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The impact of brand orientation on a South African business-to-business organisation

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Strategic Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, marketing researchers have conceptualised market orientation as an organisational culture that is geared towards delivering supreme customer value. However, one of the shortcomings of the market orientation concept is that it has failed to recognise the potential significance of strong brands, that is, it did not acknowledge brand orientation.

A few studies have investigated the conceptualisation of brand orientation in relation to brand loyalty; and the involvement of brand commitment and brand trust in mediating this association in the business-to-business context. Thus, it is the aim of this study to examine the impact of brand orientation on brand loyalty, and the roles played by brand commitment and brand trust in mediating the impact in the South African business-to-business environment.

Two hundred and sixty one questionnaires were completed by top and senior managers of a B2B organisation in South Africa. Structural equation modelling and Smart Plus were employed in this study to examine the relationships between the constructs. This study provides empirical evidence that brand orientation has a positive and significant relationship with brand commitment and brand trust, and that brand commitment and brand trust have positive and significant respective relationships with brand loyalty in the South African B2B context. The results indicate that brand orientation (BO), brand commitment (BC) and brand trust (BT) all have a strong influence on Brand Loyalty (BL).

Implications and limitations, as well as future research, are discussed in the study.

Keywords: Brand Orientation, Brand Commitment, Brand trust, Brand Loyalty, B2B

DECLARATION

I, **Gail Mbali Dludla**, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Gail Mbali Dludla

Signed at ……

On the …….. Day of …… 20…..

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to my wonderful daughter, Ntokozo. You truly are a joy to me. To my family, I am who I am today because of your steadfast love and support.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the purpose of the study as well as the context of the study. Additionally, the problem statement, research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study are presented. Furthermore, the delimitations of the study, the definition of terms, and the assumptions of the study are outlined. Lastly, the summary of the chapters is presented.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of brand orientation on brand loyalty. This impact is examined in relation to brand commitment and brand trust, in the context of a South African business-to-business (B2B) organisation.

1.2 Context of the study

Since the 1980s, marketing researchers have conceptualised market orientation as an organisational culture that is geared towards delivering supreme customer value (Narver & Slater, 1990). This culture is achieved through efforts made in developing, circulating, and utilising customer and competitor intelligence in order to retain sustainable competitive advantage (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). However, one of the shortcomings of the market orientation concept is that it has failed to recognise the potential significance of strong brands, that is, it did not acknowledge brand orientation (Gromark & Melin, 2013).

Brand orientation has been receiving much attention since its introduction in the early 1990s by Frans Melin and Mats Urde (Gromark & Melin, 2013; Urde, 1994, 1999). The key motives for the introduction of brand orientation were, firstly, to develop a better understanding of a brand as a key strategic company resource as opposed to product enhancements; and lastly, to extend knowledge on how to manage a brand successfully (Gromark & Melin, 2013). Thus, brand orientation has been portrayed by many researchers as the core of the company strategy and resources (Gromark & Melin, 2013; King, So & Grace, 20113; Urde, 1994, 1999; Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2013).

The utilisation of brands as a basis for creating a company strategy has become a prerequisite for brand orientation (Urde, 1994). Urde (1997) emphasises the significance of the symbolic meaning of a brand not only for customers, but for internal stakeholders as well. In a brand-orientated organisation, brand identity takes priority over the needs and wants of customers as well as competitors' actions (Urde, 1997).

Severi and Ling (2013) put emphasis on the argument of Aaker (1991) which states that loyalty is an essential element when it comes to assessing a brand with regards to value since loyalty can generate profit. Brand loyalty leads to marketing benefits such as lower marketing costs, acquisition of new customers, and better business leverage (Chauhudri & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, brand loyalty from employees is necessary to enable an organisation to respond effectively to the needs and wants of the customers (Javanmard & Nia, 2011). There is also a considerable likelihood for brand-loyal employees to operate as brand advocates to friends, families, customers as well as suppliers (Fram & McCarthy, 2003).

Customers with brand commitment have allowed brands to increase prices, spread positive word of mouth and reduce long-run marketing costs (Mathew, Thomas & Injodey, 2012). Brand commitment has been proven to be an important determining factor of resistance when negative messages about the brand are presented (Raju, Unnava & Montgomery, 2009). There is a need for commitment from employees if a brand is to be successful and distinguishable from its competition (Balmer, Powell, Punkaisri & Wilson, 2011). Balmer et al. (2011) state that, when employees have an understanding of the brand values, they are more likely to be mentally and emotionally connected to the brand. In other words, committed employees are better able to deliver the brand promise because of their emotional connection to the brand (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) state that customer experiences that take place during interaction with employees is a useful way of connecting customers affectively with the brand – brand commitment – while bringing about meaning to the brand. Thus, employee commitment becomes imperative in breathing life into the brand (Balmer et al., 2011).

Brand trust is at the centre of a brand's relationship with its customers (Koschate-Fischer & Gärtner, 2015). Brand trust provides a great channel through which to study and measure peoples' behavioural reactions, based on their direct experience with the brand

(Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Similarly, trust has been considered to be a causal factor of perceptions of superior quality of product or service (Sung & Kim, 2010). Brand trust has progressed over time, implying that a brand is not just a product or service, but a key partner in customer-brand relationships and captures personal qualities which are vital to social interactions (Folse, Burton & Netemeyer, 2013)..

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 *Main problem*

This study examines the impact of brand orientation on brand loyalty in relation to brand commitment and brand trust in the context of a South African business-to-business (B2B) organisation.

1.3.2 *Sub-problems*

The first sub-problem is to examine the effect of brand orientation on brand loyalty.

The second sub-problem is to examine the influence of brand commitment and brand trust on brand orientation and brand loyalty.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions of the study are stated as follows:

- What is the impact of brand orientation on brand commitment?
- What is the impact of brand orientation on brand trust?
- What is the impact of brand commitment on brand loyalty?
- What is the impact of brand trust on brand loyalty?

1.5 Research objectives

The empirical and theoretical research objectives of the study are stated as follows:

1.5.1 *Empirical research objectives:*

- To examine the impact of brand orientation on brand commitment.
- To examine the impact of brand orientation on brand trust.
- To examine the impact of brand commitment on brand loyalty.
- To examine the impact of brand trust on brand loyalty.

1.5.2 *Theoretical research objectives:*

- To review the literature on brand orientation
- To review the literature on brand commitment
- To review the literature on brand trust
- To review the literature on brand loyalty

1.6 Significance of the study

The theoretical manifestations of brand orientation have been argued by researchers such as Urde (1994); Simoes and Dibb (2001); Baumgarth, Merrilees and Urde (2013); Balmer (2013) and Harrison-Walker (2014). It has been discussed in relation to the concept of market orientation (Urde et al., 2013); brand equity (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010; Gromark & Melin, 2013; Zhang, Jiang, Shabbir, Zhu, Johnston, & Johnston, 2016); integrated marketing communications (Reid, Luxton & Mavondo, 2005); competitive advantage (Bridson & Evans, 2004); brand performance and brand identity in small companies (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014); consumer behaviour (Bridson & Evans, 2004; Casidy, 2013; King et al., 2013).

This study, however, examines how brand orientation affects brand loyalty in the context of a South African B2B organisation. The study furthermore examines how brand commitment and brand trust impact on the relationship between brand orientation and brand loyalty.

The study contributes to the current knowledge on brand orientation with specific reference to brand loyalty, and the impact of brand commitment and brand trust on these constructs within a South African B2B sector context.

The study also provides guidance to management in developing and implementing brand-orientated strategic processes for internal stakeholders, which in turn will assist in driving them to become brand-loyal advocates.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

- The study focuses only on the following constructs, namely: brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust, and brand loyalty. The study focuses on a South African B2B organisation from an internal stakeholder perspective.
- The study focuses only on the top and senior management levels of the various subsidiary entities of Bidvest Industrial Holdings.

1.8 Definition of terms

The following terms are defined as follows:

Brand orientation

Brand orientation is defined by Urde (1999) as a practice in which the procedures of an organisation revolve around the formation, advancement and security of brand identity in continuous dealings with targeted customers with the objective of attaining enduring competitive advantages in the form of brands.

Brand commitment

Brand commitment is defined by Buurman and Zeplin (2005) as the degree of mental connection of employees to the brand, which persuades their willingness to apply additional effort towards reaching the brand's objectives.

Brand trust

Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) define brand trust as the readiness of the consumer to depend on the capability of the brand to execute its expressed purpose.

Brand loyalty

Oliver (1999) defines brand loyalty as a profoundly held pledge to repurchase a favoured product or service constantly in the future; and in so doing, developing a recurrence of

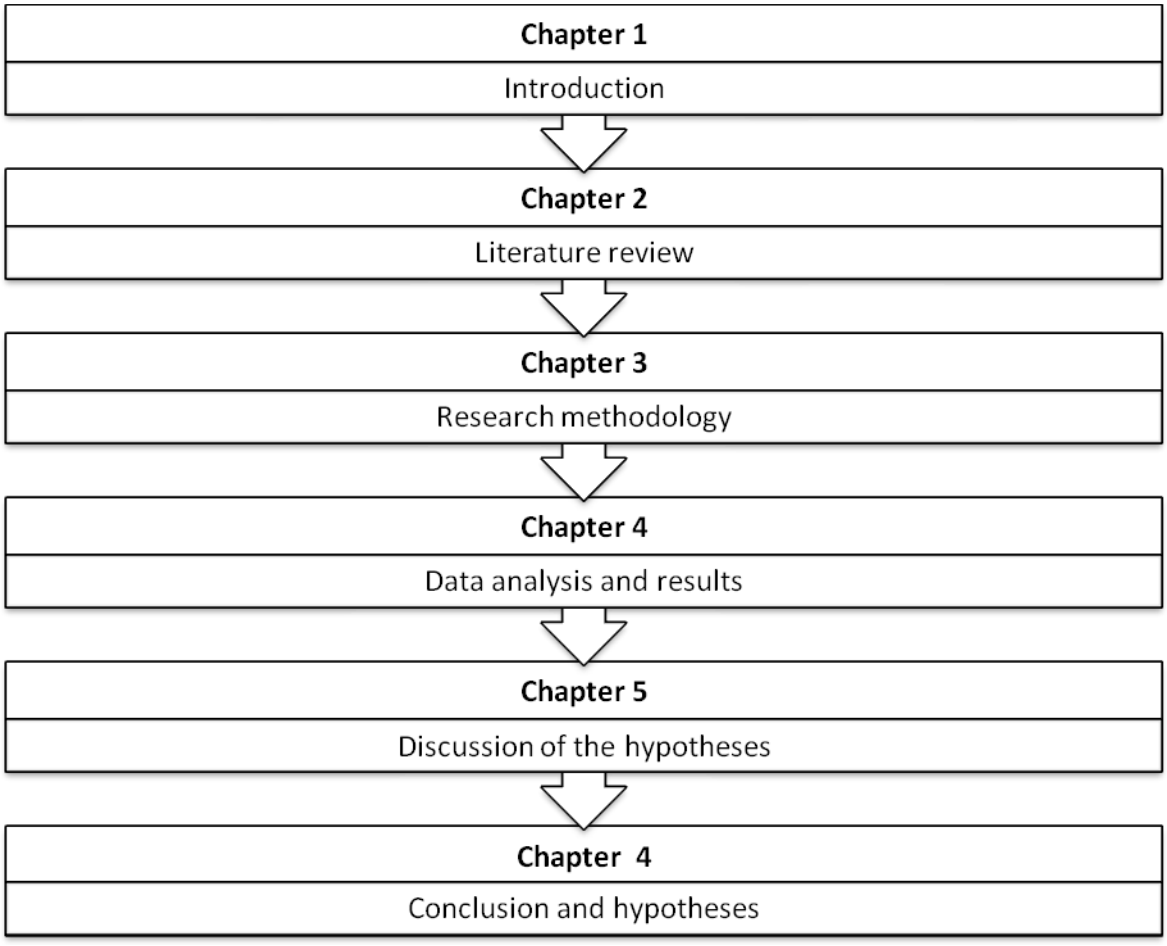
buying the same brand, regardless of situational pressure and marketing activities possessing the prospect to create switching behaviour.

