

The impact of Retailer Xs' Consumer-Based Brand Equity on the Intention of its consumers to Purchase Meat Products: A survey of FMCG stores in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town**

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ABSTRACT

Products within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry form an integral part of consumers' daily lives. Moreover, previous literature has suggested a relationship between Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) and purchase intention. However, there is a gap in current literature for an in-depth analysis of one brand in relation to a single product group. Thus, the impact of Retailer Xs' CBBE on its consumers' intention to purchase red meat products as an FMCG was investigated. The CBBE conceptual model formed the theoretical underpinning of this study and was used to evaluate Retailer X, through its dimensions of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. A causal conclusive research design was used with a sampling technique of non-probability convenience and a Randomised Block Design. This study was based in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town as Retailer Xs' target market falls between LSM 8-10, with revenue per capita being dominated by consumers who live in this area. Findings of this study established that Retailer X's CBBE had a significant positive aggregate relationship with purchase intention. Furthermore, it was determined that an interdependent relationship existed between the individual CBBE dimensions, which conformed to previous literature. This study aimed to garner value for FMCG marketing managers by providing recommendations. Furthermore, the study was unique in nature as it quantified the interdependent nature of the CBBE dimensions with their respective explanatory power, which is a method not frequently cited in current literature. Therefore, the findings of this research had both practical and academic applications.

Keywords: Retail, fast-moving consumer goods, consumer-based brand equity, purchase intention, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental objective of this study was to determine the impact of Retailer Xs' Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) on the intention of its consumers to purchase red meat (meat) products. The South African retailing sector continues to warrant investigation because South Africa's food sector is becoming increasingly mature and competitive, but has been negatively affected by low GDP growth, high unemployment, and constrained consumer spending (Business Wire 2020). Therefore, further research needs to be undertaken to understand these impacts as well as the attention it has attracted from large international investments (Luiz & Radebe 2016). These investments include large retailing players such as Walmart (Massmart), Hertz International, and Britannia Biscuits within the FMCG industry. These global corporations have used South Africa as a springboard into Africa (Luiz & Radebe 2016;

** Note:

Approval from the study's subject retailer in question, has not yet been granted, and for the purpose of this publication will be referred to as Retailer X.

Chinomona & Sandada 2013). Literature has shown that, in general, consumers in South Africa tend to evaluate the performance of a product based on their perceived quality of the good, the uniformity of the goods over a series of purchases, and its reliability (Chinomona & Popoola 2017; Pillay 2007). This provides an opportunity for marketers to structure the different elements of the marketing mix in a way that enables them to quantify the desired effects of brand equity on target audiences.

The South African consumer market is segmented in nature, owing to a range of income differentials, cultural diversity, and historical inequalities (Euromonitor International 2016; Ngouapegne & Chinomona 2019; PWC 2017). Within this context, the FMCG market has continuously experienced growth due to the high demand for these goods from consumers in all segments (Fihla 2009; Trade Intelligence 2020). This is because FMCGs satisfy basic needs and wants that are somewhat uniform across a variety of consumers (Chinomona & Popoola 2017; Fihla 2009). These products are differentiated according to the attributes of their offerings, which cater to respective consumers in the fragmented market (Fihla 2009; PWC 2017; Trade Intelligence 2020). These factors provide opportunities for marketers to understand and obtain insights on how to influence the purchase intentions of this diversified South African market.

The South African consumer economy is a hybrid of the informal and formal sectors (Van Woerkom 2017). It is important to recognise the close link that exists between the informal and formal sectors, which is an interdependent relationship because of the resale of formal goods into the informal market (Battersby, Marshak & Mngqibisa 2018). Furthermore, there is a modern perception that these sectors are two pillars in an overall trading ecosystem (Battersby et al. 2018; Simpson & Dore 2008). This research has chosen to focus on the retail side of South African trading as is the third biggest industry within the country's formal landscape, with an approximate value of ZAR 65.3 billion (Brands & Branding 2019). In addition, South Africa's retail trade has advanced on average 2.7 % year-on-year (YOY) as of March 2020, with the top 50 most valuable of those brands increasing 5.8% YOY (Brands & Branding 2019; Trading Economics 2020). The FMCG market is characterised by both retailers and wholesalers who have pioneered a billion-rand industry (Brands & Branding 2019; Brand Finance 2019; Brands2Africa 2017). However, this investigation focused on the retail side of the FMCG industry as retailers are a direct link between wholesalers and consumers, given that wholesalers do not generally interact with end-consumers (Chand 2016). Moreover, division between retail and wholesale channels has become blurred, as larger players have substantial procurement, central warehousing, and distribution divisions (Research and Markets 2020).

Furthermore, the FMCG food sector was chosen as a focus of this research as it accounts for over 50% of the entire industry output in South Africa (Statista 2019). The key FMCG retailers are Shoprite, Spar, Pick n Pay, Checkers and Woolworths, which account for about 80% of local retail sales, with various sub-brands targeting different consumer segments of the market (Brands & Branding 2019; Brand Finance 2019). Retailer X was evaluated in this study, as according to the research group Brand Finance (2019), it was the eighth most valuable brand overall in the country for 2019. Furthermore, it is the highest ranked retailer among the top fifty brands of FMCG retailers in South Africa (Brands & Branding 2019; Brand Finance 2019). Hence, Retailer X qualifies as a brand with strong equity to investigate within the confines of this research.

Moreover, Retailer X has also become the market leader amongst the expanding middle class in developing South Africa. In the segmented analysis of the Woolworths 2019 Financial Report, it was seen that food products contributed 54% to its South African revenue, which was the largest contributor to the group and considered the driving force behind the retailer's growth (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). Meat products were investigated because, as a category, they are the largest contributor to Retailer X's food products (21%), such that they generated R4 875.3 million (7.56%) of total turnover in 2016 (Woolworths Holding Limited 2016). Additionally, the meat product market is in the mature stage of the product life cycle. Therefore, product innovation and development are necessary to bring about significant growth (Grewal, Roggeveen & Nordfält 2017; Trading Intelligence 2020). Thus, it was crucial to evaluate such a significant sector.

