the limitations of the study and ethical matters considered for the research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is a detailed plan that links the “hypothetical research” problem to the investigational research (van Wyk, 2012). The grounds for the kind of data collected, system adopted for accumulation and analysis; and application of information for the purpose of answering the research question is provided by the research design (van Wyk, 2012).

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) the following form part of the kinds of research designs:

- Exploratory Research: Has inadequate formal structure. The exploratory research design is fitting for studies that are in connection to subjects with low certainty. Exploratory research design has flexibility that is of a high degree.
- Descriptive Research: Is structured and issues accurate representation to the research objectives connected variables.
- Causal-comparative research: Is utilised for the purpose of examining a causative link between variables after the occurrence of the connection.
- Correlational research: Is utilised for the purpose of identifying the cause and effect association between two variables.

The study aimed to determine which brands carry equity, based on the perceptions of students, what criteria they value in terms of brand equity and whether or not that translates into the

purchasing of the brand. The study utilised an exploratory research design due to it being the most suitable design. An exploratory research design establishes the perimeter of the environment in which a phenomena is encountered and distinguishes the relevant factors that are suitable to the study.

In cases where there are few studies undertaken on a phenomenon, one undertakes exploratory research in order to better understand the nature of the problem. Creswell (2013) states that interviews may be conducted in an exploratory research study to acquire an understanding of a situation and the phenomenon of interest. There are qualitative studies that are exploratory in their nature, using interviews or observations as a means accumulating data.

At the point in which the accumulated data exposes some pattern with respect to the phenomena the study has focused on, theories are constructed and a hypotheses is created for successive testing. Studies that are exploratory are also required in cases where specific information is known but still require additional detail for the construction of a theoretical framework that is feasible. Studies that are exploratory can be undertaken by conducting interviews on individuals and or focus groups (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

The aim of the study was to determine the smart phone brands with the most brand equity according to the perception of students of University of KwaZulu-Natal. The exploratory research study design is undertaken for its importance with regard to advancing knowledge and understanding phenomena through successive construction of theory and testing of hypothesis.

3.3 Research Approaches/Paradigms

Research approaches are for the accumulation and the reporting of the accumulated data. There is the quantitative research approach which is a positivist approach, the qualitative research approach which is a phenomenological or interpretivist approach and the mixed methodology research approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative methodological studies, deal with research that brings about data that is descriptive. According to Punch (2013) a researcher aiming to achieve the accumulation of data with textual description regarding the manner in which a phenomenon is experienced by a target population can utilise qualitative research. Within a theoretical dimension, research that is qualitative aims to establish compatibility of the theory with the data. Qualitative research approaches place their reliance on case studies, grounded theory, action research and ethnography which uses interview schedules and observation techniques (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Principal to the phenomenological standpoint and consequently research that is qualitative is comprehending people from experiences of reality, current situations, and context of reference of their own (Collis and Hussey, 2013). Research that is qualitative has been detailed as naturalistic. Interviews that are qualitative are designed as conversations that are normal for the interaction that is natural and easier for the informants. Qualitative research aims to test the different perspectives of things with each view carrying equal credibility. All features of social life are important enough to be studied. All backdrops and people are simultaneously unique and similar (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 2015).

3.3.2 Quantitative Research Approach

The quantitative approach is applied in studies with a large quantity of subjects participating in the study and then it applies methods that are statistical to obtain patterns from the accumulated information (Ben-Eliyahu, 2014). The results from this approach can be applied to the wider population. Research that is quantitative utilises surveys, sampling and census methods for the accumulation of data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Quantitative research has an advantage in that it produces exact data in its numerical which is independent of the researcher. Research that is quantitative does on the other hand have the disadvantages in that the data accumulated is not in-depth (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3.3 Mixed Methodology Research Approach

Mixed methodology research approach constructs on both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The mixed methodology research approach enables a researcher to jointly accumulate qualitative data via individual interviews as well as quantitative data through surveys. This results in accumulation of data that is textual and numerical. It is possible to utilise mixed method research approach to address different research objectives which enables a researcher gauge and describe end results, build an analysis for a case in a manner that is in-depth, providing insight into the connection between variables, create new measurement instruments and bring about the advancement of social justice affairs founded upon multiple perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.3.4 The Adopted Research Design

Structural guidance is supplied by the research design and the research method which consequently encourages the examination of the data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In order to answer the questions as well as the objectives of the study it was important to undertake a qualitative research study, as it provided one the chance to detect the perceptions and judgement held by individuals on which brands carry equity, what criteria is used to assess brand equity and whether that translates into the purchasing of the brand. The qualitative approach, as opposed to the quantitative approach, does not utilise methods that are statistical as qualitative data is presented in the form of words which make up text. The qualitative approach is utilised in studies with a small quantity of subjects participating in the study and can be utilised as a starting point for a larger study but it is not possible to generalize the results from a qualitative study to the wider population as it falls short of a statistically large enough sample size (Ben-Eliyahu, 2014). The qualitative methodology is not merely a set of systematic data accumulating techniques, it is also a means of approaching a factual world to understand the study's questions and objectives and for produced findings that are to be solid (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The research has therefore used the qualitative research methodology as it allowed the researcher to ask open ended questions in order to answer the questions of the study. This was undertaken to ensure greater depth and understanding of the issues that students believe contribute to brand equity of smart phones.

3.4 Study Site

According to Simons (2009) the area or place where the study is conducted for the purpose of accumulating the data required is referred to as the study site. The study site is the University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville campus.

3.5 Target Population

Population is defined as a body of people, events, or other things that are of interest to the researcher to explore. The target population is defined as the body of units with specific features of interest determined by the researcher, such as a category of people (Draugalis and Plaza, 2009). The target population for this study consisted of students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville campus **regardless of department or education level**. As this was qualitative research there was no need to have a sample large enough to be statistically sound and the requirements of quantitative research are that a small sample be used. The target population can provide answers that are correct, providing the researcher with a better understanding of the problem and **enable the researcher to provide answer to the research question** (Hanlon and Larget, 2011:3).

3.5.1 University Students

The University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville campus students are the target population's for this study. Population size according to the registrar is 12,676. As this is a qualitative study, population and sample size are not as critical as they are for a representative quantitative study.

3.6 Sample

Yin (2009) states that a portion of a population in its entirety where the researcher accumulates data is referred to a sample. A sample is therefore a subset or subdivision of the target population. Through the investigation of the sample, it is possible for the researcher to reach conclusions that can be generalized for the selected population. There are two principle kinds of sampling designs: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

Probability sampling is a quantitative method aiming to find a subset of a population in order to represent the overall population. In probability sampling, the probability or chances of selection

for elements of a population as the study's sample subjects are known. Nonprobability sampling is mainly applied in qualitative studies. In nonprobability sampling, the probability or chances of selection for elements of a population as the study's sample subjects are unknown (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

This study undertook a non-probability sampling design which as it is more appropriate in qualitative research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

3.7 Sampling Method

Sampling has two general sets which are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling encompasses various methods that can be undertaken for sampling. Methods that can be used in probability sampling include: stratified, simple random, systematic, and cluster. Each method has the following description:

- Stratified: The target population for the study is separated into subgroups in accordance with specifications and the application of random sampling is made to subgroups (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).
- Simple random: The process for the selection of samples is undertaken in a way which presents equal possibility for each unit of the population to be selected (Hanlon and Larget, 2011).
- Systematic: The selection of a sample is from a starting point that is capricious and then fixed periodic intervals referred to as sample intervals will follow (Teddle and Yu, 2007:79).
- Cluster: The researcher, rather than sampling single units, samples groups that appear within the target population in a manner that is natural (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

Non-probability sampling also encompasses different methods that can be used for sampling with the inclusion of convenience, snowball, judgemental, maximum variation, and quota. These methods have the following description:

- Convenience: The selection process of samples has no defined technique. The selection of samples is founded on convenience (Dudovskiy, 2016).
- Snowball: The researcher will use this sampling method when it proves to be challenging to acquire participants. Participants are found using referrals from existing participants (Dudovskiy, 2016).
- Judgemental: Elements considered by the researcher as fitting for the study are selected as samples (Teddlie and Yu, 2007).
- Maximum variation: The categorization of the study's various points of interest is conducted and then the selection of samples that have huge differences in connection to the categories is made by the researcher (Teddlie and Yu, 2007:79).
- Quota: The selection of the sample is comes from a representative group within the target population (Dudovskiy, 2016).

Since qualitative research methodology was undertaken, to assist with the selection and inclusion of students in the sample non-probability sampling will be adopted. According to Draugalis, and Plaza (2009) non-probability sampling is the selection as well as the inclusion of elements or people of the population into the sample on the basis of the researcher's judgement.

Draugalis, and Plaza (2009) state there are no probabilities connected to the elements of the population with respect to them being included in this study's sample, this then suggests that the conclusion from the examination of the sample cannot be optimistically made general to the population. Convenience sampling, where population units available to participate in the study might be selected to become a sample subject, was used for this study.

According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) convenience sampling is concerned with the accumulation of data from units of the population that are conveniently accessible to supply it. In convenience sampling, all people or units of a given population as a subjects are selected for convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. Convenience sampling is usually undertaken in exploratory research and is possibly the best means of speedily and efficiently accumulating some information that is basic.

3.8 Sampling and Sample Size

Sampling is simply the subset population selection process for the representation of a target population in its entirety in order to investigate the sample and comprehend its features to make it possible to generalize such features to the elements of the population. The population's characteristics serve as approximations of the population, meaning all findings extracted from the sample of the study are made general to the study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

The sample size on the other hand is the number of elements or people in total that have been selected for inclusion in the study. Given that the qualitative research approach was adopted for the study, an appropriate number of 15 participants were included. As this study was qualitative, a small sample was used enabling the study to be in accordance with qualitative practice and convenience sampling was undertaken.

3.9 Data Collection Instruments

Data is information accumulated from primary sources like individuals and focus groups or secondary sources such as company records, publications and books during the research process. A data collection instrument is a device that is utilised in order to accumulate data with questionnaires and interviews being the major data collection instruments (Chang, Witteloostuijn, Eden, 2010). Data collection instruments are means through which data can be collected. In-depth interviews were used in order to accumulate data for this study.