1.9 Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are stated as follows:

It is assumed that the respondents are knowledgeable on brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty.

1.10 Structure of the research report



Source: Own

1.11 Summary

The study examines the impact of brand orientation on brand loyalty, and the roles played by brand commitment and brand trust in facilitating the impact in the South African B2B environment. The concepts of brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty have been put in context of the study. The research problem statement, research questions and objectives, and the significance of the study have been presented. The delimitations of the study, the definition of terms, and the assumptions of the study have been outlined. The next chapter provides a literature review on brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theory of planned behaviour as theoretical grounding for the study. Literature on brand orientation as well as brand orientation in the context of the B2B market is reviewed. Thereafter, literature on brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty is presented, followed by the literature on respective relationships between brand orientation and brand commitment; brand orientation and brand trust; brand commitment and brand loyalty; and finally, brand trust and brand loyalty. The hypotheses are then stated, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2 Theoretical Grounding

The theory of planned behaviour

In order to examine brand orientation and how it affects employees to the extent that it results in brand loyalty, this study utilises the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory is an improvement on the theory of reasoned action and was introduced to resolve the constraints in the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory of planned behaviour encompasses three components, namely: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). The model for the theory of planned behaviour created by Ajzen (1991) is illustrated in figure 1.

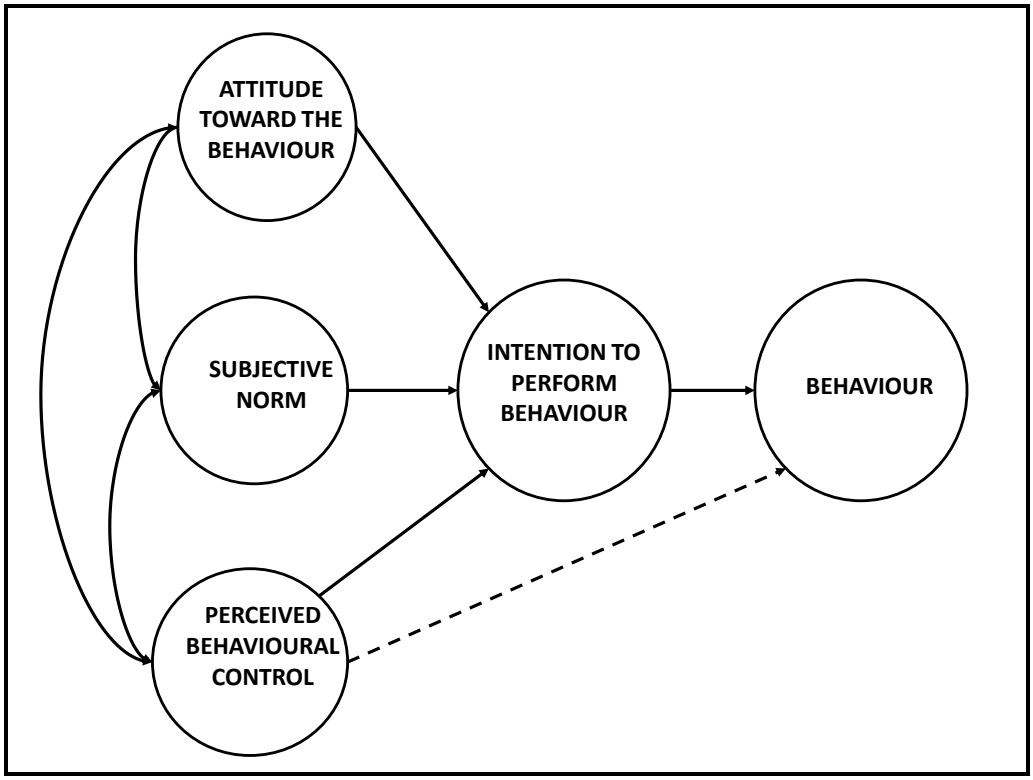


Figure 1: Theory of planned behaviour

Sourced from Ajzen (1991)

According to the theory, attitude toward certain behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, together, lead to an individual's behavioural intention and ultimately, behaviour (Mishra, 2014). Attitude is defined by Zeithaml (1988) as the degree of vantage or disadvantage of an individual's assessment of behaviour. Attitude takes into account the beliefs about the possible outcomes of performing the behaviour and of the assessment of these outcomes. If individuals have a favourable attitude towards a brand, they will have intentions to buy. Several studies have proven the strong impact of attitude on intention (Chekima, Wafa, Igau & Chekima, 2015; Ha & Tam, 2015; Kandiraju, 2014; Pag & Luding, 2003; Son, Jin & George, 2013).

Subjective norm refers to the perceived societal pressure to perform or not to perform a particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Various influencing forces related to the subjective norms may be groups such as family, friends, and colleagues (Mishra, 2014). As part of the group, individuals will make attempts to be associated with the group norm (Mishra, 2014).

Ajzen (1991) defines perceived behavioural control as an individual's belief as to the simplicity or complexity of performing a particular behaviour, in the presence or absence of related resources and opportunities. Perceived behavioural control is assessed by a portfolio of control beliefs – beliefs about the existence of dynamics that may encourage or prevent performance of a particular behaviour.
Behavioural intention is defined as the perception of an individual towards performing of a specific behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory of planned behaviour posits that the more favourable the attitude is toward a particular behaviour and subjective norm, and higher the perceived behavioural control, the more powerful will be the individual's intention to carry out the particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991: Mishra, 2014).

The theory of planned behaviour has been applied in numerous disciplines such as, but not limited to, e-commerce services (Saeri, Ogilvie, La Macchia, Smith & Louis, 2014; Su & Huang, 2010); obesity (Carson, 2010); green consumption (Wu & Chen, 2014); alcohol use (Duncan, Forbes-McKay & Henderson, 2012); marketing (Dobocan, 2013; Kirton, 2014; Lee, 2013; Yang, Liu & Zhou, 2012). There is very little evidence to demonstrate the application of the theory in the B2B sector and/or in the case of brand orientation.

The theory of planned behaviour assists the study in better understanding how brand orientation leads to brand trust and brand commitment, resulting in individuals becoming brand loyal and ultimately becoming brand advocates. Brand orientation speaks to the internal stakeholders and customers' attitude towards the shared beliefs and values about the brand. Every employee is exposed to the subjective norm as they do what is necessary to belong to the organisation. These two factors, brand orientation and the need for employees to belong to the organisation, will cultivate trust and commitment towards the brand, which symbolises the intention to act favourably towards the brand. This intention will cause the individuals to 'perform the behaviour' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) which in the case of this study, is to be loyal to the brand and become advocates of what the brand represents.

.

2.3 Brand orientation

Brand orientation is a comparatively new marketing research topic (Gromark & Melin, 2011). Urde (1999) defines it as “an approach in which the processes of the organisation revolve around the creation, development and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands” (Urde, 1999, p.117). Its definition has been further enhanced by Gromark and Melin (2013) to be an intentional move toward brand building whereby brand equity is produced through marketing communication, between internal and external stakeholders. With brand orientation, brand management is understood as core proficiency, and brand building is closely linked with corporate development and greater performance (Gromark & Melin, 2013).

Brand orientation has been put forward as an expansion on the market orientation concept, which places the customer at the core of an organisation’s operations (Narver & Slater, 1990), because it takes into consideration the function of the brand in gaining competitive advantage (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014). It has been described by many researchers as a new outlook on brand management that views brands as resources and strategic focal points (Melin, 1997; Urde, 1994, 1997, 1999). Some studies refer to brand orientation as inside-out approach that attaches the brand to the culture and identity of the organisation/brand (Urde, 1994, 1999; Yin-Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Brand-oriented organisations are said to use the brand as a structure within which the wants and needs of customers are satisfied (Urde, 1999). Furthermore, brand orientation is pertinent when referring to organisations that endeavour not only to satisfy customer needs and wants, but also to provide strategic meaning to brands (Zhang et al., 2016).

Urde (1994) views brand orientation as a model consisting of seven elements which are: the corporate name, corporate identity, the brand vision, the product or service, the targeted group, the trademark, and brand positioning (Evans et al., 2012). A brand-oriented methodology incorporates a passion for brands and becomes a manner of articulating a mindful desire to develop and communicate corporate identity (Gromark & Melin, 2013) In this fashion, the brand takes priority over the product/service; and affective values and symbolic meaning become fundamental to all management levels in an organisation (Gromark & Melin, 2011).

Brand orientation has been studied from two viewpoints, namely: the philosophical perspective and the behavioural perspective (Urde et al., 2013). Brand orientation, as a philosophy, is said to display organisational values, beliefs, and attitudes toward the brand; while the behavioural perspective concentrates on the degree to which an organisation's marketing activities strengthen the brand (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014). While Hankinson (2002) and Apaydın (2011) adopt the philosophical approach, Bridson and Evans (2004) are leaning closely towards the behavioural viewpoint of Urde (1994).

Ewin and Napoli (2005) try to merge the two perspectives of brand orientation and define it as the organisational wide process method of generating and sustaining a united sense of brand meaning that offers greater value to stakeholders and greater performance to the organisation. In other words, brand orientation calls for a shared brand vision of the all members of the organisation and the implementation of the brand core values and promises into everyday practice (Huang & Tsai, 2013). Although this definition accommodates both the philosophical and the behavioural aspects, the measures widely used by many researchers tackle brand-oriented behaviours only (Evans et al., 2012). Moreover, four levels of brand orientation are identified by Evans et al. (2012), being: values, norms, beliefs expressed through artefacts, and behaviours. Values have an effect on behaviours, referring to brand orientation as the degree to which the organisation treats the brand at a cultural level and utilises it as a framework for decision-making to influence brand behaviours (Evans et al., 2012).

Brand orientation focuses on the capability of the organisation to generate superior value for customers through the brand (Baxter, Kerr & Clarke, 2013). Yin-Wong and Merrilees (2005) and Gromark and Melin (2011) argue that the brand management process should include everyone from top management level to general staff and that every employee should look upon the brand as the highest priority. Wong and Merrilees (2007) argue that brand orientation surpasses all job functions, from top management right down to general workers. This was confirmed by Gromark and Melin (2013) that brand orientation helps with consistency of communication, to external and internal stakeholders, and the development of greater value in the market in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Urde (1994) highlights the advantages of brand orientation in relation to the consistency of messaging and customer value creation. This ultimately brings about brand loyalty, both internally and externally. Urde (1994) further highlights that the

building of the brand is then the central point of the strategy, and brand management becomes the culture management with the understanding of every employee being a brand builder (Hirvonen, Laukkanen & Reijonen, 2013). The critical role of communication in the branding process is stressed, as well as the necessity for organisations to utilise the brand vision to influence managers' behaviours (Baxter et al., 2013: Dunn & Davis, 2003; Huang & Tsai, 2013; Tosti & Stotz, 2001).

Research related to internal branding has illustrated that it is imperative to establish a brand culture in any organisation. As a result, the formation of brand orientation is closely linked to organisational culture (Hankinson, 2002). Hankinson (2002) states that staff members of brand-oriented organisation should endorse the organisational values. With a high level of identification with the organisation, employees may possibly incorporate their own lives with the brand (Huang & Tsai, 2013).

Brand orientation, together with theories of corporate brand and brand commitment, views the brand to be of strategic significance (Lee, 2013). Brand orientation, though, emphasises a particular link between the external market expectations and construal of the brand; and the internal strategic resources. The customer needs and wants are satisfied within the constraints of the identity and values of the brand and the organisation (Baumgarth et al., 2013). In turn, these constraints reflect the image back to the organisation, where employees integrate reflective perceptions into the creation of brand identity, which ultimately may become entrenched in the organisational culture (Lee, 2013).