Moreover, the strategic impact of branding has been recognised in marketing literature and business practices (Aaker 1991, 1992; Baxendale, Macdonald & Wilson 2015; Keller 2001; Keller & Brexendorf 2019; Lassar, Mittal & Sharma 1995; McDonald & De Chernatony 2001). This is because brands can generate a sustainable competitive advantage for firms, by shaping consumers' brand perceptions in a positive way through means of differentiation (Aaker 1991; Baxendale et al. 2015; Keller & Brexendorf 2019; Pappu, Quester & Cooksey 2005). This competitive advantage provides "the opportunity for successful extensions, resilience against competitors' promotional pressures, and creation of barriers to competitive entry" (Lassar et al. 1995: 11). Moreover, Pappu et al. (2005:143) suggest that differentiation is one of the "key competitive positioning strategies" in regard to branding, which is significant in the highly competitive FMCG industry. Therefore, developing insights into the measurement of Retailer Xs' CBBE was crucial to understanding the prominence of branding in this FMCG market (Keller 2016; Lassar et al. 1995; Pappu et al. 2005).

In conceptualising brand valuations, consumers' perspectives are key as brand equity is derived from the superior confidence that consumers place in one brand over another (Keller 1993, 2016; Lassar et al. 1995). However, there is limited current research of an in-depth analysis of one brand in relation to one product group, specifically in a South African retail context (Abratt 2019; Chinomona & Sandada 2013). Despite the increasing importance of CBBE, a measurement instrument for brand equity from a consumer perspective has also been lacking (Baxendale et al. 2015; Brahmbhatt & Shah 2017; Keller 2016; Lassar et al. 1995). This study therefore aimed to fill this gap in literature by basing the understanding and measurement of Retailer Xs' CBBE on Aaker's (1991) conceptual model. This is because this framework has proven to have a strong impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Moreover, it is crucial for brand managers to have "access to valid and reliable" CBBE instruments (Pappu et al. 2005: 144).

Therefore, a measurement of Retailer Xs' CBBE was derived to harness these insights for fundamental academic understanding and managerial implications. This was initially done by testing the effect of its dimensions as the independent variables on the dependent variable of purchase intention. Findings illustrated that a significant interdependent relationship existed between these dimensions. However, this study sought to optimise their reliance on one other, rather than considering it as a limitation. This study used the independent measurement scales for each dimension and measured them against each other in the form of a multiple regression (Disatnik & Sivan 2016; Qualtrics 2012). This method was innovative and unique to the South African retailing field, as it enabled the dimensions of CBBE to be optimised to enhance practical retailing decisions. This statistical measurement could potentially be applied more widely to different retail sectors beyond the scope of the South African retailing industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study was guided by the following research question:

"Does the CBBE of Retailer X have a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products?"

The primary objective of this study was:

To determine whether the CBBE of Retailer X has a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products

The secondary objectives of this study were to determine the impact of:

- Brand awareness on the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products;
- Brand imagery on the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products;
- Perceived quality on the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products;
- Brand loyalty on the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products.

This article has been divided into three parts, such that the following section provides a literature review, succeeded by the methodology of the research with its results. Finally, a discussion about the results is provided in the form of managerial implications. Limitations of the research and possible future research concepts are also presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Industry

The FMCG industry is one of the largest industries worldwide (Ntloedibe 2015; Research and Markets 2020). According to KPMG (2016), South Africa had the third highest expenditure in Africa in the FMCG market. Today, the FMCG industry is a highly competitive environment, characterised by retailers' relentlessness towards capturing market share. FMCGs can be characterised as products with a relatively low-cost and low profit margin, and relatively high sales demand (Research and Markets, 2020; Wood, 2019). Examples of FMCGs include a variety of consumables such as food products, soft drinks, toiletries, and over-the-counter drugs. Thus, to create profitability for the store, companies within the FMCG industry rely heavily on marketing and other methods to gain consumer loyalty (Keller 2016; Wood 2019). Given that FMCGs are very similar, branding is used to differentiate and gain competitive advantages (KPMG 2016; Wood 2019).

Retailer X and meat products within the FMCG Industry

Retailer X, as previously mentioned, has a significant influence in this FMCG market. The brand is a South African-based retail group that operates both domestically and internationally; and caters to a market of consumers in the middle-to-upper income bracket (LSM 8 - 10) (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). In South Africa, the group has over 218 full-line and 430 food standalone stores and offers a wide variety of specific ranges under its own brand name of apparel, cosmetics, and food products (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). Retailer X is geared towards delivering high quality products by making use of contract farming in the production of freshly produced and prepared convenience foods, which has allowed Retailer X to supply a greater range of gourmet products (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). Furthermore, Retailer X has distinguished itself from competing FMCG retailers, such that 90% of its offering falls under Retailer X's house brand, with a limited range of other branded goods (Trading Intelligence 2020). This exclusivity has allowed Retailer X to price their products slightly higher than competing retailers (Konuk 2018; Tarrant 2016).

Retailer X's brand equity is a result of the above, which has cemented its position in the FMCG industry. The brand's quality blueprint stipulates that they measure their performance on their ability to meet set standards from a supplier and retail point of view (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). Among all the food products sold in its stores, Retailer X's meat products have experienced significant success within the food retail department (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2016).

Furthermore, meat products meet the definition of an FMCG good as they have a short shelf-life, are perishable, and have low margins with relatively high sale volumes (KPMG, 2016). Current literature indicates that consumers' concerns in terms of meat purchases are related to price, shelf-placement, calorie content, artificial ingredients, convenience characteristics and cholesterol (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero 2014; Resurreccion 2004). Furthermore, Retailer X dedicates, on average, 21% of its shelf space to meat products (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2016). Literature has found that the most prominent characteristic on which consumers base their quality evaluation is the appearance of meat products. (Kim, Spence & Marshall 2018; Verain, Sijtsema & Antonides 2016). Various aesthetic attributes of the product impact the consumer's likeliness to purchase meat (Verain et al. 2016). The attractive, simple, and clear packaging of Retailer X's meat products allow for consumers to evaluate if the product meets their needs in terms of colour and fat content (Kim et al. 2018). The following section illustrates the importance of branding and how it is regarded as a core concept in the FMCG industry.