Quantitative research assesses questions that are close-ended. The outcomes of quantitative studies are illustrated through the use of percentages, graphs and charts. Qualitative methods are adopted for this study in order to assess the study's interview schedule with questions that are open-ended and therefore requires discussions and critical thinking. The interview schedule presented this study with advantages such as fast data accumulation, low costs, and a higher degree of objectivity when compared to other information accumulation methods (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

3.10 Interviews

In-depth interviews were adopted to explore and accumulate data regarding the perceptions and experiences of subjects. In-depth interviews were used in this study for the accumulation of data and answer the research questions. In-depth interviews were conducted face to face, with respondents. According to Dudovskiy (2016) the following three formats are usually undertaken in interviews for the research process:

- **Structured:** A collection of questions pre-set by the researcher will be presented to the participants to be answered by following the same order.
- **Semi-structured:** A compilation of a collection of questions will be made by the researcher in order to conduct the interview process yet in order to expand on specific matters questions that are complementary may be asked.
- **Unstructured:** There are no questions prepared prior to the conducting of the interview. Unstructured interviews are commonly the most unreliable as they are associated with biasness of a high degree and the process of comparing responses from different participants have at times proven to be difficult which is due to the differences in the construction of questions.

The interviews **conducted by the researcher of the study** consisted of open ended questions in a semi-structured process to provide respondents with the opportunity to respond freely and provide information that answers the research questions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Interviews were conducted in an informal manner and in a conversational way. The freedom and opportunity for participants to express in their own words their thoughts, ideas and experiences without stress or pressure was granted by the easy-going and informal design. Each interview had and followed a set of questions that were predetermined yet **probing questions** which were complementary were asked in order to acquire clarity with answers that were specific. Interviews were thereafter **transcribed** into writing and made up the principle means of accumulating data. The length of the interviews were in-depth in an effort to acquire a deeper understanding of the participants experiences from their point of view.

3.11 Data Quality Control

3.11.1 Trustworthiness

Anney (2014) states that in order to produce trustworthiness in the research study, the qualitative researcher must undertake the study using research methodology and design that is suitable. Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability make up trustworthiness and certain steps must be taken to ensure trustworthiness and therefore give the research credibility.

3.11.2 Credibility

According to Biseth (2005) there are six techniques that can be undertaken by qualitative researchers to ascertain credibility in the research study, these include member checks, referential adequacy, prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing and persistent observation.

Participant honesty and sincerity with regards to information provided is vital and therefore participants were provided with the opportunity to reject and withdraw involvement from the study in order make sure that the accumulation of data involved subjects as informants who were willing to partake voluntarily.

Each participant was provided with transcript copies before the interview transcripts analysis process began, this was done for any necessary removal or alteration of parts of the interview by the participant as they deemed fit in situations whereby they identified incorrect or inappropriate parts.

3.11.3 Transferability

According to Cope (2014) transferability is the research findings degree of enactment to various elements or situations. To ensure transferability, the employment of purposive sampling is suitable as information that is specific can be best used in connection to the setting in which the accumulation of data occurs.

The purposive sampling of the subjects featuring different cultural characteristics were utilised in this study in order to make sure data that is meaningful and strongly connected to the research objectives are acquired.

3.11.4 Dependability

Dependability is connected to stability and consistency of the findings of the study over time, via rigorous keeping of records by the qualitative researcher from the beginning to the end of the entire process of the study (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2013). A pilot study featuring some questions being delivered in multiple forms in order to assess the interview schedules internal accordance or consistency **was undertaken and resulted in the improvement of interview schedule feasibility.**

The degree of difficulty and acceptance was ascertained through asking all participating subjects their experiences of answering the questions.

3.11.5 Confirmability

Bitsch (2005) claims confirmability is connected to the level in which the studies acquired results or findings can be authenticated by other studies. Past research results or findings were rigorously looked into in order to ascertain if the findings of the study were indeed accordant or unchanging with the findings of previous studies that were undertaken in order to produce conformability in this study. The eradication of any source of bias was attempted.

3.12 Data Analysis

Sarantkos (2012) claims data analysis is defined as the technique of raw data examination with the intention of extracting conclusions regarding that body of information. With in-depth interviews being adopted for the accumulation of data, the analysis of the data will be through the use of thematic analysis method.

Thematic analysis is fitting for the analysis of data that was accumulated in this study due to the techniques organization of accumulated data being concise and further providing a description of the data components in a manner that is detailed.

3.13 Ethical considerations

For this research, ethical approval is going to be procured from the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a gate keeper's letter will be procured from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Office of the Registrar. In order to make sure that human dignity is continuously sustained, agreement to participate in the study by informed respondents must be met and further allow respondents to form the decision to participate on the basis of adequate knowledge regarding the study that will be given to them.

Confidentiality and privacy will be sustained by continuously reminding the participants of the study of their right to block information about themselves from the public and agreement to regulate access to information that is private. All respondents will stand or remain anonymous and the study will use pseudonyms and no other name.

3.14 Conclusion

For reasons provided in this chapter it can be said that a suitable methodology for this study has been selected to research the topic and its objectives. This research may yield criteria for assessing brand equity that Aaker and others have not considered. From a practical point of view the research will determine which aspects of Brand Equity apply when students consider smart-phone brands as such this research will at least be of value to smart-phone dealers, suppliers and other premium goods suppliers. This chapter has also looked at the limitations and ethical matters that have are considered by the study. In connection to the study's outlined objectives and methodologies, chapter four discusses and analyses the findings of the research. The following chapter presents the results of the study and elaborates on responses provided by the study's participants.

Chapter Four – Presentation and Discussion and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's analysis and discussion of the relevant information accumulated in order to deal with the research question. In addition to the data collected from participants of this study, the study's analysis and discussion took into account preliminary research data collected from various retailers of smart phones which provided feedback regarding the bestselling smart phone brands and data from www.gsmarena.com in order to check and compare the specifications of relevant smart phone brands. Any differences in participant feedback attributed to demographic characteristics are indicated within the relevant research question. Frequently used words by participants are indicated and highlighted through large text in word cloud figures presented for the relevant and applicable research question. This research provides insight as to which brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students, what criteria they value in terms of brand equity and whether or not that translates into the purchasing of the brand.

4.2 Research questions 1 - What are the student's perceptions of smart phone brands?

4.2.1 Which brands of smart phone appeals to you and why?

Participants of the study were asked to provide a list of smart phone brands that appeal to them and in turn they generally listed multiple smart phone brands as appealing to them. Amongst all brands, many participants of the study listed Samsung and iPhone as the most appealing smart phone brands but there are a number of other brands that have been listed.

Other than Samsung and iPhone the following smart phone brands that have been reported as appealing by the participants of the study: Huawei, Sony, Vivo and Blackberry. With smart phone products available in the market being very similar, as requested the participants of the study also provided reasons as to why the brands they have listed are appealing to them.

As reported by participants, the following underlying factors are why Samsung as a smart phone brand appeals to them: design, camera quality, ease of use, affordability, overall features, innovations, storage space, overall perceived quality, battery durability, software system, brands

association, overall reliability the brands large quantity of carriers and the competitiveness of the brand. The common underlying factors that make Samsung appealing to participants are design and camera quality.

Participants reported the following underlying factors as why Apple iPhone as a smart phone brand appeals to them: design, camera quality, uniqueness of brand, storage space, performance speed, software system, brand associations, upgrades, overall reliability, amplification of brand users social status, security system, ease of use, interconnection with other devices, technological capability, trust in brand, overall features, brand reputation, expensive pricing, trendiness, innovations, overall performance and brand superiority. The common underlying factors that make Apple iPhones appealing to participants are design and camera quality.

As reported by participants, the following underlying factors are Huawei as a smart phone brand appeals to them: camera quality, affordability, overall features, new competitor to top brands, serviceability, battery durability and overall reliability. The common underlying factors that make why Huawei appealing to participants are camera quality and affordability.

As reported by participants, the following underlying factors are Sony as a smart phone brand appeals to them: camera quality, durability, sound quality, software programs, overall perceived quality, design, ease of use, innovation, software system, overall reliability, overall performance and uniqueness of the brand. The common underlying factors that make why Sony appealing to participants are camera quality and durability.

Vivo is listed as an appealing smart phone brand for its camera quality. Blackberry is reported to be an appealing smart phone brand for its: historical dominance in social media through BBM as a software program, innovations, internet connectivity and design.

The participants of the study reported Samsung, Apple iPhone, Huawei, Sony, Vivo and Blackberry as smart phone brands that appeal to them. Out of all the brands reported by participants as appealing Samsung and Apple iPhone are the commonly mentioned smart phone brands. Participants of the study have provided numerous reasons as to why the listed smart phone brands

appeal to them and it must be noted that the design and camera quality are reasons that have been reported many times. Retailers have reported Samsung and Apple iPhone as brands that commonly appeal to their customers. www.gsmarena.com reports the same or similar specifications between Samsung and Apple iPhones. Responses from participants are illustrated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Word Cloud of which Brands of Smart Phone Appeals to Students and why

Participants were asked to name smart phone brands that would not be on their list to buy. Almost half the participants of the study named a single brands that would not be on their list to buy while the other remaining participants named two or more brands. Brands that were reported by

participants are Hisense, Nokia, Blackberry, LG, Apple iPhone, Alcatel, Sony, Huawei, Xiami, Motorola, Vodafone, Microsoft and Samsung.

Participants that selected Hisense as a brand that would not be on their list to buy reported the following underlying points as reasons why: poor overall quality, poor reliability, poor software system, poor design, poor camera quality, generic qualities, poor durability, poor storage space, brand did not target participants fellow peers, lack of accessories, poor reliability and lack of trust.

Participants that mentioned Nokia as a smart phone brand that would not be on their list to buy stated the following underlying factors as reasons why: poor overall quality, poor reliability, poor software system, the brand is outdated, other better options are available and the brand does not target the participant's fellow peers.

For Blackberry, participants reported the following reasons why Blackberry would not be on their list to buy: poor overall quality, poor reliability and poor software system.

Participants that mentioned LG as a smart phone brand that would not be on their list to buy stated the following underlying factors as reasons why: poor reliability, poor software system, poor overall quality, generic qualities, doesn't come to mind and lack of trust.

For Apple iPhone, participants listed the following reasons why Apple iPhone would not be on their list to buy: too expensive, lack of uniqueness, poor features, poor repair and maintenance, too many specifications, not easy to use, complicated, poor reliability and poor software system.

Participants that selected Samsung as a brand that would not be on their list to buy reported the following underlying points as reasons why: brand is too popular, too many owners, lack of uniqueness, too expensive, poor reliability and poor software system.

For Alcatel, participants listed the following reasons why Alcatel would not be on their list to buy: overall poor quality, poor reliability, poor software system, poor performance speed, poor camera quality, poor software program and poor storage.

Participants that selected Huawei as a brand that would not be on their list to buy reported the following underlying points as reasons why: poor reliability, poor software system, poor durability, unfavorable brand associations, lack of originality and lack of originality in design. For Vodafone, participants listed the following reasons why Vodafone would not be on their list to buy: poor reliability, poor software, poor design, poor camera quality and poor overall quality.