Brand orientation in the B2B environment

Anees-ur-Rehman (2014) posits that the brand is a symbolic representation of an organisation / product values. Since the corporate brand name is a reflection of the values held by the organisation, industry buyers are also more sensitive to the organisation's brand image (Anees-ur-Rehman, 2014). The majority of the literature that has attempted to test the role of brands in a B2B environment is no more than ten years old (Glynn, 2012; Guzmán, Iglesias, Keränen, Piirainen & Salminen, 2012). Generally, these researchers have assessed the effect of brands on the buying process of the customer (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010). They have found that industrial supplier brands can generate customer loyalty, diminish risk, increase repeat purchase (Leischnig &

Enke, 2011; Walley, Custance, Taylor, Lindgreen & Hingley, 2007); and earn premium prices (Persson, 2010). However, there is limited theoretical explanation for a brand strategy which is aligned with the characteristics of the B2B market (Glynn, 2012: Leek & Christodoulides, 2012).

Hadjikhani and LaPlaca (2013) analysed B2B literature over the last hundred years and found that there is a conflict between two theoretical aspects: the economic and behavioural theories. Economic theories view the marketing process existing purely for financial profits, whereas behaviour theories take it a step further by accentuating more mutual benefits through developing strong relationships, i.e. implemented behaviours and activities (Urde, 1994). Nevertheless, the researchers have detected a shift of interest from economic theories to behavioural theories in last twenty years (Urde, 1994).

In theory, relationships get stronger when inter-organisational exchange is mutually beneficial (Anees-ur-Rehman, 2014). A product/service supplier can generate value, which is communicated through the brand, to lure external organisations. According to Anees-ur-Rehman (2014), the internal setting of that supplier should also exhibit the same behaviour and act according to the same brand values. The rationale for this is that suppliers should not be able to deliver the promised brand values to external customers if they are not generated internally (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Essentially, the brand acts as the connection between internal and external settings (De Chernatony & Cottam, 2006). Therefore, the theory of brand orientation purports that a strong brand is one which has maintained a strong relationship with internal and external stakeholders (Anees-ur-Rehman, 2014; Hadjikhani & La Placa, 2013; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012). In light of the discussion above, this study uses the definition by Anees-ur-Rehman (2014). Anees-ur-Rehman (2014) describes brand orientation in the B2B context as a strategic management method which utilises the value of the brand to cultivate relationships of a supplier with itself (internal stakeholders from top management to frontline staff) and external customers.

2.4 Brand commitment

In psychology, the theory of commitment is considered as possessing intended characteristics; as the vow or oath of an individual to particular behavioural actions (Modi

& Patel, 2012). Commitment is a psychological condition that signifies the occurrence of dependence on a relationship, a permanent disposition towards it, emotions of attachment to an associate and a longing to sustain that relationship (Modi & Patel, 2012).

Brand commitment refers to an emotive attachment to a brand (Raju, Unnava & Montgomery, 2009). Brand commitment symbolises the relationship between a brand and an individual expressed by attitudes and behaviour, exemplified by power, durability and unwillingness to change (Li, Robson & Coates, 2014). According to Li et al. (2014), the existence of brand commitment is an essential component of a strong brand relationship. The effects of brand commitment are favourable to companies, in the form of increased readiness by individuals to pay a premium, increased market share and increased probability of repeat purchase (Li et al., 2014).

Du Preez and Bendixen (2015) found that research on brand commitment has often been outwardly focused with very little attention paid to brand commitment internally. An examination of commitment was conducted by Allen and Meyer (1990), looking specifically at attitudes and behaviours of employees. In their study, employee brand commitment was defined as the extent to which employees recognise and are involved with their brand, are prepared to put forth extra efforts to attain the goals intended by the brand; are keen to remain with the organisation. The researchers identified three dimensions of commitment, namely: affective/attitudinal commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective Commitment is an emotive attachment and contribution to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Continuance Commitment is an awareness of the expenditures related to leaving the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Normative Commitment is a feeling of responsibility to continue working in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1990). These components of commitment function simultaneously (Modi & Patel, 2012).

Employees' habitual dealings with the brand are influenced by the top management style, human resources management practices and the manner in which departments are organised; and ultimately, perceptions and behaviours towards the brand (Modi & Patel, 2012). Employee brand commitment is an organisational behaviour concept largely covered in the management literature (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). The concept of employee commitment has been applied to different constituencies in an organisation,

including unions, work group and team supervisor and top management. However, this concept seems to be neglected (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010).

The researchers state that employees with continuance commitment have to remain with their companies if the costs of exiting the organisation must to be avoided (He, Murmann & Perdue, 2012). Some employees feel that they are obligated to and should stay once normative commitment dictates (He et al., 2012). Affective commitment is the staff member's emotional connection to, identification with, and interest in the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment has been positively related to effort and work performance. Although employees may develop all three forms of organisational commitment at varying points in the employment term, it is affective commitment that can truthfully inspire employees to have that desire to contribute significantly to their companies (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) posit that affective commitment remains a dispensation of top management. They share a better knowledge and stronger emotional attachment than lower occupational levels. They describe the social connections that stimulate brand commitment and shared brand attitudes as being delicate.

Brand commitment is viewed as a key tool for exploration because of its power on employee performance and value (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). When employees are committed to the organisation, they demonstrate better 'social capital' where relationships are formed from shared values (Wallace, de Chernatony & Buil, 2011). The influence of the three-component model of commitment is helpful to appreciate the adoption of brand values (Wallace et al., 2011). This model by Wallace et al. (2011) measures the brand commitment in the context of brand building.

When staff have a clear understanding of brand values, they are more likely to be intellectually and emotionally engaged with the brand (Balmer et al., 2011). Brand committed employees can better fulfil the brand promise because of their affective attachment to the brand (Balmer et al., 2011). Furthermore, the brand identification and the organisational commitment theories have claimed that when employee's values are in line with brand's values, their need to retain brand loyalty will be increased (Balmer et al., 2011).

Developing and understanding brand commitment is of interest to marketers considering its association with loyalty (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2014).

With regards to brand commitment, King and Grace (2010) asserted that such commitment makes employees want to remain with the organisation and, in turn, willing to make considerable effort on behalf of that organisation. As such, job satisfaction and organisational commitment are commonly found to be related outcomes with respect to the workforce (King & Grace, 2010). In this study, brand commitment refers to the degree of mental attachment of employees to the brand, which persuades their willingness to put forth extra effort towards reaching the brand objectives (Hasnizan, Salniza & Zokafli, 2012).

2.5 Brand trust

People's attitudes towards the dependability and sincerity of the brand enhance brand trust (Bianchi, Drennan & Proud, 2014). These attitudes might stem from knowledge about or understanding of the brand based on prior dealings and experiences, and consequently, the relationship with the brand Gefen, Karahanna & Straub, 2003). In order to build trust, it is important for the individual to acquire and evaluate the information from the brand (Gefen et al., 2003). Brand trust is defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) as the readiness of an individual to rely on the capability of the brand to execute its promised task.

Within a marketing perspective, it can be inferred that people's regular interaction with a brand will increase brand knowledge, which will then add to the building of brand trust (Yannopoulou, Koronis & Elliott, 2011). Brand knowledge is expected to be closely related to brand trust (Wang, Fuan & Yu, 2010).

Trust is perceived as a determining factor of satisfaction and collaboration between partners and a driving force behind customer loyalty (Bianchi et al., 2014). According to Bianchi (2014), trust can also be built through a connection with a brand, which becomes a replacement for human contact with an organisation's employees. The ultimate objective of marketing is to create a strong bond between the individual and the brand, and trust is the key component of this bond (Bianchi et al., 2014). This might be because trust is deemed to be the foundation stone and one of the most wanted attributes in a

relationship, whilst it is the most significant quality that a brand can possess (Yannopoulou et al., 2011). Thus, trust continues representing a mysterious concept (Yannopoulou et al., 2011).

Yannopoulou et al. (2011) state that, in order for trust to be noticeable, there have to be instances of high perceived risk. Trust only becomes functional when the trusting partners are vulnerable; these partners have to partake in risky behaviour for this vulnerability to exist (Canning & Hanmer-Lyoyd, 2007). This is the foundation of the psycho-social model of trust put forward by Elloitt and Yannopoulou, (2007) where genuine trust in brands can only be created in circumstances of high perceived risk. Trust is seen as a vital component for the brand to forge a lasting relationship with individuals (Yannopoulou et al., 2011).

A brand is not just a product or service good, but a partner in consumer-brand relationships and captures personal characteristics important to social interactions (Folse, Burton & Netemeyer, 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that different attributes, such as proficiency, goodwill, expertise; and human experiences, such as fulfilment, stimulate brand trust (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012). The relationship between a brand and a consumer can be seen as a two-way trade relationship that relies on views of reciprocal trust yet the brand perceptions and meanings obtained by a individual not only rely on encounters with the brand, but also on the interactions that the individual creates with other consumers and stakeholders, such as the employees and public opinion (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Researchers such as Brodie, Glynn and Little (2006) and Balmer and Gray (2003), in their research on service branding and corporate branding, also highlight the function of this broad range of stakeholders in the brand building processes.

The idea of “reliance” is critical to the meaning of brand trust, implying that there are two key components and characteristics essential to brand trust, namely: trustworthiness and expertise (Sung & Kim, 2010). Sung and Kim (2010) define trustworthiness as referring to the individual’s assurance in the brand providing superior performance in a sincere and truthful manner. Expertise is the extent to which a brand is seen to be competent and knowledgeable, which comes from experience or education in the product/service grouping (Sung & Kim, 2010). Consumers’ certainties about the relationship partner (the

brand) being reliable, unfailing, capable, accountable, supportive, just, and sincere are all important aspects that enhance brand trust (Chaudhuri, & Holbrook, 2001).

The role of trust is to decrease uncertainty and information irregularities and make individuals feel at ease with their brand (Gefen et al., 2003). Trust is regarded by as a key ingredient for the establishment of brand attachment and has been identified as a very important instrument for increasing brand attachment (Gefen et al., 2003). Recurrent interfaces with a brand and its experience are fundamental to building trust. In fact, according to Zhang, Zhou, Su and Zhou (2013), the enhanced level of dealings between individuals and the brand is a value-formulating behaviour which makes them trust the brand (Chinomona, 2013).

Trust can predict views of brand credibility, brand loyalty and brand commitment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and it is a critical constituent in building thriving marketing relationships (Herbst, Finkel, Allan & Fitzsimons, 2012). Brand trust operates as a major precursor of people's commitment toward a brand and consequently of people's loyalty (Baumann, Hamin, Ngoc Phan & Ghantous, 2013). In this study, brand trust is defined as the keenness of an individual to rely on the brand's capability to perform its promised purpose (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

2.6 Brand loyalty

Rundle-Thiele (2005) notes that the notion of loyalty arose in the marketing literature during the 1940s, and it was initially thought of as one-dimensional. Over time, two dimensions of brand loyalty have been developed; attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Rundle-Thiele, 2005) Behavioural/ purchase loyalty comprises repeated purchases of the brand, whereas attitudinal brand loyalty includes a degree of attitudinal commitment or attitude toward the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

The definition of behavioural brand loyalty is often considered to be tantamount with repeat purchase behaviour (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Later, the role of attitudinal loyalty was identified (Rundle-Thiele, 2005). It was said that genuine brand loyalty surpasses repetitive purchasing behaviour and involves a true commitment to a specific brand (Kuikka & Laukkanen, 2012). Behavioural loyalty guarantees that an individual's attitudinal loyalty can be translated into actual purchase behaviours – one of the key

pointers utilised to measure the accomplishments of marketing strategies (Bianchi et al., 2014).