Defining branding and brand equity

Brands have become an integral part of consumers' daily lives (Keller 2002, 2019). From a corporate perspective, brands are regarded as being central to the firm's marketing and business strategy (Çerri 2012; Kotler 2019; Kotler & Armstrong 2010). This is because establishing a strong and successful brand assists in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for a firm and significantly impacts the firm's overall performance (Çerri 2012; Kotler 2019;

Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Pillay, 2007). After analysing the works of Ambler (2003), Kotler and Gertner (2002) and Aaker (1991), a broad definition of a brand was derived as being a name, term, design, symbol, design or another feature that identifies one seller's distinctive good or service, and it is something that is bought by the consumers.

A brand ultimately has the power to shape a consumer's perception of a product, and it is this perception that drives the consumer to favour one brand over another (Çerri 2012; Çifci, Ekinci, Whyatt, Japutra, Molinillo & Siala 2016; Moolla & Bisschoff 2013; Tanveer & Lodhi 2016). Davis (2002) reiterated that it is a brand that a consumer may have a relationship with, not the actual product or service (Coelho, Rita & Santos 2018). This is because a brand is essentially a set of promises, and therefore can occupy an important position in the minds of consumers (Davis 2002; Keller 2016). In light of the above perspectives, the following definition of a brand provided by McDonald and De Chernatony (2001:20), was used for the purpose of this study: "A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Its success results from being able to sustain these added values against competitors" (Iglesias, Ind & Alfaro 2017:150). The following section is based on this understanding and discusses the concept of brand equity and its importance to a firm.

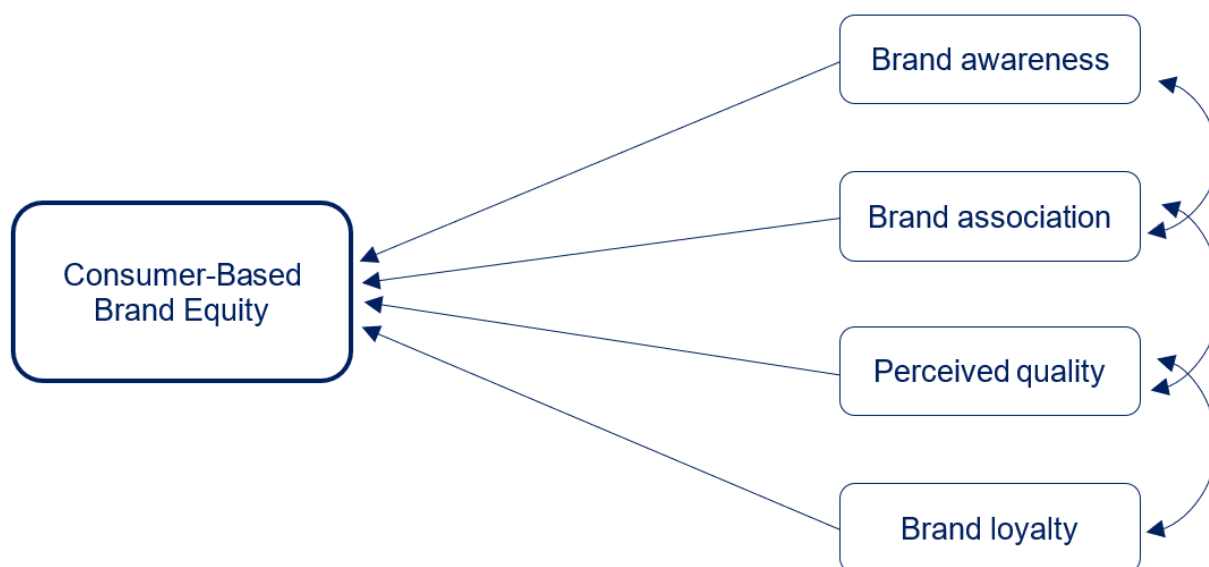
Defining brand equity

A concept derived from branding is brand equity, which emerged in the 1980s (Aaker 1991; Çifci et al. 2016; Keller 2016). Keller (2002, 2016), Tanveer and Lodhi (2016), Atilgan, Aksoy and Akinci (2005), Dublin (1998) and Aaker (1991) define brand equity as the marketing outcomes and effects that accumulate to a product with its brand name, in comparison with those that would accumulate if an identical product did not have the brand name. Brahmabhatt and Shah (2017) concur with this definition, defining brand equity as the value added to a product or service by the brand name. Creating a brand equity profile involves "the identification of the various consumer associations with a brand and levels of consumer awareness and loyalty that set it apart from competitors" (Aaker, 1991:126). This is induced from a consumer's individual experience with the brand (Aaker 1991; Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Çifci et al. 2016). A consumer-based perspective was chosen for this study as it is their viewpoints which assist marketers in developing efficient strategies to understand, meet and influence consumer behaviour (Çifci et al. 2016; Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014). This consumer-based perspective enables marketers to determine the consumer's response towards a brand name and derive real value (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Çerri 2012; Çifci et al. 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014). Therefore, a meticulous understanding of brand equity from the consumer's perspective is a prerequisite in achieving effective brand management (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014). The following section presents a more detailed discussion on the concept of CBBE.

CBBE and its conceptual framework

According to Keller (1993:2), CBBE is defined as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on a consumer's response to the marketing of the brand" and can be positive or negative (Çerri, 2012). Positive CBBE transpires when the consumer expresses familiarity with the brand and retains some strong, positive, and distinctive brand associations in their memory (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Çifci et al. 2016; Keller 2016; Çerri 2012). Aaker (1996) presents how positive CBBE is core to the success of any business as it can lower costs and increase revenue, thereby resulting in greater profit (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016). This study was adapted from Aaker's (1991) model, given that it has been cited and empirically tested over 1 500 times in respected academic work relevant to this study (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Çifci et al. 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). Moreover, the study was also adapted from Tong and Hawley (2014), owing to its relevance to this study. This CBBE model aims to determine the different aspects that contribute to the overall intrinsic value of the brand, and how this may impact purchase intention (Çifci et al. 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014; Aaker 1991). Therefore, this model has been applied to this study to test the measurement of the CBBE dimensions in regard to Retailer X in the FMCG industry. The applications of the CBBE model depicted in Figure 1 are discussed below.