Participants that selected Motorola as a brand that would not be on their list to buy reported the following underlying points as reasons why: brand doesn't come to mind, lack of trust for brand, poor software and poor reliability. For Xiaomi, participants listed the following reasons why Xiaomi would not be on their list to buy: poor reliability, poor software and poor serviceability. For Microsoft, participants listed the following reasons why Microsoft would not be on their list to buy: lack of trust for brand, poor serviceability and poor software.

Participants that selected Sony as a brand that would not be on their list to buy reported the following underlying points as reasons why: poor durability, poor overall quality, poor reliability, poor software system, poor design, poor storage space, brand does not target participants fellow peers, brand is outdated, lack of innovations, brand doesn't come to mind and lack of trust for brand.

Even though a number of brands have been selected by participants as brands they would not buy, Hisense and Nokia are brands that are commonly enlisted by participants. Participants offered numerous reasons why they would not have selected brands on their list to buy. Common underlying reasons why the mentioned brands would not be on the list to buy for participants of the study are the poor features and poor durability. Retailers have reported that there are not many purchases of the phone brands being discussed in this section. Website www.gsmarena.com shows the same or similar specifications between these phones and smartphone brands in the market. Responses are illustrated in figure 4.2.

other people like friends, family, fellow peers such as students, by seeing brands associated with or owned by popular and or wealthy people and word of mouth. Results are illustrated in figure 4.3 below.



Figure 4.3: Word Cloud of how Students become Aware of the “Good” and “Bad” Brands

4.2.4 Would you consider buying a generic brand from an established network store- (e.g) Vodafone, Cell C phone, MTN brand, Virgin phone? Elaborate on your response.

Participants of the study generally reported they would not consider buying a generic brand from an established network stores for the following reasons: inferior quality when compared to established smart phone brands, negative word of mouth, unsatisfactory personal experiences, lack of presence in the market, lack of expertise, lack of other users of these brands, lack of trust,

shortage of value for money, lack of durability, better options available, lack of relevance and because they are affordable.

Participating respondents who reported they would consider buying a generic brand from established network stores as a secondary phone, for their affordability, if the quality is good, if they were purchased once off rather than contractually and if there were no other alternatives.

Many participants of the study reported they would not consider buying a generic brand from an established network stores. Participants commonly reported inferior quality and lack of trust as reasons why they would not consider buying a generic brand. Participants who would consider generic smart phones from an established network stated that it was because generic phones are cheaper and further indicated that they prefer smart phones from established smart phone brands. www.gsmarena.com shows that generic phones share the same or similar specifications with established smartphone brands generally available in the market. This indicates that participants are commonly under-informed as they have not undertaken internet research on smart phone technical specifications with few some participants seeking out technical details to realize that many phone sets especially the Android ones have common platforms/components.

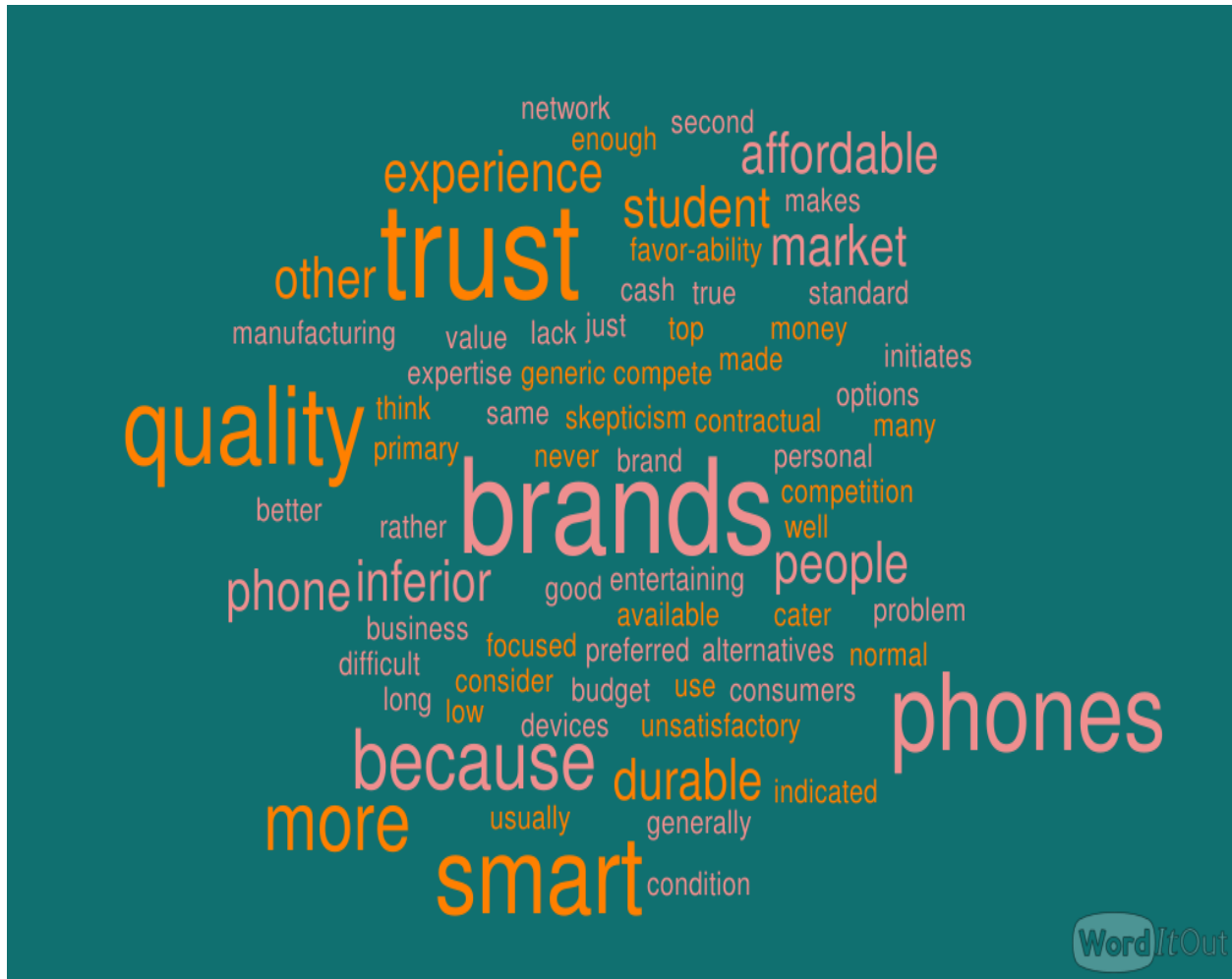


Figure 4.4: Word Cloud of Whether Students Consider Buying a Generic Brand from Established Network Stores (e.g) Vodafone, Cell C phone, MTN brand, Virgin phone

4.2.5 Comment on the following brands: Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel, and Xiami.

Participants of the study were asked to comment on the following brands: Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel, and Xiami. Participants of the study commonly reported that they do not know of HTC, Mobicel and Xiami.

With regard to Alcatel, participants of the study made the following reports: that the brand doesn't come to mind when thinking about brands, lack of knowledge of the brands current state, it is an established brand, an old brand, one of the leading brands when it was new in the phone market, don't like it, hasn't disappointed people who own the brand, good as second phone, phones are

unreliable as they malfunction, bad camera quality, an irrelevant brand, an inferior brand, a brand with low quality and a brand affordable in price.

With regard to HTC, participants of the study made the following reports: lack of visibility in the local market, it was not popular locally, had more presence and appeal internationally, seems like a strong brand, never seen any users, have never used it, has never been dominant, beaten by competition, it was an outdated brand, it was good quality, has good camera and screen picture display quality, it is not easy to use and don't know of HTC. (HTC up until recently manufactured phones for several leading brands. It has recently been taken over by Google because of its quality and technological quality).

Participants reported the following regarding Mobicel: the brand is a new entry to the smart phone market, don't remember it, don't know the brand, needs to improve its quality, it is a generic brand, has inferior quality, it is irrelevant, wouldn't consider unless it is cheap, wouldn't consider unless its recommended, would consider as a backup phone, it is not a dominant brand, can't compete with other brands, it is a generic brand, phone is not durable, repair and maintenance is poor, unsatisfactory personal experience with brand and brand is affordable.

Many participants of the study reported that they do not know of the Xiaomi brand and have never heard of it. Participants further reported the following about the regarding the brand: it is generic, don't like phone brand because it seems generic, needs to do more advertising, it is their first time hearing of it, the brand is new to the market, has competitive specifications, almost considered buying because it seemed like a cheaper version of Apple iPhone, low priced and that it could not be trusted.

In comparison to brands that appeal to participants of this study and or those participants don't consider for purchase, participants commonly admitted that they are not well informed and generally couldn't provide much commentary on Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel and Xiaomi. Many participants reported that they are unaware of HTC, Mobicel and Xiaomi as brands when asked to provide comments. Support firm dealers have Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel and Xiaomi smart phone stock in their inventory but are not selling as much as Samsung and Apple iPhone. www.gsmarena.com

present these smartphone brands as having the same or similar specifications with smartphone brands in the market.