Oliver (1999) argues that there are three critical stages in attitudinal loyalty: cognitive, affective, and conative. Cognitive loyalty is the first stage that involves the existence of clear knowledge about a brand (Oliver, 1999) Then comes affective loyalty which refers to individuals' emotions, dispositions, and emotional responses towards a brand; the notion of satisfaction has been recognised as a vital ingredient of affective loyalty (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007). The final phase of attitudinal loyalty is conative loyalty which entails behavioural intention, and is defined by Oliver (1999) as an intent or promise to act toward an objective in a specific conduct. This promise to a brand results in repurchase behaviour (Matthews, Son & Watchravesringkan, 2014).

Brand loyalty appears in brand equity debates as a constituent of brand equity referring to the loyalty of internal and external stakeholders of an organisation and its brand (Juntunen, Juntunen & Juga, 2011). Aaker (1992) also proposes that brand loyalty leads to brand equity, which leads to profitability. Brand loyalty makes a significantly valuable input to competitive advantage (Juntunen et al., 2011). Marketing expenditure makes it costly to acquire new customers, and loyal customers are less prone to change brands (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011). Brand loyalty is an asset that lends itself to higher market share; higher return on investment and in due course, high brand equity (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011).

According to Kabiraj and Shanmugan (2011), developing and sustaining brand loyalty has been an essential subject of marketing theory and practice in creating sustainable competitive advantage. Customer loyalty is significant because loyal customers bring many financial benefits to an organisation (Shih, 2012). Shih (2012) states that different benefits of loyalty consist of an uninterrupted stream of profits reduced marketing costs, per-customer revenue growth, reduced operational expenditure, increased referrals, a higher price premium, and higher barriers to brand switching among loyalists.

Brand loyalty has been one of the most talked about and most misconstrued marketing concepts for many years (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011). First, a loyal customer and a satisfied customer are not necessarily the same thing (Shih, 2012). Customers may remain loyal for a number of reasons and may not even be happy with the product or

service (Juntunen et al., 2011). A lack of customer defections does not necessarily indicate satisfied consumers (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011). The cost of switching to an alternative supplier may be prohibitive or there may be a penalty clause. Switching supplier may be inconvenient and the alternatives may not be attractive (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011). Second, there are many reasons why a consumer may be loyal to a product, service or brand (Juntunen et al., 2011). Genuine satisfaction with the product or service is a key reason for remaining loyal (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011). Understanding the drivers for brand loyalty is the first step to understanding how to influence them and thus increase profitability (Kabiraj & Shanmugan, 2011).

Most of the marketing literature defines brand loyalty as a result of the interaction between the attitude and repeat-purchase behaviour (Kuikka & Laukkanen, 2012). Brand loyalty can be measured through positive word of mouth, satisfaction and trust, andprice sensitivity. The performance of the brand is recognised by higher loyalty (Chandio, Qureshi, & Ahmed, 2015). When a brand satisfies all customer needs, meets all customer expectations, and offers some distinctive benefits to satisfy customer needs, then brand loyalty has been developed (Sheikh, Sheikh, Rizwan, & Maqsood, 2014). Oliver (1999) defines loyalty as a sincerely felt commitment to repurchase a preferred good constantly in the future, and in so doing, creating recurring same-brand or same purchasing, in spite of circumstantial influences and marketing efforts possessing the power to cause switching conduct.

2.7 Conceptual model and hypothesis development

This section discusses the conceptual model and hypothesis development. Brand orientation is the predictor variable, brand commitment and brand trust are the mediating variables, and brand loyalty is the outcome variable.

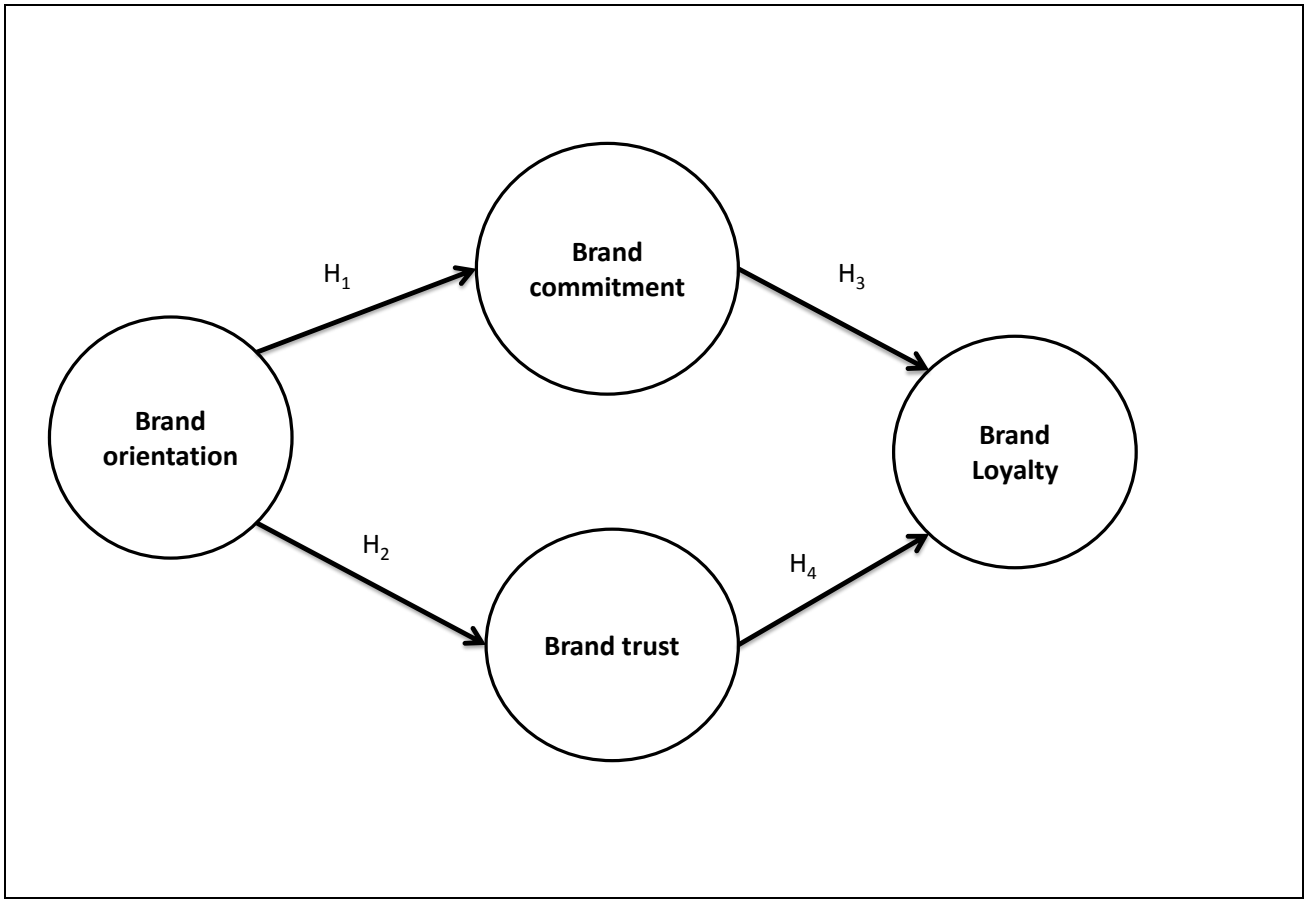


Figure 2: A Conceptual Model of brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty.

Source: Own after discussing the literature

2.7.1 *Brand orientation and brand commitment*

The concept of brand identity is central to brand-orientation (Reid et al., 2005). According to Urde (1999), brand orientation is a method in which the systems of an organisation are geared around the formation, growth, and safety of brand identity. Brand identity can be viewed to transform favourable attitudes of management into something more solid (Reid et al., 2005). Brand identity can enhance trust and commitment (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014). Brand orientation has to be based on relationships between partners that share the matching brand values and follow like strategies (Hankinson, 2012). This is vital to the development of trust and commitment (Hirvonen & Laukkanen, 2014).

As a central component of brand orientation, brand identity is said to be an antecedent of employee's brand commitment (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). Some studies have provided

empirical evidence for the link between internal branding and employees' brand commitment (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Patla & Pandit, 2012). The brand orientation process affects employees' brand commitment; effective efforts with regards to internal branding give rise to employees' commitment toward the brand (Javanmard & Nia, 2011). Brand-oriented organisations attempt to encourage behavioural changes amongst employees so that they become committed (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is investigated:

H_1: Brand orientation has an impact on brand commitment in the B2B context.

2.7.2 *Brand orientation and brand trust*

Research on the relationship between brand orientation and brand trust is limited. The study by Ha and Perks (2005) revealed that a strong positive relationship exists between brand experience and brand trust, which is mediated by brand familiarity and brand satisfaction. In studying the effect of brand personality on brand trust and brand affect, Sung and Kim (2010) found a positive relationship between brand sincerity and brand trust. Jahn, Gaus, and Kiessling (2012) explored the notion of brand attachment as a consequence of brand trust.

Eggers, O'Dwyer, Kraus, Vallaster, and Güldenberg (2013) posited that if a benefit is delivered as initially promised, the customer and other stakeholders will view the brand as genuine, thus building brand trust. According to Nam, Ekinci, and Whyatt (2011), satisfaction with brand utilisation produces a favourable attitude toward that brand, which ends up in brand trust.

Organisations can develop emotional trust if they can demonstrate that the brand is there to meet expectations of fulfilling wants and needs (Chandio et al., 2015). Organisations are able to positively influence brand trust of consumers and also of prospective and current employees (Rampl & Kenning, 2014). Trust in organisations is different from trust between individuals, since the organisation also encompasses organisational standards and processes (Rampl & Kenning, 2014).

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is evident that scholars have neglected the relationship between brand orientation and brand trust. Therefore, the study hypothesises that:

H_2: Brand orientation has an impact on brand trust in the B2B context.

2.7.3 *Brand commitment and brand loyalty*

Among the first researchers to consider brand commitment as an antecedent of loyalty was Cunningham (1967). Developing attitudinal attachment is one of the most important approaches identified in building brand equity, and commitment is one of the considerations used for assessing brand equity (Cunningham, 1967). Behavioural loyalty defines and measures loyalty by repeat purchases of the brand (Modi & Patel, 2012). The second approach, attitudinal perspective, looks at the relationship between the individual and the brand, thus introducing the notion that loyalty cannot exist without commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Studies referring to attitudinal loyalty view commitment as a way of distinguishing between genuine and fictitious loyalty (Mathew, Thomas, & Injodey, 2012). Brand commitment thus represents the individual's want to remain attached to and identify with the brand; and for this reason, it is recognised as a key mediating tool in the construction of loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Brand commitment is believed to be an antecedent of loyalty (Raïes & Gavard-Perret, 2011). Brand loyalty symbolises the degree of attachment the individual has to a specific brand (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Bruwer and Buller (2013) propose that brand loyalty represents commitment and, therefore, involvement with the brand. Brand trust results in brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2001). On this basis, the following hypothesis is examined:

H_3: Brand commitment has an impact on brand loyalty in the B2B context

2.7.4 *Brand trust and brand loyalty*

According to the studies on loyalty and trust, trust is one of the major antecedents of loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Chiu, Huang, & Yen, 2010). Bianchi et al. (2014)

argue that brand trust plays a mediating role in transforming the effects of the brand values into brand loyalty. Trust is a key driver of loyalty as it develops greatly valued trade relationships (Chandio et al., 2015). Brand loyalty is a vital product of the continuous process of furthering and sustaining a significant relationship, built on trust, between the brand and the individual (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Thus, brand trust plays a very important role in developing and sustaining both attitudinal and behavioural aspects of brand loyalty (Bianchi et al., 2014). Brand loyalty is a result of brand trust or promises that build the highly valued connections (Chandio et al., 2015).

Studies suggest that brand trust increases brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) and results in commitment, especially in business-to-business environments (Lee, Kim, & Chan-Olmsted, 2011; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Yannopoulou, Koronis, & Elliott, 2011) thus, the following hypothesis is investigated:

H_4: Brand trust has an impact on brand loyalty in the B2B context.