FIGURE 1
AN ADAPTATION OF AAKER (1991) AND TONG & HAWLEY (2014)
TO FORM A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CBBE TO TEST AGAINST PURCHASE INTENTION



Aaker (1991) divides brand equity into five main dimensions: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other privately-owned brand assets such as trademarks, patents, and channel relationships. The basic concept behind the model is that the power of a brand is determined by what consumers have seen, learnt, heard, and felt about a brand over time. The first four dimensions have been frequently used to measure CBBE, as responses to them can be easily understood by consumers (Çifci et al. 2016; Pappu et al. 2005; Tong & Hawley 2014). Thus, to say that a brand has a strong brand equity suggests that consumers have a high brand-name awareness; retain a positive brand image; perceive the brand to be of good quality; and are loyal to the brand (Çifci et al. 2016; Pappu et al. 2005; Tong & Hawley 2014).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the extent to which a consumer expresses familiarity with the image or qualities of a brand as a member of a certain product category (Aaker, 1991). Pappu et al. (2005:145) further substantiates this viewpoint by defining it as “the strength of a brand’s presence in consumers’ minds”. According to Keller (2002, 2016) and Snoj, Korda and Mumuel (2004), brand awareness consists of two main sub-dimensions, namely: brand recognition and recall. Rossiter and Percy (1987) conceptualised brand awareness as the consumers’ ability to identify or recognise the brand. However, all literature supports the view that brand awareness is created through frequent exposure to the brand (Çifci et al. 2016; Keller 2002; Pappu et al. 2005; Snoj et al. 2004). Hence, brand awareness was operationalised as a consumer’s general familiarity with the Retailer Xs’ brand for the purpose of this study.

Brand Association

Brand associations are considered to embody “the meaning of the brand for consumers” (Keller 1993: 3). Çifci et al. (2016) and Tong and Hawley (2014) expanded on this definition by describing brand association as the characteristics of a brand that come into a consumer’s mind when engaging with the brand. Moreover, these varying associations have different levels of strength, which impact a consumer’s decision to purchase a product (Aaker 1991, 1996; Brahmhatt & Shah 2017; Mohan & Sequeira 2016). A consumer’s perception of the link between a product and its respective brand will strengthen when it is based on various experiences or exposures to brand communications which form positive attitudes among consumers (Aaker 1991; Brahmhatt & Shah 2017). Thus, CBBE ensues when consumers possess a high level of brand awareness and retain numerous strong, positive, and exclusive brand associations in their minds (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin 2017; Snoj et al. 2004).

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is not the actual quality of the product but is rather the consumer's subjective evaluation of the product's quality, in comparison to alternatives (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangin 2017; Pappu et al. 2005; Snoj et al. 2004; Zeithaml 1988). Brands that are perceived to be of higher quality positively influence a consumer's attitude toward a brand, which in turn impacts their intention to purchase goods or services from the respective brand (Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016; Çifci et al. 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014). Furthermore, it enables the brand to differentiate itself from competing firms, to demand a premium price, and provides a solid foundation for the brand extension (Aaker 1991; Baalbaki & Guzmán 2016).

Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1991:39) defined brand loyalty as, "the attachment that a customer has to a brand". Tong and Hawley (2014) expanded on this definition by specifying it as the tendency of consumers to concentrate their purchases on the same brand of goods over a long period of time. Aaker (1991) inferred that brand loyalty contributes significantly towards the value of a brand, as it results in a group of long-term habitual buyers who are unlikely to start purchasing from competitors. Moreover, brand loyalty can be characterised as a favourable attitude of a brand, and the repeat purchases of its products over time (Coelho et al. 2018; Rossiter & Percy 1987). The accumulation of these definitions operationalise brand loyalty as the consumer's actual loyalty to the brand, which is reflected in purchase choices. The application of brand loyalty is needed for marketers to understand the unique South African retail market by providing insight into what the optimal consumer experience is with products and services. Moreover, these results could provide useful insights to enhance Retailer Xs' competitive advantage within the highly competitive FMCG industry.

In addition, this study proposed an associative relationship between the four CBBE dimensions. Pappu et al. (2005) envisaged that a consumer's perception of quality would be associated with their brand loyalty; in other words, the more brand loyal a consumer is, the more likely they are to perceive the brand's offering as superior quality, and vice versa (Çifci et al. 2016). Moreover, a consumer's brand awareness is likely to be high when they have strong associations for the brand. This study sought to investigate the possible interdependent relationships between the dimensions, which have been illustrated in previous literature (Çifci et al. 2016; Pappu et al. 2005). A discussion of purchase intention follows, as the measurement of CBBE cannot be fully appreciated until its effect on the attitudes and behaviour of consumers is understood.

Purchase intention of consumers

This conceptual model was applied to this study as previous literature has suggested that there is a link between CBBE and purchase intention in the FMCG industry (Chinomona & Popoola 2017; Pillay 2007). This was because brands with a positive CBBE, across various product categories, generated significantly "greater preferences and purchase intentions" (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble & Donthu, 2013: 37). Halim and Hameed (2005) describe the purchase intention of a consumer as being the repeated purchases and repetitive engagement with the product. Fandos and Flavian (2006:656) further state that purchase intention is the positive and "foreseeable behaviour in short-term future buying decisions". Thus, if the product's respective values coincide with the consumer's wants and needs, they will then be inclined to make a purchasing decision (Tariq et al. 2013; Wangwe 2018). Furthermore, Wangwe (2018) and Tariq et al. (2013) both suggested that consumers will make repeated purchases if they continue to have positive experiences with the brand. This study operationalised the concept of "purchase intention" through the summation of the above discussion. Understanding the attributes of meat product attributes in determining consumer purchase intention is imperative as it is relatively unexplored. Thus, examining attributes of consumers' purchase intention in this study provides a robust assessment of economic opportunities for growth in the FMCG industry. Therefore, in the context of this study, the outlined associated benefits of the Retailer Xs' brand can be said to influence its consumers' purchase intention of their meat products.

Given the discussion above, the following five relational hypotheses were derived in terms of the scope and objectives of the research. The primary objective of this study was:

To determine whether the CBBE of Retailer X has a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products.