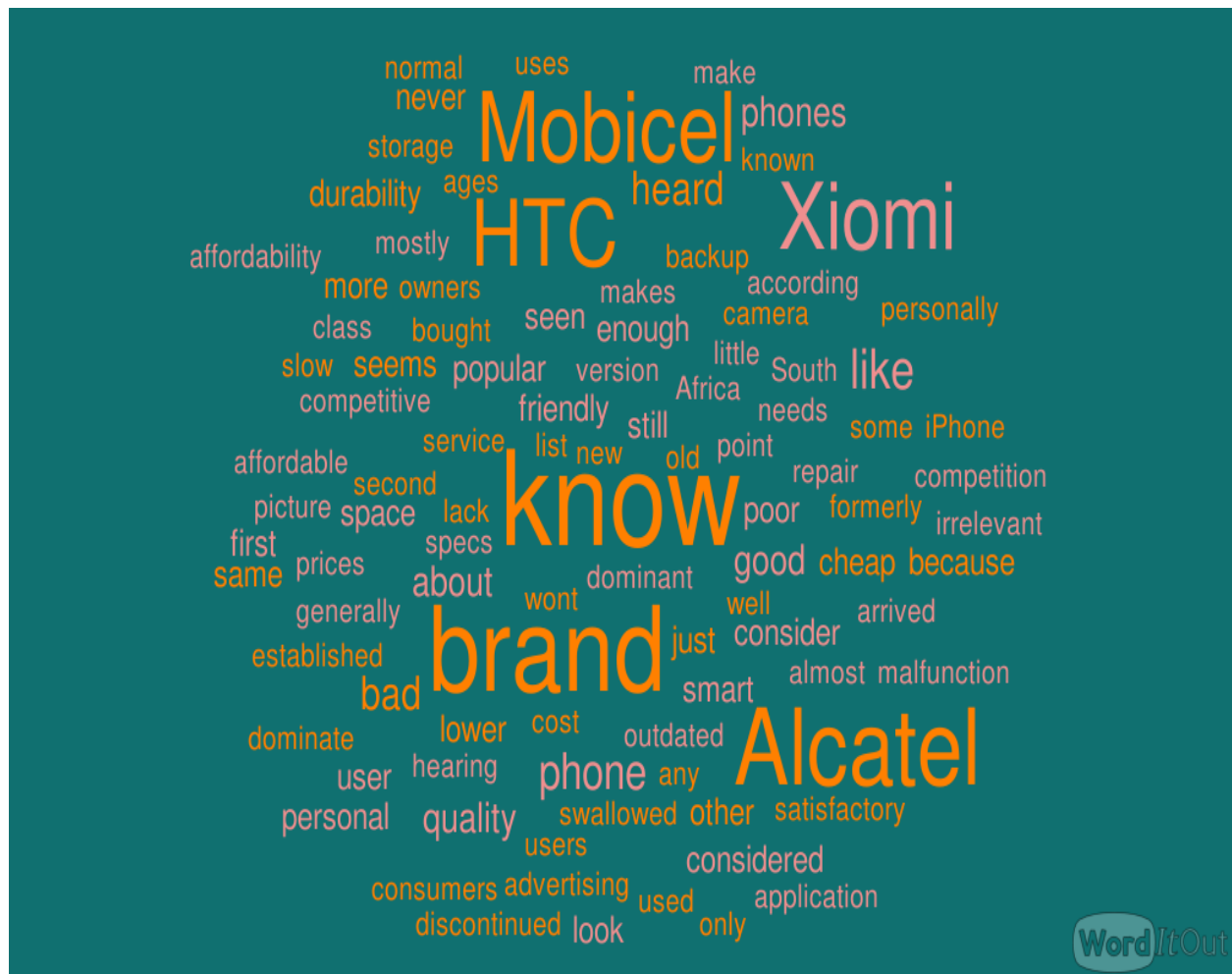


Figure 4.5: Word Cloud of Student Comments on the following Brands: Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel, Xiomi

4.3 Research Question 2 - Which smart phone brand/s is owned by the student and why?

4.3.1 Which brand do you own and why?

There are six smart phone brands named by participants of the study. The smart phone brands owned are Samsung, Huawei, Apple iPhone, Sony, Doogee and Alcatel. Participants of the study reported various reasons as to why they own the smart phone brands they own.

Participants of the study have commonly reported ownership of the Samsung smart phone brand. Participants have reported the following reasons for why they own Samsung: it is affordable, has good design quality, it was the best option within their purchasing budget, they received it as a gift and because it is user friendly.

Huawei carrying participants state they purchased the brand for the following reasons: its affordable, user friendly, affordable repair and maintenance, good performance, battery durability, screen display quality, falsely believed it had good storage space, falsely believed it had good speed performance, falsely believed it had good display quality and falsely believed it had good overall quality.

Apple iPhone carrying participants state they purchased the brand for the following reasons: it amplifies the users social status, has superior security system, ease of use, interconnection to other devices, good storage space, technologically advanced, good performance, good design, trust the brand, features, brands uniqueness and the brands positive reputation.

Participants that carry Sony report they own Sony for the following reasons: its good quality software, reliability, durability, camera quality, display quality, and they were convinced to buy the phone for the manner in which it was marketed. Reported reason why Alcatel is owned is because of its marketing efforts. Reported reasons why Doogee is owned is because of its international popularity and because it was affordable during a sale.

There are numerous smartphone brands owned by participants as indicated by their reports. Of all smartphone brands mentioned, Samsung as a smartphone brand is the brand many participants have reported they own. There are various reasons why participants have opted to make their brand purchases with the common reason for purchase being affordability, ease of use, storage space, design and durability. Smartphone retailers have reported that many customers purchase a Samsung smartphone brand.

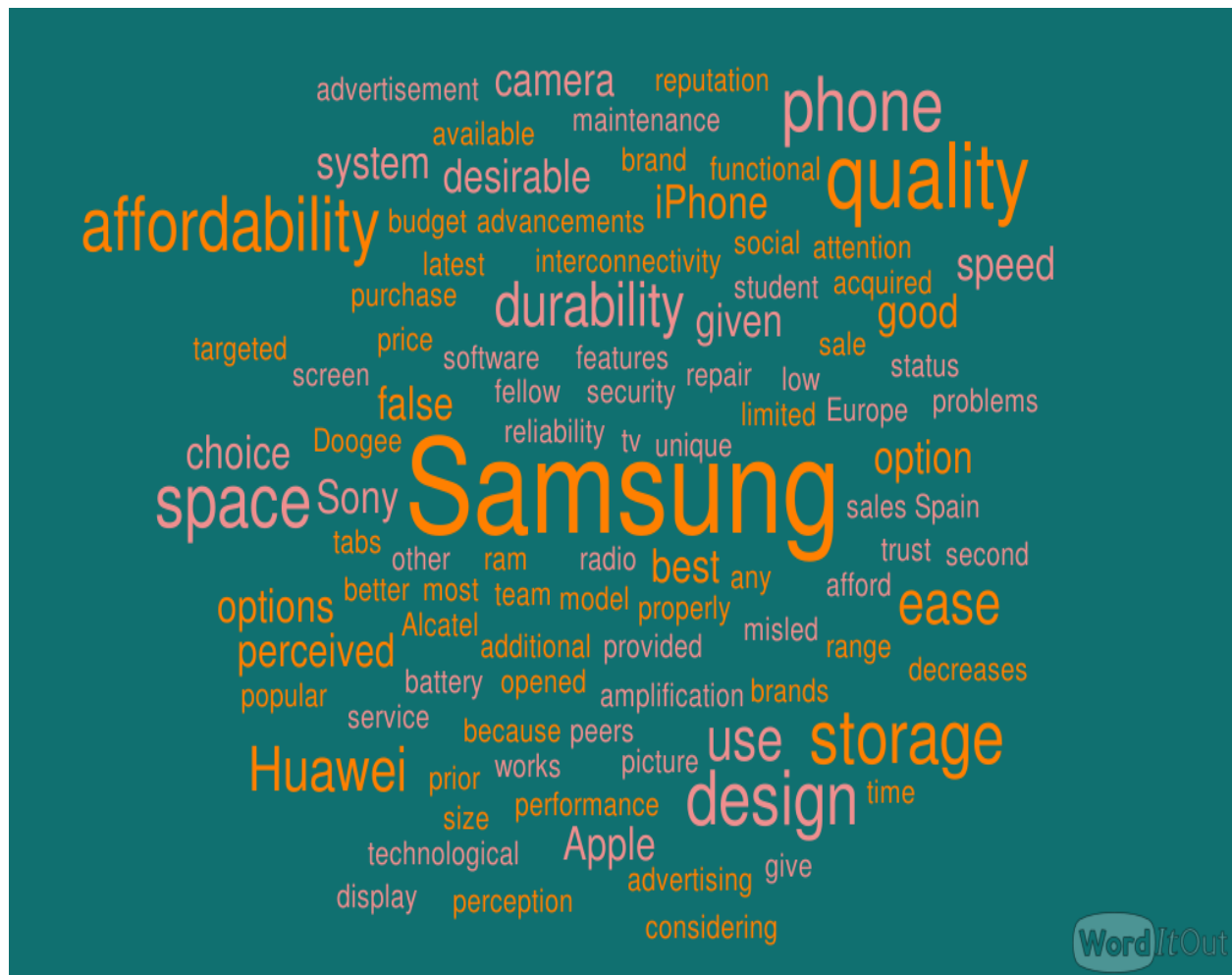


Figure 4.6: Word Cloud of which Brand Students own and why

4.3.2 What range in price does your phone fit into?

R1200/ R1200-R3999/ R4000-R7999/ R8000-R12999/ R13000 +

There are various price ranges in which participant smart phone brand fall under. There are different price points under some of the brands as brands typically have a large product line. Samsung, iPhone, Huawei, Sony, Alcatel and Doogee are smart phones owned by participants.

Participants report their Samsung smart phones prices range from R0 to R1200, R1200 to R3999, R4000 to R7999 and R8000 to R12999. Participants report their Apple iPhone prices range from R4000 to R7999 and R13000 and more. Participants reported their Huawei smart phone prices range from R1200 to R3999 and R4000 to R7999. Participants reported their Sony smart phone

prices range from R1200 to R3999. Participants reported their Alcatel smart phone prices range from R0 to R1200. Participants reported their Doogee smart phone is prices range from R4000 to R7999.

Many participants reported that their smartphone fit into the R4000-R7999 and R1200-R3999 price range. Smart phones with higher price ranges of R4000 to R7999, R8000 to R12999 and R13000 plus are commonly purchased by participants of the following demographic groups: age bracket of 26 to 30, five years plus as a student in Westville campus and are students currently in Masters and PHD level of studies. Retailers have reported that these phone brands do indeed have the price ranges that have been reported by participants of this study. Smart phone brand price range is illustrated below in table 4.1.

Table 4. 1: Smart Phone Brand Price Range

Brand	Price Range				
	R0.00-R1200	R1200-R3999	R4000-R7999	R8000-R12999	R13000+
Samsung	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Apple iPhone			✓	✓	✓
Huawei		✓	✓		
Sony		✓	✓		
Alcatel	✓				
Doogee			✓		

4.3.3 How do you rate your smart phone and why you bought it/them?

Participants who own Samsung reported the following ratings out of ten: six, six, six, seven, seven, seven point five and ten. Participants who own Samsung smart phones reported the following reasons why they bought it/them: it's affordable, it's a brand inferior only to Apple iPhone, it was the latest model, best option in budget range, ease of use and good quality in design. There are participants that reported that they did not buy a Samsung smart phone and instead it was given to them by another purchaser.

Participants owning Apple iPhone reported the following ratings out of ten: eight and nine. Participants who owned Apple iPhone smart phones reported the following reasons why they

bought it/them: it was an updated model from the model previously owned, for add-on's or accessories, the display screen size, its superiority to other brands, there are fewer carriers which makes it a standout phone and owners stand out, for features namely software program or applications, for storage space, exclusive music purchased via application, quality in performance speed, design quality, progressive upgrades, brand trust, reputation and uniqueness.