2.8 Summary

The key findings of the literature review suggest that there is an association between brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty; a significant yet under-researched area, particularly in the South African B2B context. Thus, this study is set to test the abovementioned statement which aligns itself to the hypotheses development which focuses on four key hypotheses:

H_1: Brand orientation has an impact on brand commitment in the B2B context.

H_2: Brand orientation has an impact on brand trust in the B2B context.

H_3: Brand commitment has an impact on brand loyalty in the B2B context

H_4: Brand trust has an impact on brand loyalty in the B2B context.

The next section looks at the research methodology to test the above mentioned hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies and describes the methodology—the theory of how research should be carried out, as well as the hypothetical and philosophical assumptions on which research is based and the inferences of assumptions for the techniques and procedures implemented to collect and analyse data (Quinlan, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012) that were employed in this research. Broadly, it has three objectives; namely, to identify and describe the research strategy, the research design, as well as the sampling procedure and methods. The chapter also describes the technical and administrative limitations of the research procedure and methods as well as the reliability and validity measures this research applied to make it credible. Lastly, it looks at the ethical considerations and provides a summary of the chapter.

3.1 Research paradigm

Malhotra and Birks (2007) define research paradigm as a set of suppositions containing consented-to knowledge, criteria of judgement, problem fields and ways to view them. Saunders et al. (2012) describe research paradigm as a method of assessing social phenomena from which particular understandings of these phenomena can be gained and explanations attempted. Quinlan (2011) defines it as an investigation of some aspect of the social world by following a systematic approach. There are three types of research paradigm, namely, positivism, intepretivism and postmordernism (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

The study takes a positivist paradigmatic approach as it seeks to scientifically illustrate empirical evidence of the existence of a causal relationship that involves brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty. In terms of research philosophy, quantitative research takes a positivist position, which is the epistemological position in the natural sciences which promotes an observable social reality (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012). As a research approach, it is deductive (it involves testing theories or hypotheses); and objectivist (an ontological approach that declares that social beings exist in a reality independent of the social agents that are concerned with their being (Saunders et al., 2012)).

Epistemology: The study was objective, and its related theories are based on verifiable information from past research studies (Ellen & Bone, 1998; Madzharov, Block, & Morrin, 2015; Mitchell, Kahn, & Knasko, 1995; Morrin & Ratneshwar, 2003).

Ontology: The study conducted hypothesis testing for each of the research hypotheses stated in Chapter 2.

Research strategy

Research strategy is defined by Saunders et al. (2012) as the broad plan of how the researcher intends to answer the research question(s). Bryman (2012) refers to it as to a general direction to the implementation of social research. Singh (2010) describes it as a generalised plan for a problem which includes, structure, desired solution in terms of the objectives of research and an outline of planned devices necessary to implement the strategy. There are three commonly applied research strategies: first, quantitative research studies relationships between variables which are calculated numerically and analysed using a variety of statistical techniques (Saunders et al., 2012). Second, qualitative research is used to focus on meanings of words rather than numbers in the collection of data (Quinlan, 2011). Third, mixed method research strategy is the use of a component of qualitative data collection as well as a component of quantitative data collection in the same research study (Robson, 2011).

Due to the aim of the research study being to examine the relationship between brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty, the research strategy implemented was quantitative. Quantitative method is defined as the research method that seeks to quantify data, and typically applies some form of statistical analysis (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Quantitative research is defined as a research strategy that studies relationships between variables which are calculated numerically and analysed using a variety of statistical techniques (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012). In other words, it is a research strategy that makes measuring and computing of data – converting verbal information into numerical data – central to the research methodology (Robson, 2011).Quantitative research involves the study of meanings in the form of attitudinal scales such as the Likert scale and other related procedures (Bryman, 2012). The techniques which are commonly associated with quantitative research strategy are experimental research and survey research (Bryman, 2012; Quinlan, 2011; Saunders et

al., 2012). Survey research is implemented through utilising questionnaires, structured interviews and structured observation. The benefits of using quantitative research are: it provides estimates of populations at large; it allows for statistical comparison between various groups; and it provides results which can be condensed to statistics (Sukamolson, 2010). The disadvantages of quantitative research are: human perceptions and beliefs are excluded; there are no resources to conduct large scale research; depth experience description is excluded (Choy, 2014).

3.2 Research Design

Malhotra and Birks (2007) define a research design as a framework for executing research. It specifies processes for gaining the information required to resolve research problems. This necessitates the researcher selecting a design that provides pertinent information and completes the investigation process resourcefully (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Bryman (2012) defines research design as system of collecting data on more than one case and at a particular point in time. This system is implemented to gather quantitative/quantifiable data relating a relationship between to two or more variables (Bryman, 2012). Research design may pertain to the collection of qualitative data. Saunders et al. (2012) and Robson (2011) describe research design as a study of a specific phenomenon or phenomena at a single time point or a “snapshot”. There are commonly used research designs, namely: cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study, comparative, and experiment and quasi-experimental design. The research design for this study was in the form of a cross sectional design convened over a specific day. Cross-sectional design is the study of a specific observable fact at a specific time, or a snapshot (Saunders et al., 2012). Robson (2011) defines cross-sectional design as a design whereby data is gathered at a particular point in time, or a relatively short period of time. Bryman (2012) explains it as involving the gathering of data on more than one case and at a one point in time.

The advantages of using cross-sectional design are: it is immediate and inexpensive, it is the best method to determine prevalence, and is of use at identifying associations that can then be studied in more depth using a cohort study (Mann, 2003). The disadvantages of cross-sectional design are: differentiating cause and effect from simple

association is problematic, and generally, cross sectional studies do not offer a clarification for their findings (Mann, 2003).

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

A target population a complete set of cases from which a sample is obtained (Saunders et al., 2012). It is a cosmos of units, such as human beings, nations, cities, regions or companies from which the sample is to be extracted (Bryman, 2012). In other words, respondents in a sample are chosen as being representative of some bigger group, known as the population (Robson, 2011). The population in the context of the research is the total number of 90,000 employees in Bidvest Industrial Holdings.

3.3.2 *Sample size*

Sampling is used for all research questions where it would be unfeasible to collect from the entire population (Saunders et al., 2012). It is a segment or subset of the population that is selected for research (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011). The sample size of this was 261 senior and top management employees from the Bidvest Group.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Description of respondents	Number of respondents
Employees of Bidvest Industrial Holdings Senior and top managers across different subsidiaries	261

3.3.3 *Sampling method*

According to Quinlan (2011), sampling method is the process from which the population of the research is clearly defined and then a sample is selected for studying. Bryman (2012) defines it as a process of selecting a subset or segment of the population for

investigation. Malhotra and Birks (2007) describe sampling method as the selection of a subgroup of the population for participation in the study.

There are two types of sampling methods, namely: non-probability random sampling method, which is the choice of sampling techniques in which a the chance of each case being selected is unknown; and probability sampling, which is the choice of sampling techniques in which the chance of each case being selected from the population is known and is not nought (Saunders et al., 2012).

Probability sampling is defined by Malhotra and Birks (2007) as a sampling procedure in which each constituent of the population has a set probabilistic chance of being selected for the sample. Bryman (2012) explains it as using a random sampling in which the likelihood for each unit in the population is known. This study used probability random sampling. The strengths of probability sampling are: it is easily understood and the outcomes are projectable and conclusive (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The shortcomings of this method are: the greater the precision, the higher the cost; and there is no certainty of representativeness (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

There are different types of sampling in the quantitative research strategy, namely: simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, and stratified random sampling, cluster random sampling. The study used cluster random sampling which is defined by Malhotra and Birks (2007) as a two-step probability sampling technique where the population is split into mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive clusters, and the a sample is randomly selected. Saunders et al. (2012) describe cluster random sampling as the procedure in which the population is parted into discrete groups/cluster before sampling takes place. Bryman (2012) states that it is a sampling procedure in which, at an initial stage, the researcher samples clusters and the elements from these clusters using a probability sampling method. Cluster random sampling is suitable for this study because two sets of participants have been identified; top managers and senior managers. Both occupational levels have been selected because they are policy and decision makers of the companies.

3.4 The research instrument

Saunders et al. (2012) defines a research data collection instrument as the means by which researchers collect data required to answer research questions. Put simply, it is a manner in which a researcher gathers data (Wagner, Kawulich, & Garner, 2012). Bryman (2012) further adds that it is device like a structured interview schedule or a questionnaire used to collect data from respondents. A fully structured interview is one in which questionnaires based on pre-formulated standardised questions are administered to respondents (Saunders et al., 2012). Quinlan (2011) simply defines a questionnaire as a structured way of collecting data. Saunders et al. (2012) describes it as techniques in which each participant is requested to answer a fixed set of tailored questions. They are more effective when the questions are standardised and can be interpreted the same way by all respondents (Robson, 2011).

The study has taken into consideration the questionnaires that have been applied in previous studies as a guide to formulating the questionnaires that pertain to this study. Brand orientation is adapted from a study by Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010), brand commitment is adapted from a study by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010), brand trust is adapted from a study by Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) and brand loyalty is adapted from a study by Chauhan and Mahajan (2013). The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.

Advantages of questionnaires:

- Information is gathered quickly and easily, at the time when respondents are in the store (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).
- The questionnaire can be administered in the absence of the researcher without affecting its validity and reliability (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Disadvantages of questionnaires:

- Customers may not consent to participating in the research; or they may be apprehensive about completing a questionnaire (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).
- Some customers may claim medical reactions/allergies to the ambient scent (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The questionnaires were provided to senior and top managers during an executive management conference which was confirmed for 14th – 15th March 2016. The confirmed number of delegates was 600 top and senior managers from all Bidvest companies in South Africa Permission had been requested from the Chief Executive of Bidvest Industrial Holdings to providing the questionnaires during a 20 minute interval on the 14th March 2016.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Bryman and Hardy (2004), data analysis is the significant aspect of the research report. It is crucial to know how the data collected will be analysed as it affects the results and the conclusions drawn from the results. Malhotra and Birks (2007) define data analysis as the statistical examination of quantitative data. It is also defined as the means by which data is collected for research (Quinlan, 2011). There are two types of data analysis namely, descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics is the data analysis used to describe variables such as income, gender, academic qualification, age, and so forth (Quinlan, 2011). Saunders et al. (2012) defines it as statistics that can be utilised to express variables. Inferential statistics infer, based on a study of a sample, what the whole population could do or think (Quinlan, 2011). Saunders et al. (2012) define it as the method of making a conclusion about a population based on data describing a sample selected from that same population.

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3.7 Structural equation modelling

Structural Equation Modeling or SEM (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008) was used to analyse results in the study. Structural Equation Model is best suited for the research as it enables for the inclusion of multiple item scales. It also provides exact error estimates linked to scales. It is defined by Hox and Bechger (1998) as a blend of factor analysis and regression analysis. Savalei and Bentler (2010) define it as an instrument for analysing multivariate data that has been regarded in marketing to be particularly suitable

for theory testing. Violato and Hecker (2007) describe it as a set of statistical procedures utilised for methodical analysis of multivariate data to measure primary hypothetical constructs and their interrelations.

SEM performs better than other statistical techniques because it can model fundamental constructs laden upon by independent variables (Violato & Hecker, 2007). It is built on multivariate methods of factor analysis and path analysis, which are fairly strong independently (Violato & Hecker, 2007).

SEM has become a generally accepted statistical method for testing theory in many sectors of knowledge (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1998; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Qureshi and Kang (2015) define SEM as a multivariate statistical system that is mainly utilised for exploring relationships between constructs and observed variables that represent a statistical model. Bollen (1989); Mitchell (1994); Hoyle (1995); Malaeb, Summers, and Pugesek (2000) and Grace (2006) describe SEM as a statistical technique with which a researcher can formulate theories and validate suggested cause-and-effect relationships by means structural equations. Although SEM is recognised as being similar to regression analysis, it is more prominent in that it assesses the causal relationships among constructs while simultaneously resolving the measurement error (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014; He, Gai, Wu, & Wan, 2012). SEM's capability to attend to various modelling complications, the endogeneity among constructs and complex underlying data structures established in various phenomena can be assumed to be part of the reason for its attractiveness (Washington, Karlaftis, & Mannering, 2003).