Therefore, based on this primary objective, the following relational hypotheses were derived:

H₁: The CBBE of Retailer X has a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products

H₂: Brand awareness impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products

H₃: Brand association impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products

H₄: Perceived quality impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products

H₅: Brand loyalty impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products

The given hypotheses were tested, and recommendations were derived on the basis of their results. The methodology that was used to conduct this study is discussed below.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of a causal, conclusive research design in order to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between CBBE and purchase intention; thereby varying and manipulating the 4 CBBE dimensions (Cowles & Nelson 2019; P.N. Hague, N. Hague & Morgan 2013; Malhotra 2010). This research design was adopted as previous literature, on which this study derived its theoretical underpinning, made use of this causal conclusive design (Çifci et al. 2016; Tanveer & Lodhi 2016; Tong & Hawley 2014; Yoo et al. 2000). The outcomes and effects that these dimensions had on the dependent variable, purchase intention, were observed. The most appropriate research method for this study was a Randomised Block Design as it ensured that the various experimental groups were closely matched to the blocking variable (Cowles & Nelson 2019; Malhotra 2010; Nunan, Birks & Malhotra 2020; Cowles & Nelson, 2019; Malhotra, 2010). The blocking variable used was age such that respondents were classified according to specific age brackets, these being: 25–34 years, 35–44 years, 45–55 years, and 56–65 years (Cowles & Nelson 2019; Qualtrics 2012). This was done to deduce the buying patterns of different age groups. This approach was beneficial for the purpose of this study, as literature suggests that there are changes in the demand for meat products across different generations (Resurreccion 2004; Verain et al. 2016).

The target population for this study consisted of Retailer X's consumers between the ages of 25 and 65. This implied that the analysis was based on more assured purchasing intentions and an established brand loyalty (Keller 2002, 2016). Retailer X's target consumer is between LSM 8-10; therefore, Cape Town was investigated as relatively it has the highest household income bracket across South Africa (Chatterjee, Czajka & Gethin 2020; Trade Intelligence 2020). The Southern Suburbs were selected for investigation as Retailer Xs' target population and Cape Town stores were prominent in this area (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). The sampling technique that was used to select the target population was a non-probability technique of convenience sampling. This is because the technique does not use chance selection procedures, and an accurate set of probabilistic chances of selection of the sample population could not be identified (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). The data was collected through an online questionnaire, consisting of 23 questions and measured all the constructs in this study. Demographic questions were included at the end to ensure there was a fair representation of each gender subgroup, and to identify any prejudicial influence (Nunan et al. 2020). Lastly, a brief description of the purpose of this study was given, to ensure the respondents had no significant preconceived sentiments when answering the questionnaire (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). The measurement of each scale of this study's constructs was discussed below.

The measurement scales were adopted from a study conducted by Yoo et al. (2000), which has also been adopted in other academic works (Çifci et al. 2016). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-scale using indicators of (1) 'strongly disagree' to (5) 'strongly agree' on the basis that they were internally consistent (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). The dimensions of CBBE from Aaker's (1991) conceptual model were the independent variables in this study

and were manipulated in relation to the marketing mix, to determine their effect on the dependent variable, purchase intention (Cowles & Nelson 2019; P.N. Hague et al. 2013). The following section discusses the data collection of this study using this measurement instrument.

The fieldwork of the research, including the pre-test and the data collection procedure, are described below. This process commenced with permission from the UCT ethics committee. The measurement was pretested on 25 consumers as it allowed researchers to identify and remove any errors and misunderstandings displayed by the respondents (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). This gave assurance about the ease of response for each participant, and furthermore reduced the risk of inaccurate answers in the final online experimental process. The consumers who were part of the pre-test sample were excluded from the study when closing the pre-test, by thanking them and clarifying that they could not participate in the final questionnaire of the study (Wolf, Joye, Smith & Fu 2016). The official data collection began on 14 August and ran to 30 August. The sample consisted of 255 respondents, as a sample of this size increased the validity of the study and ensured that accurate conclusions were derived (Malhotra, 2010; Nunan et al., 2020).

The data was collected through an online survey and was distributed Facebook and Facebook Messenger. Facebook was chosen as the main medium for distribution, given that it has 36% more active users than its nearest competitor and it was assumed a snowball effect of obtaining respondents would take place (Statista 2017). Retailer X also has its greatest number of online followers (1.8 million people) on Facebook so a link to the questionnaire was posted on their respective pages. Approval from Retailer X was not obtained, given UCT's ethical clearance of the study; however, implicit consent from the brand was assumed by Retailer X not removing the questionnaire link from their social media page. Moreover, using Facebook meant that no preferences regarding age, gender or race were made, owing to the randomness of conducting through this platform. Facebook Messenger distribution ensured the underserved age brackets were targeted by means of randomised public profiles obtained through the Facebook database. This enabled the researchers to obtain a more representative sample.

In addition, the use of an online survey allowed the experiment to be conducted in an environment where the respondents felt comfortable, so that they would not be inconvenienced or feel negative towards participating in the research (Nunan et al. 2020). The use of an online questionnaire provided more accurate results due to the absence of the interviewer's presence and assumed expectations of consumers (Pusterla 2016). The risk of was reduced, as respondents had complete anonymity compared to personal interactions. Moreover, no incentives were offered to influence participants' responses. Consent was given by respondents in the beginning of the questionnaire in answering "yes" to a question asking whether they agreed to participate, and indicating they were over the age of 25. Thus, the likelihood of respondents giving more truthful responses was increased (Ciccarelli & White 2017). The following section discussed the fieldwork that took place during the data collection period.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

Nominal and Ordinal Descriptive Statistics

Respondents were represented by 65.9% of the sample being females and 33.7% were males, with 0.4% of the sample preferring not to indicate their gender. The composition of the sample was slanted towards females and thus, it was not representative of the greater population. However, South African literature has indicated that the sample would contain more females, as they are the ones who predominantly do the shopping for the household (Lindsey, 2015; Trade Intelligence, 2020). The following section presents the descriptive statistics of the interval data from the data collection.