Participants owning Huawei reported the following ratings out of ten: five, eight and eight. Participants who owned Huawei smart phones reported the following reasons why they bought it/them: affordability, ease of use, affordability in repair and maintenance, battery durability, overall quality, storage space, screen quality and ram size. There are participants that reported that they did not buy a Huawei smart phone and instead it was gifted to them by another purchaser.

Participants owning Sony reported the following ratings out of ten: eight and eight. Participants who own Sony smart phones reported the following reasons why they bought it/them: wanted to experience the brand, affordability, durability, picture quality, fit and finish and various marketing activities from the brand.

The participant owning a Doozee rated the smartphone at nine and a half out of ten. Participant who owns a Doozee smart phone reported the following reasons for purchasing the brand: for its international popularity and cut on price from sale.

The participant owning an Alcatel rated it at four out of 10. Participant who owns an Alcatel smart phone reported the following reason for purchasing the brand: appealing marketing efforts by the brand and store salesman.

Participants have provided various different ratings ranging from 4 to 10 for the various smart phone brands they have purchased. Reasons for purchase include affordability, latest model, best option within budget range, ease of use, design, accessories, display screen size, superiority of smart phone brand, few carriers, makes student stand out, features, software programs, storage space, performance speed, brand trust, brand reputation, repair and maintenance, battery durability,

inferior only to Apple iPhone, currently doesn't need another phone and Samsung phone was a gift.

Participant who reported their previous ownership of a Hisense stated the reason for the switch was because of the desire to explore new brands and get upgrades in features, performance, design and overall quality through acquiring a different phone brand. Participant who reported their previous ownership of a Nokia stated the reason for no longer owning a Nokia is because of its undesirable software and desire to try another brand.

Participants who reported that they previously owned a Blackberry stated they no longer own the brand for the following reasons: poor software security system, the software system crashed, had too many flaws, better phones from other brands, brand became outdated, BBM as a social network software program by Blackberry was shut down, the brand could no longer compete with other smart phone brands available in the market and the company crashed and couldn't recover with the presence of tight competition.

Participants who reported that they previously owned a Sony stated they no longer own the brand for the following reason: could afford a better phone from a different brand. Participants who reported that they previously owned a Vodafone stated they no longer own the brand for the following reason: poor quality. Participants who reported that they previously owned a Hisense stated they no longer own the brand for the following reasons: poor quality durability, lack of accessories or secondary parts and poor fit and finish as it broke easily.

Numerous brands have been listed by participants of the study when asked to report the brand they previously or still own with many participants reporting they have previously or still own the Samsung brand. Participants of the study have commonly reported that they have switched from whichever smartphone brand they previously owned to another brand. Many participants reported design and affordability as criteria which influenced their decision to switch or still stick to the brand they previously owned.

Participants who have been convinced by a salesman/women have provided the following details: convinced the participant in buying a specific brand model instead of the predetermined choice, presented an alternative option that was more affordable, had an overall better contractual offer, it was within price or budget range and was one of the phones that appealed to the participant prior to arriving at the store.

Participants of the study have commonly reported that they have never been convinced by a salesman/women to buy a smart phone brand. A participant reported that they were not really convinced to buy a brand by salesman/women as they pitched a sale for a brand that the participant had already wanted.

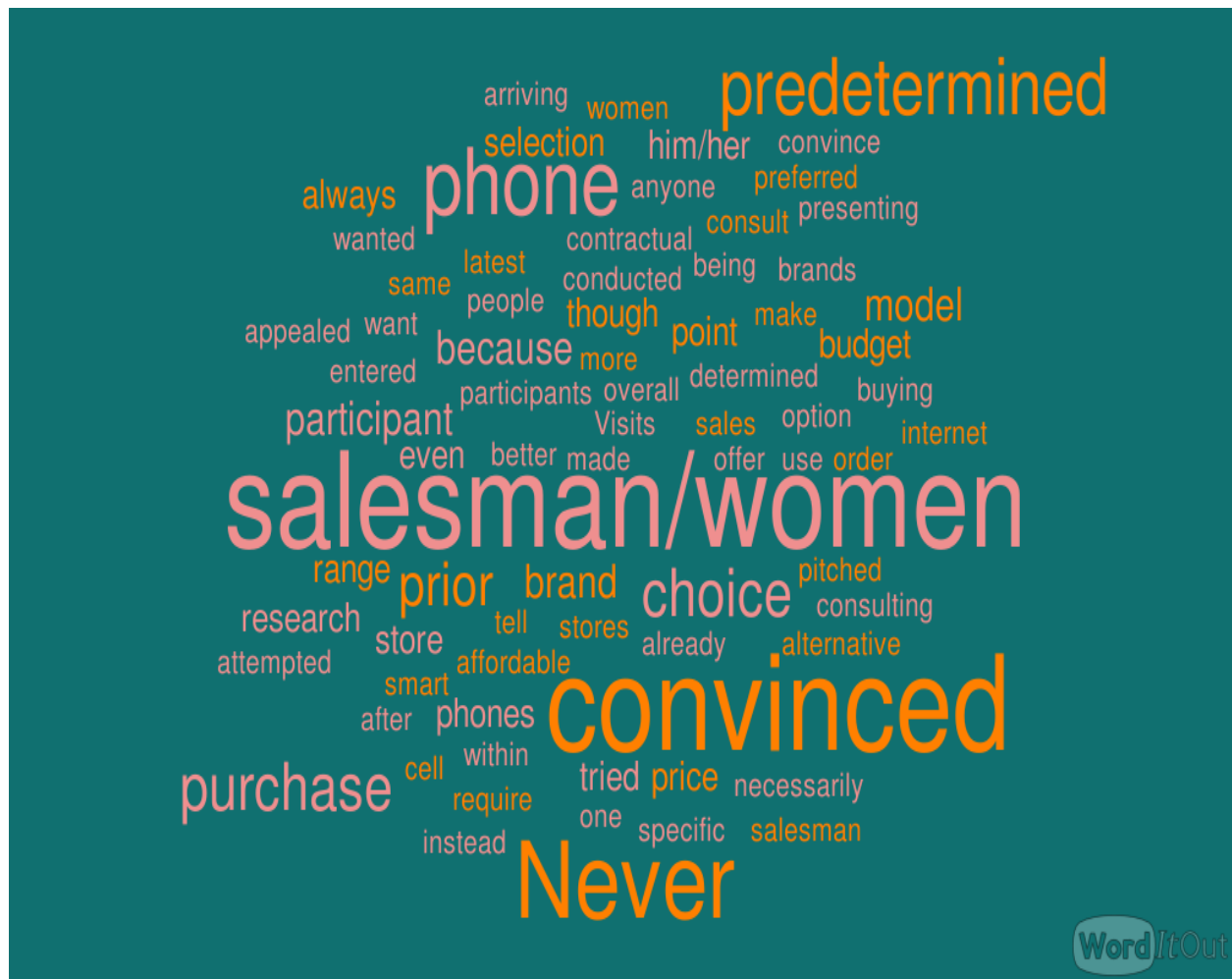


Figure 4.9: Word Cloud of whether salesman/women have ever convinced Students to buy a Smart Phone Brand

4.4 Research Question 3 - Which specific aspects make the student loyal to a smart phone brand?

4.4.1 List the aspects that attract you to a smart phone brand

Participants of the study listed the following aspects that attract them to a smart phone brand: brands that can amplify their social status, brands that are associated to high social class of people, overall quality, performance, design, durability, ability to connect to social networks, ability to connect to Wi-Fi, access to emails, good quality camera, good quality ram, fast performance, software system, being expensive in price, exclusivity in terms of accessibility, brand that attracts high social class, good storage space, can in some form aid in daily errands, software programs, quality display screen, feature a touch display screen, good quality earphones, brand logo that

symbolizes something meaningful, color, good network speed, a lot of hype, positive word of mouth, compatibility, good download quality, additional storage space options, superior security system, functional and connectivity to other devices such a laptop or computer.

With there being similar smart phone products available in the market, participants reported many tangible and intangible aspects which attract them to a smart phone brand. Participants report that the common tangible aspects that attract them to smart phone brands include good camera quality, design and storage space. Participant report that the intangible aspects that attract them to smart phone brands include the amplification of social status, bands associated with high social class people, brands that attract high social class people, brand logo symbolizing something meaningful, brand with lots of hype and brand with positive word of mouth.



Figure 4.10: Word Cloud of Student List of Aspects that Attract them to a Smart Phone Brand

4.4.2 Mention any issues you’ve had regarding “good” or “bad” support from dealer or the brand?

Participants have reported the following issues they’ve had regarding good support firm dealer: never had a bad experience buying a phone at support retailer because service was good, friendly, sales team were informative and sales team were helpful.

Participants reported the following issues they’ve had regarding bad support firm dealer: price drop shortly after purchasing from support dealer, lack of maintenance and repair service, lack of expertise, proof of residence as requirement for purchase, didn’t have external memory card accessory for additional storage on sale, poor service, untrustworthy, expensive, no good

experiences, dealers will offer different contractual offers, bad service delivery, poor service delivery offers because retailers have bargaining power due to lack of competition, took a long time to deliver product, non-availability of desired brand model, not fully knowledgeable about brand and as a result they under inform or lie, did not activate phone upon purchase and possibly because of importing of device google certification was not available on device which blocked access to certain google services and issue was only sorted after contacting brand.

Participants have reported the following issues they've had regarding good brand: purchase from brand is cheaper than support retail dealer, superior in service maintenance and repair, more service options available, better affordability than retailers, more availability in merchandise in comparison to support firm retailer, brand retailer preferred over support firm dealer, and brand salesman assist better than retailers as they are better informed.

Participants have reported the following issues regarding bad brand: waited a long time for a phone to be delivered as it was not available at the point of purchase.

In general, participants have had either or both good and bad issues with either or both the support firm dealer and the brand. Participants commonly report bad issues with regards to the support firm dealer and good issues with the brand. Participants have commonly linked the good or bad issues they have had to the service they have been provided.

first time hearing of it, no specific website used but research online, use YouTube for comparison of specifications, check reviews on the internet.

Participants who have checked www.gsmarena.com to compare phone specifications have reported the following: www.gsmarena.com provides good information, indicates points of differences and points of parities and use website to compare phones.

Participants have commonly reported that they have never checked www.gsmarena.com to compare phone specifications. Participants who do not check www.gsmarena.com to compare specifications have reported they do either do not check specifications or have other means of doing so. Other participants have reported that they check www.gsmarena.com to compare specifications.