SEM is essentially a structure that involves simultaneously resolving systems of linear equations and comprises procedures such as regression, factor analysis and path analysis (Stein, Morris, & Nock, 2012; Beran & Violato, 2010). SEM with Smart PLS involves performing procedures called Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and path analysis concurrently (Chen, Zhang, Liu, & Mo, 2011). CFA is an improved data reduction technique that allows researchers to model from before, how variables identify latent constructs (Violato & Hecker, 2007). The purpose of CFA is to assess how well the latent variables are computed by the observed variables (Chen et al., 2011) while that of path analysis is to explore cause-and-effect relationships among unobserved variables (Nusair & Hua, 2010).

Scholars have supported many benefits of SEM such as:

- SEM has the capability to resolve research questions relating to complex cause-and-effect relationships between unobserved variables (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009; Nusair & Hua, 2010) with empirical data (Sarstedt et al., 2014).
- SEM can expand explanatory power and statistical efficiency for model examination with only one complete model (Hair et al., 1998).
- SEM can take account of latent constructs in the analysis while taking account for measurement errors in the estimation process (Hair *et al.* 1998, p. 12).
- SEM offers support for exploring and validating hypotheses of cause-and-effect relationships owing not only to its capability to model measurement error, but also to its capability to eliminate bias and distortion (Iriondo, Albert, & Escudero, 2003; Pugesek & Tomer, 1995).
- "SEM minimizes the differences between the observed covariances and the model predicted covariances using methods such as the Maximum Likelihood algorithm to estimate the free parameters" (Malaeb et al., 2000, p. 93)
- SEM has the capability to simultaneously model and demonstrate the direct and indirect interrelationships that is present among numerous dependent and independent constructs (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000).
- SEM possesses a continuing attribute that allows it to create separate and independently different coefficients (Jenatabadi & Ismail, 2014).
- SEM method allow for making sure that a complete model generating goodness-of-fit statistics and assessing the overall fit (Ho, 2006).
- SEM can allow for the modelling of graphic interfaces (Garson, 2007)
- SEM enables researchers to replicate mediator constructs and to study the entire system of indicators, and thus facilitate for the creation of rational models that entail simultaneous assessment (Kline & Klammer, 2001).
- SEM is a competent and most constructive method for considering and investigating the relationships among mediator constructs (Dhanaraj, Lyles, Steensma, & Tihanyi, 2004).

3.7.1 *SEM data processing*

Data coding is the process of numerical naming each of the questions answered in the questionnaire during the course of data collection (Quinlan, 2011). Coding assists in creating variables which can be statistically measured by means of statistical software systems (Saunders et al., 2012). The data analysed was from the respondents' completed questionnaires, which were imputed onto Microsoft Excel and coded accordingly. Descriptive statistics analysis was applied to analyse the features of each measured variable. This was illustrated by the mean and standard deviation of each feature using SPSS 23 and SmartPLS 3 statistical programmes. Furthermore, validity, reliability, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Path Modelling were analysed and results presented in the next chapter.

3.8 Reliability and Validity tests in CFA

Once a suitable general fit was identified, the next action was to measure reliability and validity, under the guidance of prior literature (Byrne, 1994; Chau & Lai, 2003; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair et al., 1998). As attested to by Chau (1997), the squaring of factor loadings was performed to measure item reliability. Item reliability recognises the extent of variation in an item owing to an underlying construct as opposed to error (Chau, 1997). Discriminant and convergent validity was also scrutinised using the AVE, as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Sarstedt et al. (2014) describe discriminant validity as the extent to which a construct is empirically dissimilar to other constructs in the model, both with regards to how it associates with other constructs and how the items represent only this particular construct. According to Nusair and Hua (2010), a low-cross correlation signifies discriminant validity while the strong loading of items on their familiar construct is an indication of convergent validity. Convergent validity alternatively is referred to as the extent to which a construct is characterised by its measurement items (Sarstedt et al., 2014).

3.9 Path Modeling

The next stage of data analysis involved path analysis (Beran & Violato, 2010; Stein et al., 2012). Path modeling explains the relationships between observed or measured

variables and theoretical constructs (Roche, Duffield, & White, 2011), and tests the structural paths of the conceptualised research model (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). This SEM process was executed in order to reveal and test the theoretical foundations of the study and the impact of the relationships between the model constructs (Jenatabadi & Ismail, 2014). The study's structural model was assessed by scrutinising the p-values as well as standardised regression coefficients (Matzler & Renzl, 2006). In performing path modeling, one of the main objectives is to describe standardised regression coefficients as well as predictive ability (Wu, 2010).

The path modeling methodology allows introspective and seminal calculations with regards to the measurement of latent variables (Gudergan, Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2008). It can be used to approximate relationships between latent variables with numerous indicators (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013). This approach was appropriate for the study as it was utilised to estimate the relationships between brand orientation and brand commitment, brand orientation and brand trust, brand commitment and brand loyalty, and lastly, brand trust and brand loyalty.

3.10 Validity and reliability

3.10.1 *Validity*

In research, validity tests the extent to which the instruments measure what they are supposed to measure (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In this research, convergent and discriminant validity measures were applied to ascertain the attributes and clarity of. This is the method that the study utilised in order to ensure the validity of the variables that were tested.

Convergent validity was examined. Convergent validity is the extent to which a measure correlates with other measures of the same construct. Robins, Fraley, and Krueger (2009) describe it as proof that the measure under review has a relation to other measures that share a similar construct. Convergent validity makes use of measurement indicators such as item loading and shared variance.

Discriminant validity was examined using correlations between constructs, by means of SPSS 23 statistical programme. Discriminant validity is described by Bryman (2012) as

validity that is present in testing whether or not measurements that should not be related are indeed unrelated, and correlation between them is not strong. Robins et al. (2009) also define it as is the degree to which a measure does not correlate with other measures of other constructs that are theoretically different. Discriminant validity uses measurement indicators such as Average Variance Extracted (AVE), correlation, shared variance; the results are presented in the next chapter.

3.10.2 *Reliability*

In many of the previous studies conducted, the researchers performed pre-tests and pilot studies, in order to test the reliability of the instruments selected for their respective researches (Mitchell, et al, 1995; Bone & Ellen 1998; Morrin & Ratneshwari, 2003; Madzharov et al, 2015). It is thus important to conduct a pilot study prior to the actual study. Malhotra and Birks (2007) define reliability as the extent to which a measurement yields consistent results if it was to be repeated. Reliability of the items was gauged using factor analysis, specifically, Cronbach's alpha, determined using SPSS 23 and SmartPLS 3 statistical software programme. The acceptable threshold for Cronbach's alpha value is 0.6. Composite reliability of each construct was also measured.

3.11 Limitations of the study

The following limitations were identified:

- The number of respondents was limited only to the senior and top managers who were attending the executive conference on 14th March 2016.
- Respondents might have provided responses which were not a reflection of their true selves.
- Some variables might not have been easily quantifiable.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research is simply the implementation of ethical principles and standards (Quinlan, 2011). Essential in ethics and ethical standards is a capacity to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong (Saunders et al., 2012). The debate about

ethical principles in research and how they may be contravened can be categorised into four main aspects: whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy, whether dishonesty is involved (Bryman, 2012). Written permission was requested from the executive committee of Bidvest Industrial Holdings to administer the questionnaire. Participants were not compelled to participate if they were not willing or able to participate.

3.13 Summary

The study is grounded on the principles of the positivist paradigm. In terms of research philosophy, the study follows the quantitative methodology. The cross-sectional design was selected to be conducted on a particular day. The sample was identified as the top and senior managers of Bidvest Industrial Holdings. It was expected the approach would result in the collection of good data sets, with the potential of addressing the research problem. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 and the SmartPLS 3 were the statistical tools employed for data processing analysis. A discussion on the approaches for ensuring reliability and validity followed accordingly. The chapter was concluded by a discussion on the considerations of ethical conduct.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 4.1. Introduction

This Chapter provides the results for demographic data, measurement instrument reliability and validity and the path modelling statistics. The Chapter has two main sections. The first section provides descriptive statistics for both the demographic data and the measurement instruments. The second section provides the results for hypotheses testing. In particular, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path modelling are presented in this section.

4.2 Demographic data descriptive results

The descriptive statistics of the respondents profile and the variables are illustrated in the form of pie charts and bar graphs.

4.2.1 Profile of respondents

The figures below present the profile of the respondents and the frequencies of each response gathered.

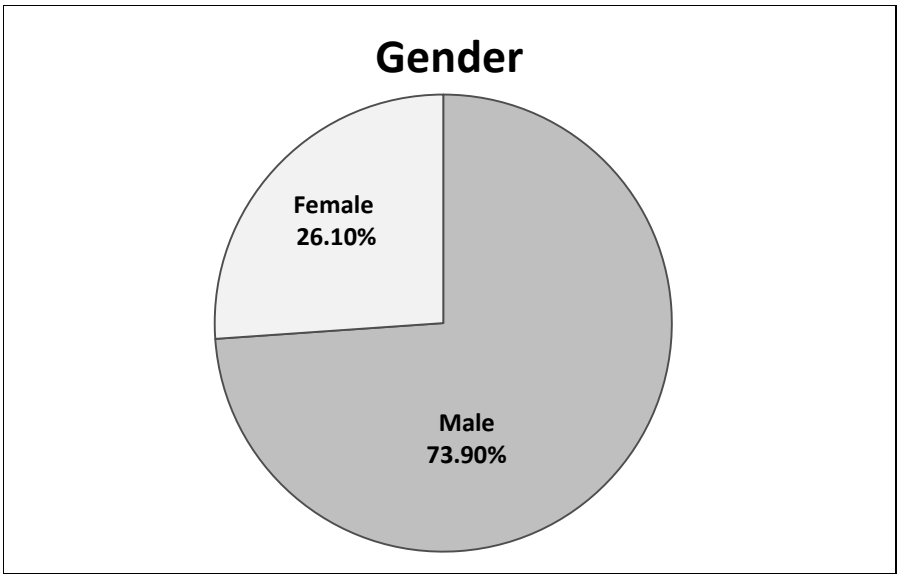


Figure 3: Gender

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Observed in figure 3 is a demonstration of the gender split in the sample. The majority of the participants were male (73.9%) and the remainder were women (26.1%).