Interval Descriptive Statistics

The following section discusses the descriptive statistics of both dependent and independent variables. The descriptive statistics of the CBBE dimensions and dependent variable of purchase intention can be seen in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE INTERVAL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE STUDY

Construct	Mean value	Standard deviation	Likert-scale interpretation	Practical application
Brand awareness	4.34	0.62	Responses varied from neutral to strongly agree	Consumers expressed a relatively high familiarity with Retailer Xs' meat products
Brand association	3.45	1.11	Responses varied from disagree to strongly agree	Some consumers valued Retailer Xs' meat product characteristics highly, whilst others were more indifferent about the product characteristics when comparing brands
Perceived quality	4.42	0.63	Responses varied from neutral to strongly agree	Respondents' perceptions of Retailer Xs' meat products were relatively positive indicating consumers saw them as high quality
Brand loyalty	3.75	1.00	Responses varied from neutral to strongly agree	Respondents were considerably loyal towards the Retailer X food brand
Purchase intention	4.10	1.00	Responses varied from neutral to strongly agree	Respondents had a high likelihood of purchasing Retailer Xs' meat products

Therefore, consumers' responses indicated that most of them made repeat purchases and continually engaged with Retailer Xs' meat products. A key finding deduced from this analysis is that consumers displayed a positive CBBE. The following section discusses the reliability of the descriptive statistics.

Scale reliability of questionnaire items

This section discusses the internal consistency and validity of the scales used in this experiment, and thus the overall respective reliability. To measure the overall reliability the study made use of both Cronbach's alpha and a Principal Factor Analysis (PCA) with a Varimax rotated solution (Nunan et al. 2020). A Cronbach's alpha is considered internally consistent if it approximates the 0.7 threshold (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). The results of the Cronbach's alpha tests can be found in Table 2 below.

The Cronbach's alphas for each dimension were all above the threshold of 0.7, except for purchase intention, which had a test statistic of 0.62. An "Alpha-if-Item-Deleted" test was run on these purchase intention scale items so that they could be considered for removal, but this only lowered Cronbach's alpha values. However, Nunan et al. (2020) and Malhotra (2010) still consider 0.6 as the lowest level of "satisfaction" for internal consistency reliability. Thus, this scale was included in this analysis. Therefore, all constructs were considered to have internal consistency.

TABLE 2
RELIABILITY AND INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF SCALES USED IN THIS STUDY

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha in Original Research	Cronbach's Alpha in Current Research	Eigenvalue(s)	Explained Variation
Brand awareness	0.94	0.82	2.88	57.49%
Brand association	0.94	0.90	2.50	83.23%
Perceived quality	0.93	0.92	3.26	81.47%
Brand loyalty	0.94	0.86	2.37	78.94%
Purchase intention	0.90	0.62	1.90	47.40%
	-	-	1.02	25.60%

When evaluating the PCA, the factor loadings of each construct the dimensions were also considered reliable if they approximated 0.7 threshold or sufficiently greater (Nunan et al., 2020). For all the CBBE dimensions, each variable extracted only 1 factor in the rotated factor analysis with an eigenvalue greater than 1, using Kaiser's criterion (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). All the factor loadings for the CBBE dimensions were above the 0.7 explained variation threshold. However, the dependent variable purchase intention had 3 iterations in this rotated factor analysis, and 2 factors were extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1, using Kaizer's criterion (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). Factor 1 had an eigenvalue of 1.90 and explained 47.40% of the variation in the data. Factor 2 had an eigenvalue of 1.02 and explained 25.60% of the variation in the data. Cumulatively, the factors explained 73% of the variation in the data, thus the factor loading were greater than 0.7, with the first two items loaded onto Factor 2, and the remaining two items loaded onto Factor 1. Moreover, the validity and reliability purchase intention was deemed satisfactory, even with its low Cronbach's alpha and 2-factor extraction, as the communality values of the four purchase intention items were above the threshold of 0.5 (Black & Babin 2019; Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2008). Therefore, all models were considered a good fit for the study and thus, reliability was established for all the constructs. Therefore, inferential hypothesis testing could be conducted in the following section.

Inferential Hypothesis Testing

Inferential testing was done to determine if the hypotheses could be supported by the collected data. Skewness and Kurtosis statistics were evaluated to test normality because this analysis supersedes normality distribution conclusions (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020; Wolf et al. 2016). The Skewness and Kurtosis bands of normality used in this study was tested with the range of -1/1 and -1.5/1.5, respectively (Nunan et al. 2020). In accordance with the normality bands of the given assumptions, the various summated scales of the CBBE dimensions and purchase intention were considered normal as they were within the outlined range above (Nunan et al. 2020;). Thus, these scales were deemed robust enough to deal with the following hypothesis testing that assumed normally distributed data (Wolf et al. 2016). The hypotheses were tested using bivariate correlations and multiple regressions.

Bivariate correlations of CBBE dimensions and purchase intention

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test the relational hypotheses (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020;). These hypotheses were used to test if the different dimensions of CBBE were able to affirm what had been said in previous literature. Essentially, if a significant relationship existed between two constructs, and the strength of the relationship was relatively strong, it could be established that the CBBE dimensions impacted purchase intention. Hypotheses 2 to 5 were investigated for this relationship and made use of a non-directional two-tailed test. Furthermore, a Pearson Correlation was also used to test the summated scales of all the CBBE dimensions to derive further insights to support the "H1" of this study. The primary hypothesis made use of a directional one-tailed test, as it sought to further support that Retailer Xs' CBBE had an overall positive relationship on a consumer's purchase intention. Given that CBBE is defined as the summation of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty; an additional Pearson Correlation test was conducted (Aaker, 1991; Çifci et al., 2016). This CBBE directional test was conducted on the basis that all the dimensions of CBBE had a significant impact on intent to purchase. The inferential testing results were presented in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3
BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS TEST OUTPUT

Brief Description	Test Statistic	P-Value	Outcome	Strength of Relationship
Correlation between purchase intention and the overall CBBE Variable.	0.493	0.00	Reject H0	Positively Moderate
Correlation between purchase intention and brand awareness.	0.338	0.00	Reject H0	Weak
Correlation between purchase intention and brand association.	0.462	0.00	Reject H0	Moderate
Correlation between purchase intention and perceived quality.	0.431	0.00	Reject H0	Moderate
Correlation between purchase intention and brand loyalty.	0.358	0.00	Reject H0	Weak

It is evident from Table 3 that the null hypothesis was rejected for each hypothesis test. The inferential statistics presented above were tested against the outlined one-tailed directional hypotheses ("H2 to H5"). Each CBBE dimension had a significant impact on the purchase intention of meat products at the 1% level with respective test statistics given above. The strengths of these relationships were determined using the p statistic such that if it was below 0.4, it was weak and above 0.6, it was strong (Malhotra 2010; Nunan et al. 2020). The scales of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty were summated to form one overall CBBE variable. This was done in an attempt to support "H1" of this research (Çifci et al., 2016; Tong & Hawley, 2014).