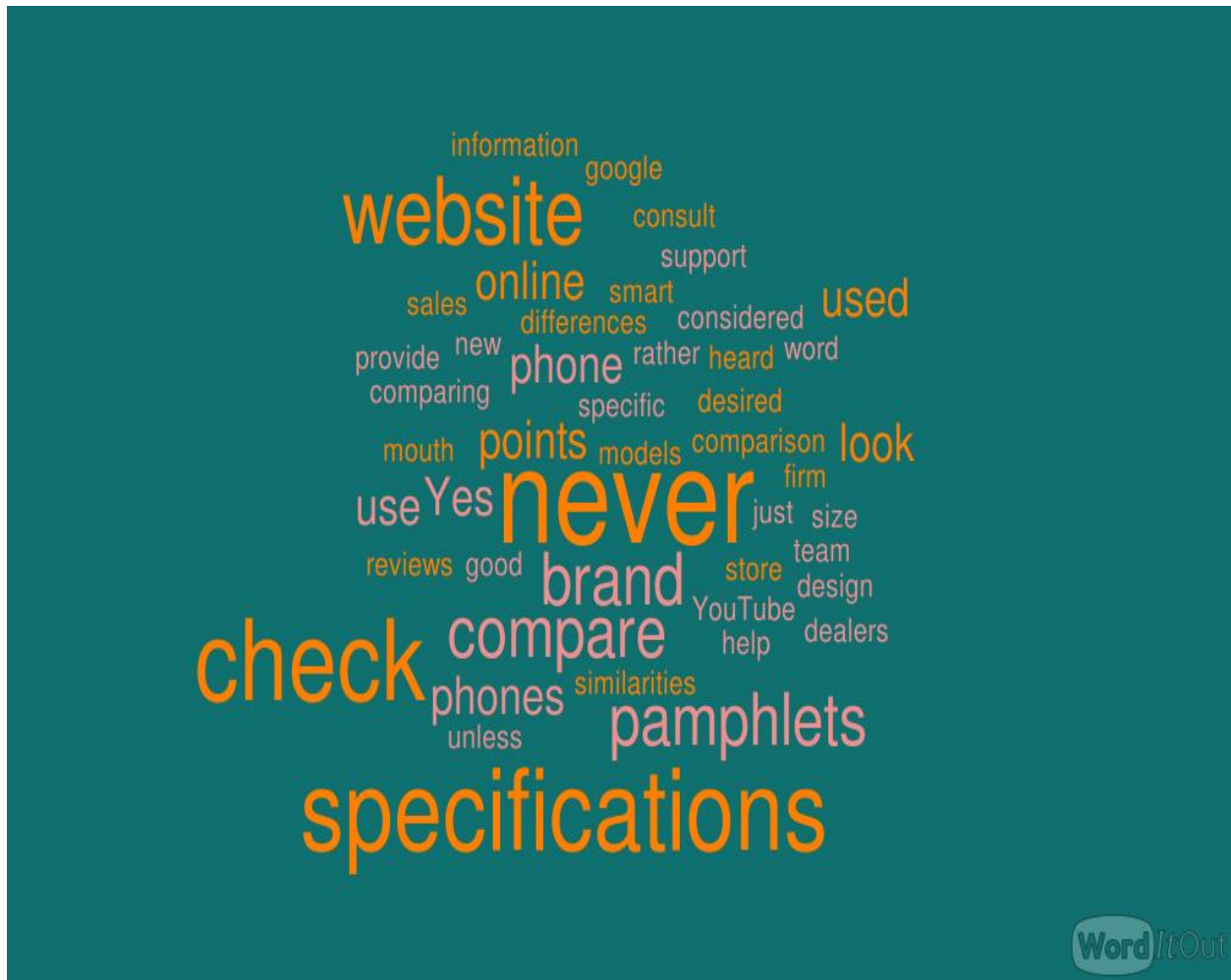


Figure 4.12: Word Cloud of whether Students have ever checked www.gsmarena.com to Compare Phone Specifications

4.6 Conclusion

Further insight into the study's research problems and findings have been accumulated. In addition to the data collected from participants of this study, the study's analysis and discussion took into account preliminary research data collected from various retailers of smart phones which provided feedback regarding the bestselling smart phone brands and www.gsmarena.com in order to compare the specifications of relevant smart phone brands. Information received from smart phone retailers confirmed that the bestselling brands are the ones with the most equity. Many students indicated that smart phones with lesser equity had less competitive specifications, but www.gsmarena.com showed competing smart phone brand models as sharing the same

specifications in some features and having similar specifications in others which indicates ignorance from students who are less informed about smart phone brand models. Any differences in participant feedback attributed to demographic characteristics are indicated within the relevant research question. Frequently used words by participants are indicated and highlighted through large text in word cloud figures presented for the relevant and applicable research question. Chapter five deals with the research in connection with each objective in the frame of reference of the applied research method and provides the findings of the research objective and the research in its entirety.

Chapter Five – Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five consists of the conclusions and recommendations for each of the study's objectives. The findings of the study are drawn from the literature in chapter two and from the data collected for chapter four. A conclusion and recommendation for each objective are presented under the findings of each of the four objectives. For the completion of chapter five further research suggestions and closing remarks are provided.

5.2 Research Objective – Ascertain the student's perceptions of smart phone brands?

5.2.1 Findings from Literature Review

Researchers refer to brands as brand elements such as name and logo while industry on the other hand considers it to be acquired reputation, prominence, awareness and so on in the market place. Even though products and brands can be distinguished they are tightly related and hard for consumers to separate. Brand equity is when prospective customers trust and value a brand. It influences consumer feelings and attitudes towards products and services, provides consumers with reasons to buy, increases value and satisfaction provided by goods and services, influences consumer search efforts as product or services brand equity differentiates product or service from competition and product brand equity acts as a cue for product or service quality (Aaker, 2009).

According to Aaker's (2009) model there are four dimensions in brand equity that may provide basis for consumer perception, reaction, choice and preference which include brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality. Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities related to a brand, to the elements of a brand such as the symbol and name that could either increase or decrease the value that is being provided by goods or services either to a company or to the consumer. In order for assets (or liabilities) to be the basis of brand equity they have to be connected to the symbol or name of the brand.

Brand equity develops when the relevant brand assets are communicated and provided to a target market, with this, the awareness and image of the brand increases, the target markets judgement of the brands perceived quality increases and the target markets attachment to the brand strengthens. Armstrong et al., (2014) assert equity of brands finds its inhabitants in the customers mind with strong brands possessing substantial equity. The degree of consumer perceived brand equity will affect the value being provided to the consumer.

5.2.2 Findings from Interviews

Research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 addressed Objective 1. The participants of the study concurred with the literature, stating smart phones brand equity influences their attitudes and feelings towards smart phones, provides participants with reasons to buy, increases value provided by smart phones, influences consumer search efforts as smart phone brand equity differentiates smart phone from competing smart phones and brand equity acts as a cues for smart phone quality.

Of all the smart phone brands reported by participants as appealing, Samsung and Apple iPhone are the commonly mentioned smart phone brands with design and camera quality are reasons that have been reported many times. Retailers have reported Samsung and Apple iPhone as brands that commonly appeal to their customers. www.gsmarena.com reports the same or similar specifications between Samsung and Apple iPhones. Findings indicate participants smart phone preferences are influenced by brand equity as they perceive benefits which produce positive feelings and attitudes towards some smart phone brands even though they share similar product attributes with other smart phone.

Participants commonly reported Hisense and Nokia as smart phone brands they would not be on their list to buy. Common underlying reasons are the poor features and poor durability. Retailers have reported that there are not many purchases of the phone brands being discussed. www.gsmarena.com shows the same or similar specifications between these phones and other smartphone brands in the market. Findings indicate participants reports towards these smart phone brands show participants perceive them to hold insignificant brand equity. Weak smart phone brand equity is due to consumer perceiving liabilities or lack of assets linked with these brands which in turn decreases the value provided to consumers.

With there being numerous ways which participants become aware of good and bad brands, the following, as reported by participants of the study, are the common reasons why: interaction with other people like friends, family, fellow peers such as students, by seeing brands associated with or owned by popular and or wealthy people and word of mouth. Findings indicate smart phones firms with brand equity have numerous means of marketing themselves to their target consumers which affords them with opportunities to grow their awareness, occupy consumer minds, acquire positive perceptions and grow consumer brand loyalty which in turn strengthens their brand equity.

Many participants of the study reported they would not consider buying a generic brand from an established network stores, reasons commonly reported include inferior quality and lack of trust. Participants who would consider generic smart phones from an established network stated that it was because generic phones are cheaper and further indicated that they prefer smart phones from established smart phone brands. www.gsmarena.com shows that generic phones share the same or similar specifications with established smartphone brands generally available in the market. This indicates that participants are commonly under-informed as they have not undertaken internet research on smart phone technical specifications. A few participants sought out technical details and realised that many phone sets, especially the Android phones, have the same or similar specifications. In spite of that it would appear that strong branding, good products and after sales support establish strong smart phone brand identity and equity which consumers seek out. These findings indicate participants smart phone preferences are influenced by smart phone brand equity as they perceive benefits which produce positive feelings and attitudes towards established smart phone brands even though some generic smart phone brands share similar features with trusted smart phone brands that have brand equity.

When comparing brands that appeal to participants with those that participants do not consider for purchase, participants commonly admitted that they are not aware, not well informed and generally couldn't provide much commentary on Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel and Xiomi. Support firm dealers have Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel and Xiomi smart phone stock in their inventory but are not selling as much as Samsung and Apple iPhone. www.gsmarena.com present these smartphone brands as having the same or similar specifications with smartphone brands in the market. The findings show

the lack of awareness and knowledge which are an indication that Alcatel, HTC, Mobitel and Xomi hold insignificant brand equity, which is why it is not possible for these brands to produce positive feelings or emotions and reaction towards them.

5.2.3 Conclusion

Interviewed participants of the study concur with literature, stating smart phone brand equity influences their attitudes and feelings towards smart phones, provides participants with reasons to buy, increases value provided by smart phones, influences consumer search efforts as smart phone brand equity differentiates smart phone from competing smart phones and brand equity acts as a cues for smart phone quality. Findings show that brand equity is significant as consumers hold regard for a brand name, look at brands with distinction, do not check or solely focus on the products quality in function, price, performance, convenience and design. In order for tangible or intangible assets (or liabilities) to be the basis of brand equity of smart phones they have to be connected to the symbol or name of the brand and smart phones with brand equity clearly communicate meaningful messages which not. So the power/strength of good brand equity and marketing are confirmed and even though there are many generic and branded phones with similar or even better specifications than the leading brands, the top brands survive due to their marketing campaigns and support which provides brand equity and credibility.