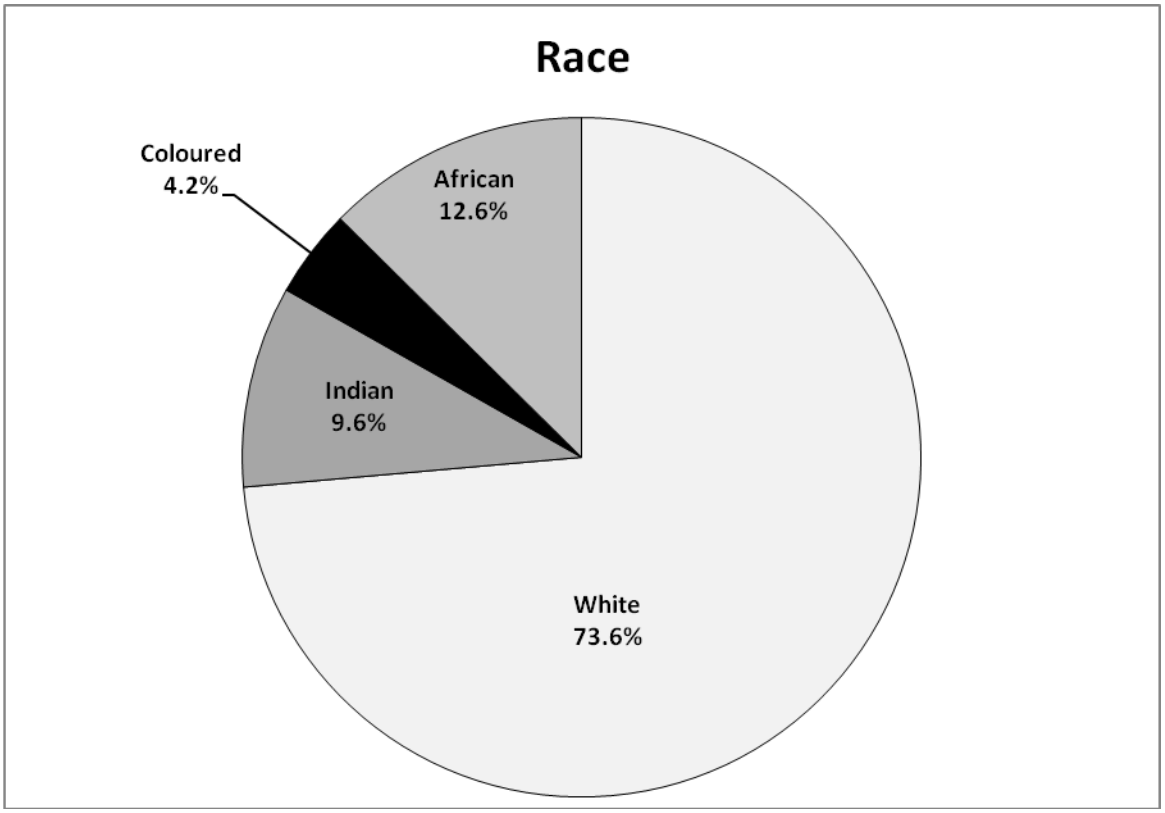


Figure 4: Race

Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

Figure 4 above shows the racial split of the respondents. Most of the respondents were white, representing 73.6% of the total sample. 12.6% of the respondents were African, while 9.6% were Indian and finally, those 4.2% of the respondents were Coloured.

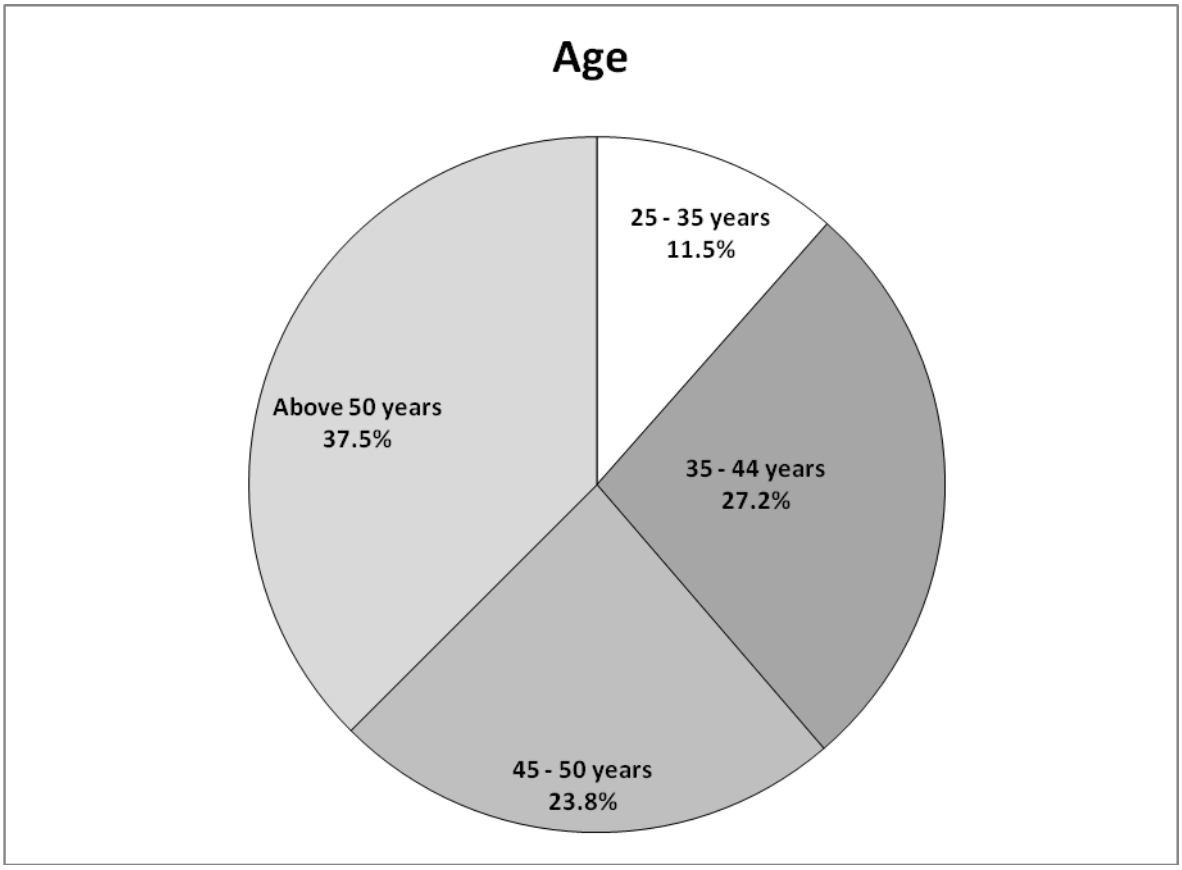


Figure 5: Age

Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

In figure 5, the age ranges of the respondents are shown. The respondents aged above 50 years were in the majority at 37.5% of the sample. They were followed by those who were between 35 – 50 years old, at 27.2%; while those who were between 45 – 50 years old were at 23.7%. Finally, those respondents who were between 25 – 45 years old represented 11.5% of the total sample.

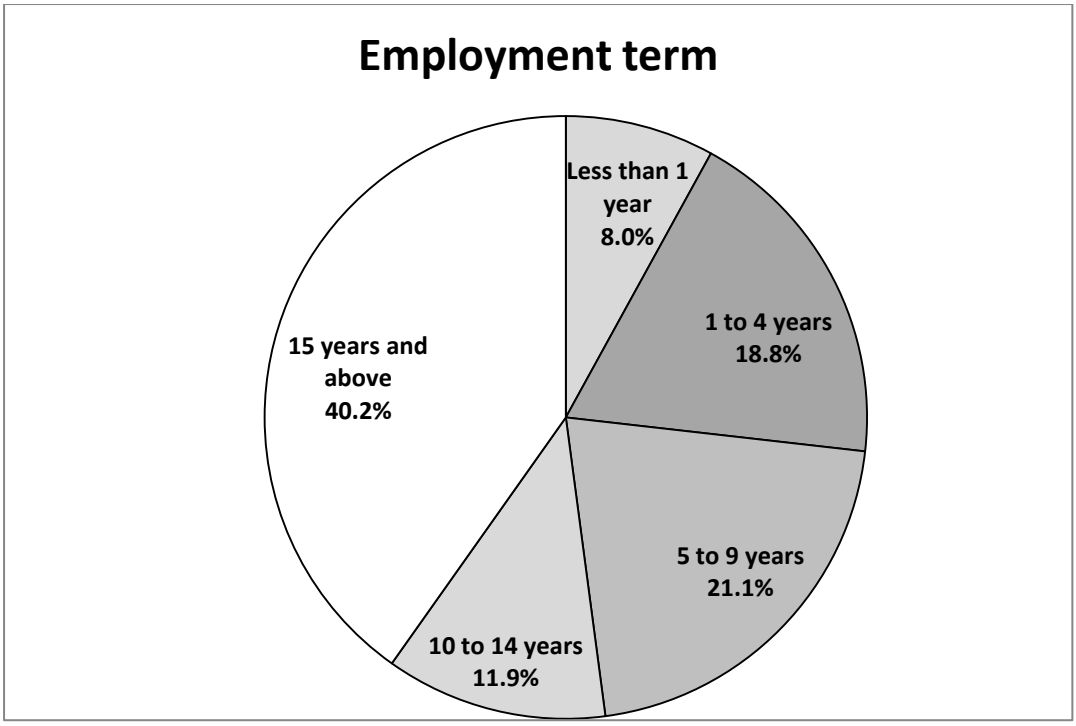


Figure 6: Employment term

Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

The respondents' term of employment in the organisation is shown in figure 6. The majority of the respondents had 15 years of experience and above, and represented 40.2% of the sample. They were followed by those who had between 5 and 9 years of experience, at 21.1%. The respondents who had between 1 and 4 years' experience were at 18.8% of the sample; and those who had less than one year's experience represented 8% of the total sample.

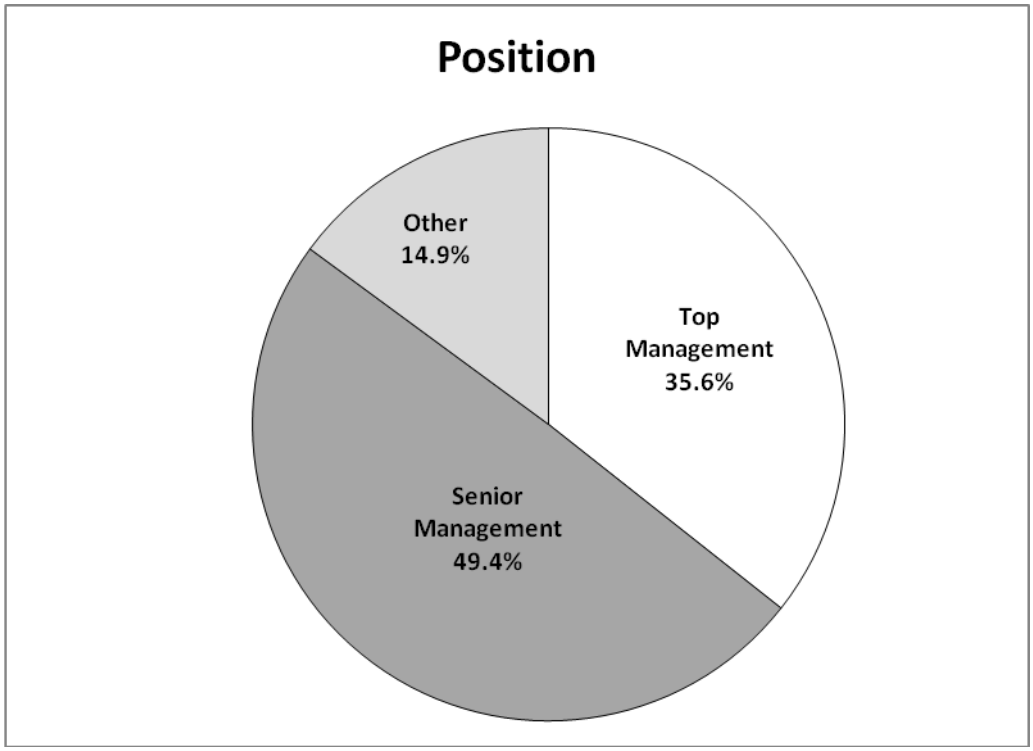


Figure 7: Position

Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

The respondents' positions in the organisation are illustrated in figure 7. The respondents who held senior management positions represented 49.4% of the sample. The top management positions were held by 35.6% of the respondents while 14.9% of the sample occupied other management positions.