H_1 : The CBBE of Retailer X has a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products

The overall CBBE variable had a significant impact on the purchase intention of meat products at the 1% level, and a test statistic of $p=0.493$. Moreover, it was the most significant relationship with purchase intention, in comparison with the individual CBBE dimensions' tests. This coincided with previous literature, as well as the hypotheses of this study, which claimed that a positive relationship exists between CBBE as a whole and consumers' intention to purchase (Çerri 2012; Çifci et al. 2016; Moolla & Bisschoff 2013; Tanveer & Lodhi 2016). This suggested that CBBE overall had a greater positive impact on consumers' intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products, when all the dimensions were aggregated. Thus, a multiple regression was run, as described in the following section, in order to decompose the cumulative effect of Retailer X CBBE's dimensions on purchase intention.

Multiple regression of purchase intention and the dimensions of CBBE

Regression was used to determine whether the dimensions of CBBE (the independent variables) explained the amount of variation in Retailer X' consumers intention to purchase meat (the dependent variable). The model was therefore able to establish whether a relationship existed between the variables. The independent variables were controlled for to evaluate the specific contributions of each CBBE dimension. It was hypothesised that:

$$\text{Purchase intention} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{brand awareness}) + \beta_2(\text{brand association}) + \beta_3(\text{perceived quality}) + \beta_4(\text{brand loyalty}) + e, \text{ where } \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 \text{ and } \beta_4 \text{ were all hypothesised to be positive based on the aforementioned conclusions.}$$

Initially, a force entry regression model was formulated according to theory:

$$\text{Purchase intention} = \beta_0 + 0.04(\text{brand awareness}) + 0.27(\text{brand association}) + 0.22(\text{perceived quality}) + 0.07(\text{brand loyalty}) + e$$

However, two variables were insignificant, so a Stepwise Method was used to confirm these results, and the following results were determined. The overall significance of the Stepwise Method was supported at the 1% level using an ANOVA, such that at least one β_x differs from zero with all regression assumptions being met. The amount of variation in Y that could be explained by the model was indicated by the coefficient of determination. The statistic in the model accounted for 25.5% of the variation in Y. In addition, the coefficient of multiple determination, which accounted for the number of X's used in the model, identified that the model was able to explain 24.9% of the variation in Y. Therefore, the model had weak explanatory power, and it was inferred that some other relationship explained the remaining variation in the model.

Results of the regression supported the following hypotheses and suggested the following estimated regression equation:

H_3 : Brand association impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products ($\beta_x \neq 0$)

H_4 : Perceived quality impacts the intention to purchase Retailer Xs' meat products ($\beta_x \neq 0$)

$$\text{Purchase Intention} = \beta_0 + 0.32(\text{brand association}) + 0.25(\text{perceived quality}) + e$$

It was determined that brand association and perceived quality loaded more significantly when the other variables were removed from the model, thus, indicating that Retailer Xs' CBBE was mainly driven by brand association and perceived quality, as they had the greatest impact on purchase intention. This could be explained by the inability of consumers to separate the four dimensions of CBBE when making a purchasing decision, which led to an overlap of

explanatory power between the different dimensions of CBBE. Therefore, the different CBBE dimensions needed to be understood interdependently to determine the greatest impact on purchase intention. The positive and significant nature of the Betas supported the hypotheses that brand association and perceived quality had a positive impact on purchase intent. In an effort to further explain the removal of brand awareness and brand loyalty in obtaining the final multiple regression model, it was important to test the multicollinearity, or overlaps in explanatory power, of the four dimensions of CBBE (Black & Babin 2019; Hair et al. 2008).

This test was conducted by regressing each explanatory variable against the remaining explanatory variables to determine if there was a significant relationship between the four dimensions of CBBE. Table 4 shows that brand association and brand awareness did not contain a significant overlap in explanatory power. Similarly, brand loyalty and perceived quality did not contain a significant overlap in explanatory power. The conclusions drawn from this are that the final model needed to contain either brand awareness or perceived quality, and brand association or brand loyalty. Determining which variables to include required an individual analysis of each of their explanatory powers on purchase intention, as this was the dependent variable of this study.

TABLE 4
SHOWING THE OVERLAPPING EXPLANATORY POWER OF THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CBBE

	Brand Awareness	Brand Association	Brand Loyalty	Perceived Quality
Brand Awareness		Not Significant	26,10%	32,20%
Brand Association	Not Significant		39,50%	32,80%
Brand Loyalty	26,10%	39,50%		Not Significant
Perceived Quality	32,20%	32,80%	Not Significant	

Table 4 below shows that the most powerful explanatory variables are brand association and perceived quality. It was for this reason that brand association and perceived quality were included, while brand awareness and brand loyalty were removed, in accordance with the multiple regression above. A further justification as to why brand awareness and brand loyalty could be removed without causing the explanatory power of the model to become too weak, was that perceived quality included 32.2% of the explanatory power of brand awareness. Furthermore, brand association included 39.5% of the explanatory power of brand loyalty. This overlap in explanatory power was evident in the multicollinearity that existed between these variables (Black & Babin 2019; Hair et al. 2008). Thus, a possible explanation for this was that a correlation network existed between the CBBE dimensions, which conformed with previous CBBE research that an overlap existed (Aaker, 1991; Çifci et al. 2016; Keller 1998, 2016; Lassar et al. 1995; Pappu et al. 2005). Managerial implications were drawn in order to understand the practical impact of CBBE on the purchase intention of Retailer Xs' consumers.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study concurred with previous literature, by inferring that a brand ultimately has the power to shape the consumers' perception of a product, driving them to favour one brand over another. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure the optimisation of CBBE to strengthen an FMCG retailer's competitive position. This section explores the managerial implications of this study's findings, and their respective impacts on purchase intent. Moreover, the value of these implications can also be extrapolated to international corporations when investing into the relatively untapped African retail market.