5.2.4 Recommendations

The South African market is saturated with there being numerous competing brands. Top brands survive as they hold superior brand equity which enables them to influence potential and existing customers more than their competitors. For the development of brand equity and the benefits of holding brand equity it is important for brands to gain exposure in different marketing channels occupied by consumers. Customer-based brand equity, according to Keller et al., (2013) is the distinctive impact of brand knowledge, as the consumer memory structure, in connection to the manner in which a brand is marketed. Smart phone brands must employ integrated marketing programs and further clearly communicate meaningful messages regarding not only their products but also their brand in order to develop their brand equity which will enable them to become more competitive in the South African market and strengthen their relationship with consumers.

5.3 Research Objective 2 – Determine which smart phone brand/s is owned by the student and why?

5.3.1 Findings from Literature Review

In the eyes of many consumers, products and brands are inseparable or very difficult to establish separately. In a saturated market product levels of differentiation decrease with constant imitations of product innovations by competitors. Practitioners have invested significant finances and focus on strengthening brand equity with claims that it impacts perceptions of potential customers. Consumers typically prefer the more reputable and prominent brands which carry equity as opposed to unbranded or weak brand products.

Keller et al., (2013) specify the key ingredient passages to consumer based brand equity, firstly it is constituted by distinctive consumer response, secondly the distinctive consumer response results from the brand knowledge and experience of a consumer and lastly the distinctive consumer response that constructs brand equity manifests itself from perceptions, favouring and response linked to every aspect of the marketing activity.

Consumers do not solely find value and satisfaction in products but also in brands. A brand equity is greater than a product as it can contain dimensions that somehow distinguish it from alternative products created for the satisfaction of the same need. Consumers are often more familiar and attracted to brands with high equity as they often carry cues of a good quality product and can acquire a desired degree of brand loyalty which will decrease consumer reason and or chances of switching to other brands with lower brand equity for reasons such as price.

5.3.2 Findings from Interviews

Research questions 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 addressed Objective 2. The participants commonly agree with the literature. Yoo et al., (2000) contends that brand equity results in distinctive customer perception after evaluation between the branded and or unbranded products or services with equal level product or service features. Brands with equity are often considered and preferred by consumers which in turn increases the likelihood of the reputable brand being purchased for the

first time or repetitively purchased as opposed to purchasing brands with less equity (Keller, 2013). Even though students primarily need a smart phone product for the implementation of daily tasks and have limited financial resources, students commonly reported that they own smart phones with brand equity such as Samsung appealed to them compared to the cheaper and lesser known smart phone brands. According to Aaker (2009) there are four dimensions in brand equity that may provide a basis for consumer perceptions, reaction, choice and preference which include brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality.

There are numerous smartphone brands owned by participants as indicated by their reports. Of all smartphone brands mentioned, Samsung as a smartphone brand is the brand many participants have reported they own. There are various reasons why participants have opted to make their brand purchases with the common reason for purchase being affordability, ease of use, storage space, design and durability. Smartphone retailers have reported that many customers purchase a Samsung smartphone brand. These findings indicate that smart phones like Samsung which hold significant brand equity provide a basis for positive consumer perceptions, reaction, choice and preference which can translate into purchases.

Many participants reported that their smartphone fit into the R4000-R7999 and R1200-R3999 price range. Smart phones with higher price ranges of R4000 to R7999, R8000 to R12999 and R13000 plus are commonly purchased by participants of the following demographic groups: age bracket of 26 to 30, five years plus as a student in Westville campus and are students currently in Masters and PHD level of studies. Retailers have reported that these phone brands do indeed have the price ranges that have been reported by participants of this study. From a brand equity perspective, price premiums are benefits obtained by smart phones with high levels of brand equity according the consumer perspective when taking into account the tangible or intangible benefits experienced by consumers.

Participants have provided various different ratings ranging from 4 to 10 for the various smart phone brands they have purchased. Reasons for purchase include affordability, latest model, best option within budget range, ease of use, design, accessories, display screen size, superiority of smart phone brand, few carriers, makes student stand out, features, software programs, storage

space, performance speed, brand trust, brand reputation, repair and maintenance, battery durability, overall quality, ram size, display screen quality, desired brand experience, picture quality, brands marketing activities, sales incentives, international popularity, appeal marketing from sales team. Smart phone brand equity provide consumers with a tangible or intangible set of assets linked to the brand and in turn they can increase the value provided by smart phones to consumers and translate into reasons for purchase. There are four dimensions in brand equity that may provide a basis for consumer perceptions, reaction, choice and preference which include brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality.

Numerous brands have been listed by participants of the study when asked to report the brand they previously or still own with many participants reporting they have previously or still own the Samsung brand. Participants of the study have commonly reported that they have switched from whichever smartphone brand they previously owned to another brand. Many participants reported design and affordability as criteria which influenced their decision to switch or still stick to the brand they previously owned. Switching to competing brands signifies a smart phones brand equity is not significant enough to retain participant consumers, but consumers who stick to a smart phone brand indicates the smart phones brand equity is significant enough make consumers commit to the brand.

Participants of the study have commonly reported that they have never been convinced by a salesman/women to buy a smart phone brand. A participant reported that they were not really convinced to buy a brand by salesman/women as they pitched a sale for a brand that the participant had already wanted. This shows the smart phone brand equity's significance as it provided participants with reasons to opt for specific smart phone brands and make participant refrain from purchasing competing smart phones despite sales team efforts to convince them to switch. Sound marketing, good quality and suitable pricing appear to be the recipe for building brand equity, attracting clients and achieving sales. Student consumers tend to opt for brands that have established themselves in South Africa and globally as premium brands carrying superior equity with iPhone and Samsung leading the pack.

5.3.3 Conclusion

Responses from participants of the study and what is stated in literature is in accordance with the notion that smart phone with superior brand equity are more likely to be purchased as consumers prefer smart phones brands with a lot of equity over weak or unknown brands for different reasons. Smart phones with brand equity are greater than competing smart phones as their brand equity can contain dimensions that provide additional value to consumers and somehow distinguish them from competing smart phones. Consumers find brands with strong equity more attractive and valuable which leads to increased consumer attachment to brands and decreases the chances of a consumer switching to a brand they are less attracted or loyal to. Consumers can also be deterred from searching for other lesser known or unknown brands due to the increased risk.

5.3.4 Recommendations

Building brand equity is important as it influences consumer perception and response. Building brand equity is highly important and it becomes even more crucial in a saturated market environment with competing firms that produce products with similar specifications that result in consumer facing a difficult challenge when it comes to distinguishing products. In order to build brand equity, smart phone firms must constantly communicate and follow up on brand messages that are meaningful to consumers through an appropriate combination of marketing tools for exposure to their target consumers over a long period of time. Brands with equity have an advantage in the market when it comes to attracting potential customers and retaining their existing customer base. Brands with high brand equity, such as Samsung, must continue observing the consumer market and improving their brand as the consumer market which includes their already existing consumer base is a continuously moving target due to ever-changing consumer expectation.

5.4 Research Objective 3 – Determine which specific aspects make the student loyal to a smart phone brand?

5.4.1 Findings from Literature

Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities related to a brand, to the elements of a brand such as the symbol and name that could

either increase or decrease the value that is being provided by goods or services either to a company or to the consumer. In order for assets (or liabilities) to be the basis of brand equity they have to be connected to the symbol or name of the brand.

Yoo et al., (2010) state that brand loyalty is the extent or level of consumer attachment to a brand. Customer or consumer based brand loyalty is considered to be brand equity's pinnacle point. It is most likely that the brand holds insignificant equity if consumers hold no regard for a brand name, look at brands without distinction, perhaps solely focused on the products quality in function, price, performance, convenience and design (Sasmita and Mohd-Suki, 2015).

According to Buil et al., (2013) perceived quality is a consumers feeling of a brand in its entirety and it is therefore intangible, though its basis will typically be the underlying dimension such as the brand products characteristics like the product performance as a product quality dimension. There may be no consistency between the evaluation or final judgement of the consumer with the products perceived quality, rather they could be based on methods and determination influences founded on the reputation of a brand or features like color or smell (Keller, 2013).

A brand is greater than a product as it can contain dimensions that somehow distinguish it from alternative products created for the satisfaction of the same need. The distinction of products can result from rationality or tangibility connected to the brands product performance or it can be more intangible, symbolic and emotional with regards to what the brand stands for or represents (Kapferer, 2012). Customer-based brand equity, according to Keller et al., (2013) is the distinctive impact of brand knowledge, as the consumer memory structure, in connection to the manner in which a brand is marketed.

Buil et al., (2013) say from the customer's point of view the equity of a brand is based on their evaluation towards the value of the brand products or service. The value of a brand usually finds its basis upon the particular meaningful associations that are connected to it. According to Severi and Ling (2013) brands representing something meaningful with a significant amount of exposure to consumer communication can bring about a positive consumer feeling or attitude.

Keller (2013) claims retailers are channels which are often the most visible to consumers, have the most contact with consumers and because of that they are the channel with the most opportunities to influence brand equity. Due to factors such as product or service availability, quality, and price amongst others, consumers can hold a variation of associations to any sole retailer.

5.4.2 Findings from Interviews

Research questions 11 and 12 addressed Objective 3. Responses from the participants of the study are compatible with the literature presented. According to Kapferer (2012) the distinction of products can result from rationality or tangibility connected to the brands product performance or it can be more intangible, symbolic and emotional with regards to what the brand stands for or represents.

According to Severi and Ling (2013) brands with equity represent something meaningful and successfully communicate that message to consumers which in turn produces positive consumer feeling or attitude. The aspects reported by participants represent smart phone brand equity assets that are tangible and intangible, are of valuable to consumers, increase consumer's loyalty to smart phone brand and can be founded on brand equity dimensions which included brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty

With there being similar smart phone products available in the market, participants reported many tangible and intangible aspects which attract them to a smart phone brand. Participants report that the common tangible aspects that attract them to smart phone brands include good camera quality, design and storage space. Participant report that the intangible aspects that attract them to smart phone brands include the amplification of social status, bands associated with high social class people, brands that attract high social class people, brand logo symbolizing something meaningful, brand with lots of hyper and brand with positive word of mouth. These findings indicate that brands do carry significant equity as participants hold regard for the brand name, look at brands with distinction and do not solely focus on the products quality in relation to function, price, performance, convenience and design.

In general, participants have had either or both good and bad issues with either or both the support firm dealer and the brand. Participants commonly report bad issues with regards to the support firm dealer and good issues with the brand. Participants have commonly linked the good or bad issues they have had to the service they have been provided. According to Aaker (2014) the means of distribution have a huge impact on not only the equity of the brand being sold but the success of its sales for those brands.