Stimulate purchase intention by optimising brand awareness through perceived quality –this lends itself to the implementation of a marketing campaign centred around generating awareness for meat products, by focusing on the high quality of the food. This could potentially be done by recruiting celebrity guest chefs to endorse the meat products. Cooking classes and "Chef's Table" events for special invitees with a certain minimum annual spend on their Retailer Xs' Rewards Cards could be conducted. This would generate positive word of mouth (WOM) and create

awareness around the superior quality of Retailer Xs' meat products. A similar, yet broader marketing campaign, would be to emphasise the sponsorship of their meat products on local cooking shows, highlighting that home cooks can be gourmet. International retailers should consider this implication, as consumers in the South African market are beginning to perceive quality foods as an everyday necessity, rather than a luxury.

Retailer X need not focus on increasing brand awareness – people in South Africa are already generally familiar with the brand of Retailer X (Trade Intelligence 2020). Instead, they should focus their marketing campaign on promoting the superior quality of their product. The idea of focusing on perceived quality rather than brand awareness can be adopted as brand was removed from the model as it was insignificant, and 40.5% of it was explained by perceived quality and brand loyalty. In addition, as alluded to above, if consumers perceive meat products to be of high quality, there could be positive repercussions of WOM generation from these meat-centric campaigns. Furthermore, with high perceived quality having a significant overlap in explanatory power with brand association, both of these variables contributed significantly towards CBBE, and ultimately the purchase intention of consumers. This insight can be beneficial for international investors, as it illustrates that to secure market share, they need to supply quality food products at reasonable prices to satisfy South Africa's growing middle class.

FMCG retailers should capitalise on the emerging consumer trend of purchasing meat from local and specialist butcheries instead of supermarkets – this provided a unique opportunity to tackle all four dimensions of CBBE in the implementation of one new concept: a standalone butchery (Townshend 2019). This could be pioneered in various Retailer X stores, where there would be a separate entrance and pay point inside the butchery. This would help increase the perceived quality of Retailer Xs' meat products, as through implementing this idea, the brand would be able to separate itself from the stigma attached to supermarket meat (Townshend 2019). This additional service from Retailer X would also help to increase brand awareness. Furthermore, brand association would be enhanced, as consumers would begin to associate Retailer Xs' meat products with the high quality of a traditional butchery. Finally, the aforementioned factors would further reinforce the brand loyalty of consumers and potentially encourage brand switching behaviour.

Retailer Xs' loyalty programmes and cards should not be stepped in nature – brand loyalty, and by extension loyalty cards, did not have a significant impact on purchase intention. Brand loyalty should therefore not be targeted directly but should rather be addressed through brand association as 39.5% of brand loyalty could be explained by brand association. Retailer X has a competitive advantage, whereby a consumer does not need to meet predetermined criteria to earn a discount. This differs from similar retailers in the sense that there are no prerequisites to benefiting from the rewards offered by being a Retailer X Rewards cardholder (Woolworths Holdings Limited 2019). Retailer X should therefore keep its rewards card programme simple and hassle-free. However, international investors should do a statistical evaluation such as that outlined in this study before deciding whether their loyalty programme should be "stepped" in nature.

These managerial implications should be phased in slowly using trial periods and strategic test-sites, to assess their effectiveness before rolling the campaign out nationwide. This research provided a method of interdependence analysis, in which the explanatory power of each dimension was determined. This has not been commonly explored in South African retailing literature; thus, this study contributed towards academic knowledge by providing useful CBBE insights. The following section provided recommendations on how future research could give further insight into these managerial implications.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section provides recommendations for avenues of future research.

- *Expand geographical area of investigation* – this study was limited to consumers residing within the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. Therefore, findings could not be generalised to the entire South African population, given the significant differences in terms of consumption patterns, purchasing power and lifestyles between consumers living in other regions (Trade Intelligence 2020).
- *Investigate alternative food items and other FMCG retailers* – to determine a brand's CBBE impact on a greater

variety of FMCG goods and retailers.

- *Investigate the relationship of convenience products in relation to the study's CBBE model* – the urbanisation of South African consumers, and the resulting level of “business” activity in these cosmopolitan areas has led to a change in lifestyles and retailing patterns (Chatterjee et al. 2020). Subsequently, there has been a growing trend towards convenience items being sold at various retailers across South Africa, to meet the needs of these consumers' busy lifestyles (KPMG 2016; Townshend 2019). Furthermore, Retailer X has been seen to pioneer this trend, and its product offerings have also been imitated by other retailers (Trade Intelligence 2020).

By extending this study beyond the scope of meat products, future research could provide broader insight into South African consumers' purchasing patterns

CONCLUSION

The fundamental objective of this study was to determine the impact of Retailer Xs' CBBE on the intention of its consumers to purchase meat products within the FMCG industry. This objective was derived by identifying an opportunity for research to determine whether the CBBE of Retailer X had a positive impact on its consumers' intention to purchase meat products. This was empirically tested in the form of a questionnaire on 255 respondents in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, in accordance with the relevant ethical considerations. The findings of this study uncovered that the CBBE dimension of Retailer Xs' meat had a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention.

However, when a multiple regression was run, both brand awareness and brand loyalty were removed from the model owing to their insignificance. Hence, the innovative statistical measurement method for the four CBBE dimensions was designed in order to quantify their independent contributions to the model. This concurred with the findings of the multiple regression, as brand awareness and brand loyalty only made significant contributions to purchase intention when driven by perceived quality and brand association, respectively. Managerial implications were derived to optimise Retailer Xs' brand-enhancing strategies. This study provides value as it identified local retail implications that optimise CBBE, as well as emphasising the brand's international appeal. Furthermore, the study was unique as it quantified the interdependent nature of the CBBE dimensions with their respective explanatory power, which is a method not frequently cited in current literature. Thus, this study highlights the importance of various marketing efforts in building strong brand equity.

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