5.4.3 Conclusion

Brand loyalty is a dimension of brand equity with consumer brand loyalty considered to be brand equity's pinnacle point. Brand loyalty is the degree at which a consumer is connected to a brand. Literature concedes that aspects that can enhance a consumer's brand equity and brand loyalty result from valued tangible aspects from the product or valued intangible aspects carried by brands with high equity. Reports from participants are in line with literature as participants reported aspects that are related to the smart phone product and brand equity. Findings show that brand equity is significant as consumers hold regard for a brand name and look at brands carrying equity with distinction with perceived good quality features, design and durability being contributing factors to building brand equity and also lead to consumers purchasing the product. Retailers are also of importance to consumers because they are the channel with the most opportunities to influence brand equity.

5.4.4 Recommendations

Solely communicating messages about a products quality dimensions to potential customers is not enough to ensure significant brand equity. Smart phone brands must develop strategic marketing programs that will communicate messages about the consumer valued brand assets in order to develop equity and further adopt a strategic combination of marketing tools for more brand access to their target market. It is important to communicate brand messages that are meaningful to consumers in an effort to build brand equity so that consumers hold regard for the brand, have a distinctive view of the brand, occupy a distinctive position in the mind of the consumer and yield positive feelings and attitudes by the consumer. Development of the smart phone consumer based

brand equity translates into value for the consumer which will strengthen the consumer's relationship with the brand as well as the level of consumer attachment and loyalty to the brand.

5.5 Research Objective 4 – Is the student technically aware of smart phone brands?

5.5.1 Findings from Literature Review

Aaker (2009) perceived quality is a component of brand equity and is described as the consumer's judgement of the product or service quality or its supremacy in its entirety in comparison to other alternative products or services in connection to the purposes for which it is intended to serve. According to Keller (2013) research studies have found specific attributes of product quality under these general elements: primary ingredients and supplementary features, product reliability, product serviceability, product durability, product style, and product design.

Judgements by consumers are typically founded on the basis of all brand equity assets and may not solely be in line with product perceived quality or may come from decisions made with lower levels of thoughtfulness, like unsophisticated heuristics and decision rules founded upon their relationship with brands, the reputation of the brands or features of products such as the product color (Beneke et al., 2013).

There may be no consistency between the evaluations and or final judgement of the consumer regarding the product's perceived quality as other underlying dimensions of brand equity such as brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty are likely to influence consumer evaluations. The brands equity is typically defined by the perception of the consumer and as a result the consumer's attitudinal and behavioral approach towards a given brand will be affected. Consumer attitudes towards a brand will be founded by intellectual product imagery like the personality and or the symbolism that is shown by a brand. These aspects, as brand equity assets, add value to product are typically of the outmost importance (Keller, 2013).

5.5.2 Findings from Interviews

Research question 13 addressed Objective 4. Literature states there are other brand equity aspects that play a role in consumer judgement of a brands product quality and brands perceived supremacy when compared to competitors. Literature is in correspondence with responses from

participants of the study who have commonly reported that they do not check specifications and or compare specifications of smart phone brands.

Participants have commonly reported that they have never checked www.gsmarena.com to compare phone specifications. Other than participants who have reported that they do not check or compare phone specifications, participants have reported other sources of information to check a phones specifications and or compare phone specifications. Findings provide a clear indication of the significance of smart phone brand equity as participants hold regard for a brand name, look at brands with distinction, do not check or focus highly on the products quality in function, price, performance, convenience and design. Brand equity of smart phone impacts consumer perception of tangible and intangible brand assets which translate into value for consumers.

5.5.3 Conclusion

Findings show students judgements are highly impacted by smart phone brand equity. Students lack technical awareness of smart phone brands due to research being replaced with what they know and perceive about smart phone brands which may indicate lower levels of thoughtfulness, like unsophisticated heuristics and decision rules founded upon their relationship with brands, reputation of brands or features of products. This is a clear indication of the significance of brand equity as consumers hold regard for a brand name, look at brands with distinction, do not check or focus highly on the products quality in function, price, performance, convenience and design.

5.5.4 Recommendations

Students typically do not check and compare phone specifications but rather their curiosity is focused on smart phone brands with equity. Consumer views on phone superiority and consumer determinations are not influenced solely on the product but also by the smart phone brand equity assets. It is therefore important for smart phone manufacturers to develop brand equity as its role is significant in connection to the judgement of a smart phone quality by consumers who typically find it difficult to separate a brand from as product and find brands to be of value. Top smart phone brands carrying superior brand equity have been able to successfully communicate brand messages that are meaningful and valuable to consumers by strategically using appropriate and well integrated marketing tools that enable them to reach their target consumer. As a result of these

various marketing strategies, top smart phone brands have increased their chances of attracting new and maintaining existing consumers who purchase their brands even without checking and comparing specifications of phones.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused exploring student perceptions of smart phone brand equity solely at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville campus. It is suggested that to attain a more accurate representation of the student's perceptions of smart phone brand equity a wider spread study should be conducted. A wider study will provide more insight as to how the equity of smart phone brands available in the market are perceived by the wider student audience whether it is at a regional or national level.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

This study has focused on student perceptions of the various smart phone brands in order to ascertain the brand equity of the respective brands and whether students consider the brands to be of value. Aaker and Biel (2013) describe brand equity as a collection of the assets and in other cases the liabilities of a brand in connection to a brands representative elements such as the name and logo. Data was obtained from student respondents by means of in-depth interviews in order to answer the research objectives. In order to provide academic data to the study a literature review was undertaken. The analysis of all data is undertaken through thematic analysis.

With claims that brand equity impacts the perception of potential customers, companies as providers of product and or service invest a lot of time and money on building the perceived quality of their brand, creating awareness of their brand, building their brand image through a set of associations, all in an aim to bring about brand loyalty and thus brand equity as a strategic asset (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2012).

Smart phones are important for the undertaking of daily tasks and students form a large portion of the smart phone consumer market even though they typically have a limited budget or purchasing

power. According to Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., (2015) a majority of consumers not only pay close attention to the attributes or practical function of a product, but they also pay attention to the brand.

According to Armstrong et al., (2014) a brand's equity contributes to the degree of value provided to consumers. The study has determined which smart phone brands carry equity based on the perceptions of students, that smart phone brand equity is valuable, the criteria they value smart phone brand equity and whether or not smart phone brand equity translates into purchasing of smart phones.

This study took into account preliminary research data which indicated that the perception, consideration and the decision to purchase a certain smart phone is influenced by the brand. Preliminary research data collected from www.gsmarena.com which showed competing smart phone brand models as sharing the same or similar specifications and various retailers of smart phones who reported that the bestselling smart phone brands are the brands with the most equity.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Research Project: Exploring Westville University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Perceptions of Smart Phone Brand Equity

General Information:

1. Are you an undergraduate or postgraduate student?

Undergraduate	Honors	Masters	Doctorate
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2. What is your age?

18 to 21 years	22 to 25 years	26 to 30 years	31 to 35 years	36 years or older
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3. Are you a male or female?

Male	Female
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4. How long have you been a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville campus?

Less than 1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years +
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Research questions:

1. What are the student's perceptions of smart phone brands?

- Which brands of smart phone appeals to you and why?
- Which brands would not be on your list to buy and why?
- How did you become aware of the "good" and "bad" brands?
- Would you consider buying a generic brand from an established network stores (e.g) Vodafone, Cell C phone, MTN brand, Virgin phone? Elaborate on your response.
- Comment on the following brands: Alcatel, HTC, Mobicel, Xiomi.

2. Which smart phone brand/s is owned by the student and why?

- Which brand do you own and why?
- What range in price does your phone fit into?
R1200/ R1200-R3999/ R4000-R7999/ R8000-R12999/ R13000 +
- How do you rate your smart phone and why you bought it/them?
- Mention brand previously owned, and state why you still/no longer own that brand?
- Has a salesman/women ever convinced you to buy a smartphone brand? Elaborate

3. Which specific aspects make the student loyal to a smart phone brand?

- List the aspects that attract you to a smart phone brand.
- Mention any issues you've had regarding "good" or "bad" support firm dealer or the brand?

4. Is the student technically aware of smart phone brands?

- Have you ever checked www.gsmarena.com to compare phone specifications? If so elaborate.

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Greetings

You are invited to participate in an M Commerce study entitled: University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville, Student Perceptions of Smartphone Brands. The aim is to determine which brands carry equity based on student perceptions and why. The study is will involve in-depth interview questions which will take approximately 12 minutes.

The study poses no risks and does not provide direct benefits to participants. The study will provide greater insight as to how students on campus perceive the brand equity of smart phone brands and it will provide understanding concerning equity and purchase intent concerning smart phone brands.

This study has been approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number: HSS/1630/017M). In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the following:

Mrs Mariette Snyman

Humanities and Social Science Ethics (HSSREC) Research Office,
Govan Mbeki Building, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, DURBAN 4000
Tel: 031 260 8350 Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

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Phone Number: 0789616669

Email Address: vuyisa.notsh@gmail.com

Supervisor: Alec Bozas 082 33 444 77

abozas@mweb.co.za

Your participation is voluntary and by participating, you grant the researcher permission to use your responses, however your name will remain confidential. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study. Your anonymity is assured and your responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this study. All data, both electronic and hard copy, will be securely stored during the study and archived for 5 years, after which all data will be destroyed.

Sincerely
Vuyisa Notshweleka

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Ihave been informed about the study entitled University of KwaZulu-Natal Westville, Student Perceptions of Smartphone Brands.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0789616669.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

Mrs Mariette Snyman
Humanities and Social Science Ethics (HSSREC) Research Office,
Govan Mbeki Building, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, DURBAN 4000
Tel: 031 260 8350 Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za
Researcher: Vuyisa Notshweleka 0789616669
Supervisor: Alec Bozas 0823344477

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

**Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)**

Date

**Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)**

Date

06 October 2017

Mr Vuyisa Phambili Sakhile Notshweleka (211554314)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Notshweleka,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1630/017M

Project title: Exploring student perceptions of Smart-Phone Brand Equity at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus

Approval Notification – Expedited Approval

In response to your application received on 07 September 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

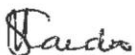
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further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

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Mr Alec Bozas
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angela Pearce

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

8 September 2017

Mr Vuyisa Phambili Sakhile Notshweleka (SN 211554314)
School of Management, IT and Governance
College of Law and Management Studies
Westville Campus
UKZN
Email: vuyisa.notsh@gmail.com

Dear Mr Notshweleka

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Exploring Student Perceptions of Smart-Phone Brand Equity at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with Students on the Westville campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Vuyisa july FINAL ab Turntin

ORIGINALITY REPORT

3%

SIMILARITY INDEX

2%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

2%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

Submitted to The Independent Institute of
Education (IIE)

Student Paper

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2

Submitted to University of Strathclyde

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