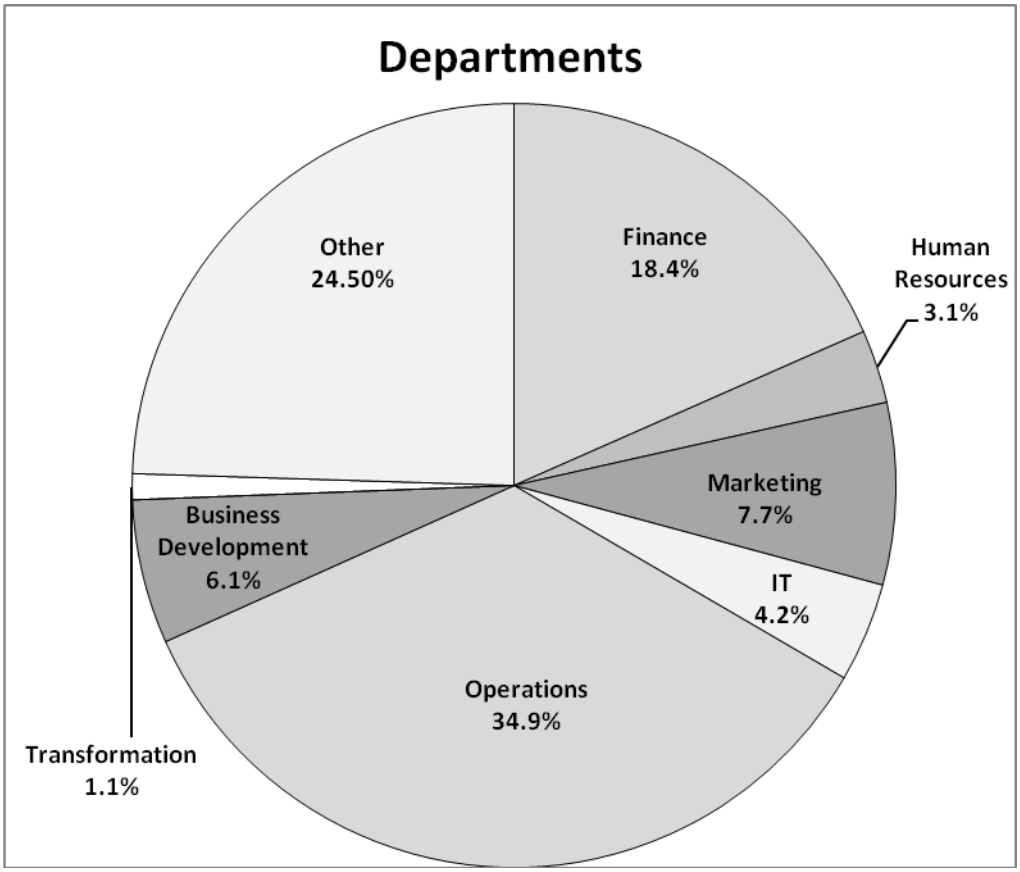


Figure 8: Department

Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

The different departments in which the respondents work within the organisation are shown in figure 8 above. Most of the participants worked in the operations department (34.9% of the total sample). Those who worked in other departments represented 24.5%, while those who were employed in the finance department represented 18.4%. Respondents who worked in the marketing department were at 7.7% and those who were in the business development department were at 6.1% of the sample. 3.1% of the respondents worked in the human resources department, and finally 1.1% worked in the transformation department.

4.3 Measurement instrument descriptive statistics

The measurement instrument was pre-tested. This procedure also assisted in identifying problems that might have arisen in terms of the use, diction, terminology, comprehension and duration of the questionnaire. As a result, a few minor changes were made to the measurement instrument.

4.3.1 *Brand orientation measurement items*

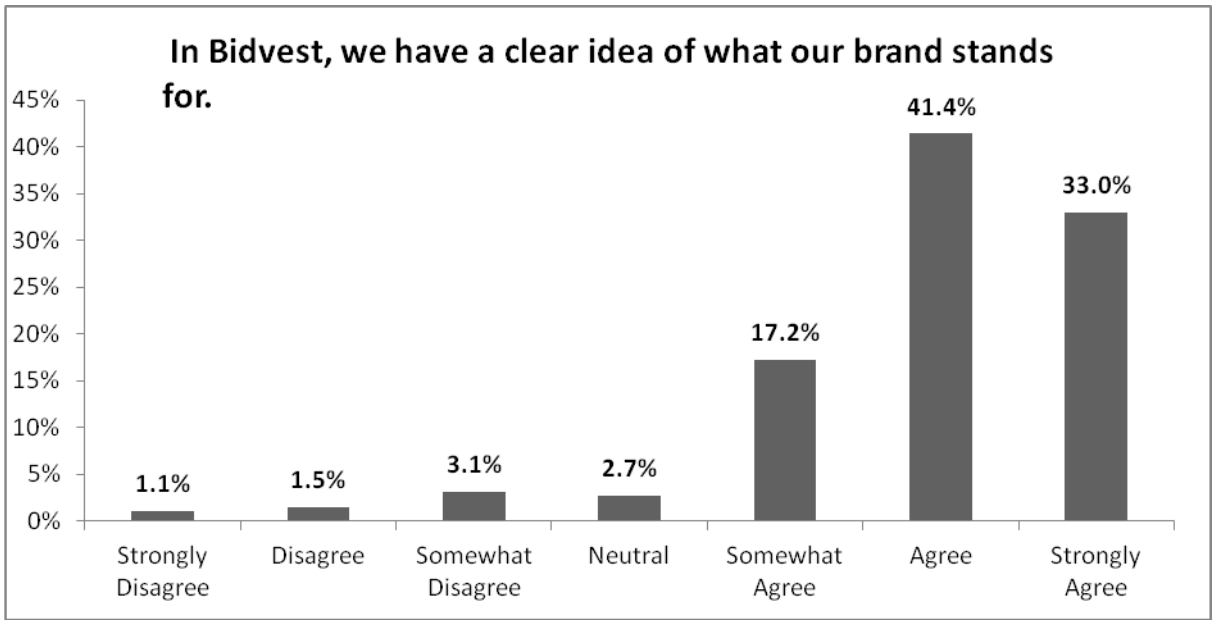


Figure 9: In Bidvest, we have a clear idea of what our brand stands for.
Source: Questionnaires collected (2016)

Figure 9 above illustrates the statement “In Bidvest, we have a clear idea of what our brand stands for”. The majority of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 41.4% of the total sample and those who strongly agreed with the statement represented 33% of the total sample. Respondents who somewhat agreed represented 17.2%, while those who somewhat disagreed represented 3.1%. Following closely were the respondents who followed who were neutral (2.7%). Those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed represented 1.5% and 1.1% of the sample respectively.

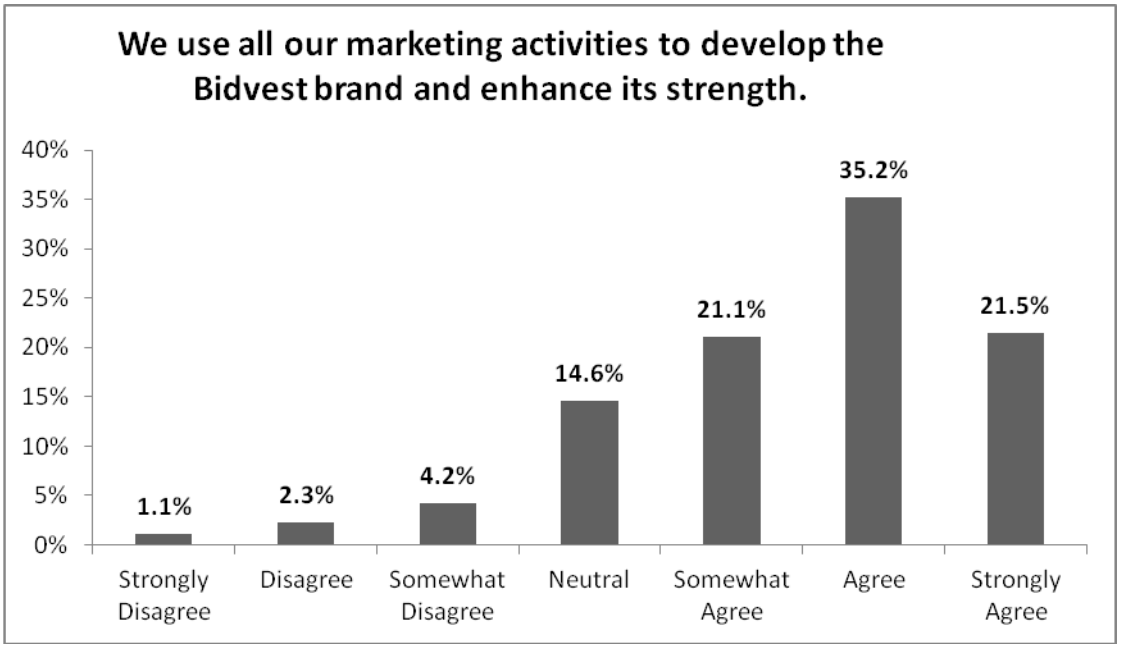


Figure 10: We use all our marketing activities to develop the Bidvest brand and enhance its strength.

Source: Questionnaires collected

In figure 10, the statement "We use all our marketing activities to develop the Bidvest brand and enhance its strength" is presented. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 35.2% of the total sample and those who strongly agreed with the statement represented 21.5% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 21.1% while those who were neutral represented 14.6%, followed by those who are somewhat disagree (4.2%) and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed – represented 2.3% and 1.1% of the total sample respectively.

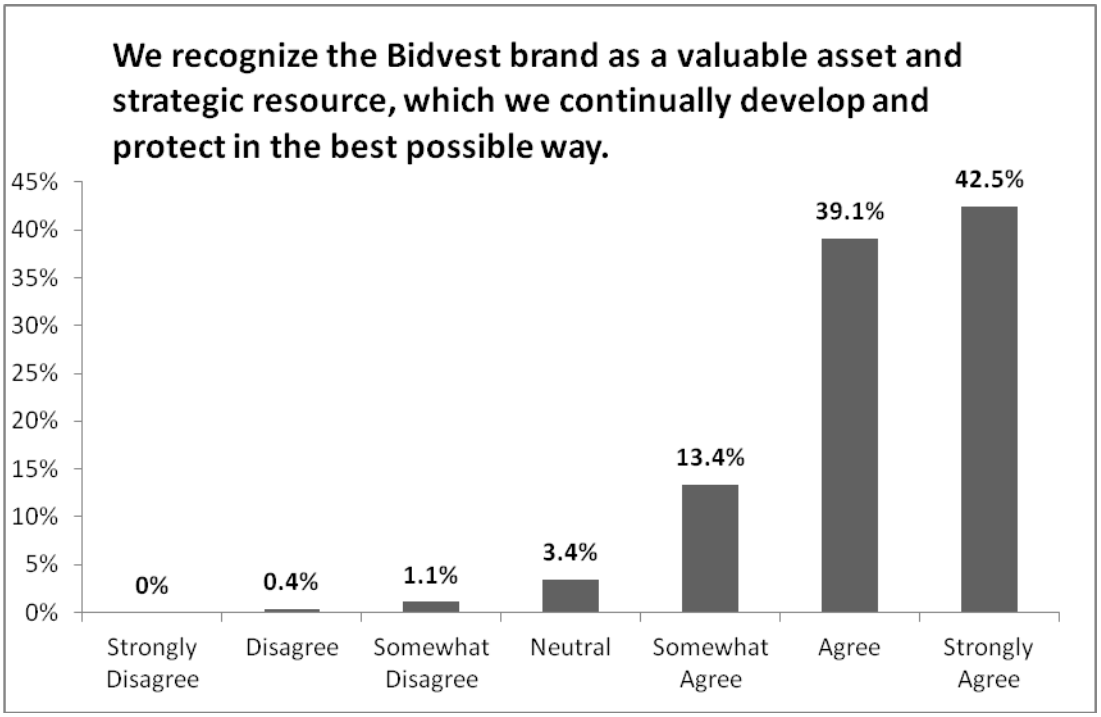


Figure 11: We recognise the Bidvest brand as a valuable asset and strategic resource, which we continually develop and protect in the best possible way.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 11 above illustrates the statement “We recognise the Bidvest brand as a valuable asset and strategic resource, which we continually develop and protect in the best possible way”. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 42.5% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 39.1% of the total sample. The respondents who somewhat agreed represented 13.4% of the total sample, and those who were neutral represented 3.4% of the sample. Finally, the minority were the respondents who somewhat disagreed (1.1%), those who disagreed (0.4%) and none strongly disagreed.

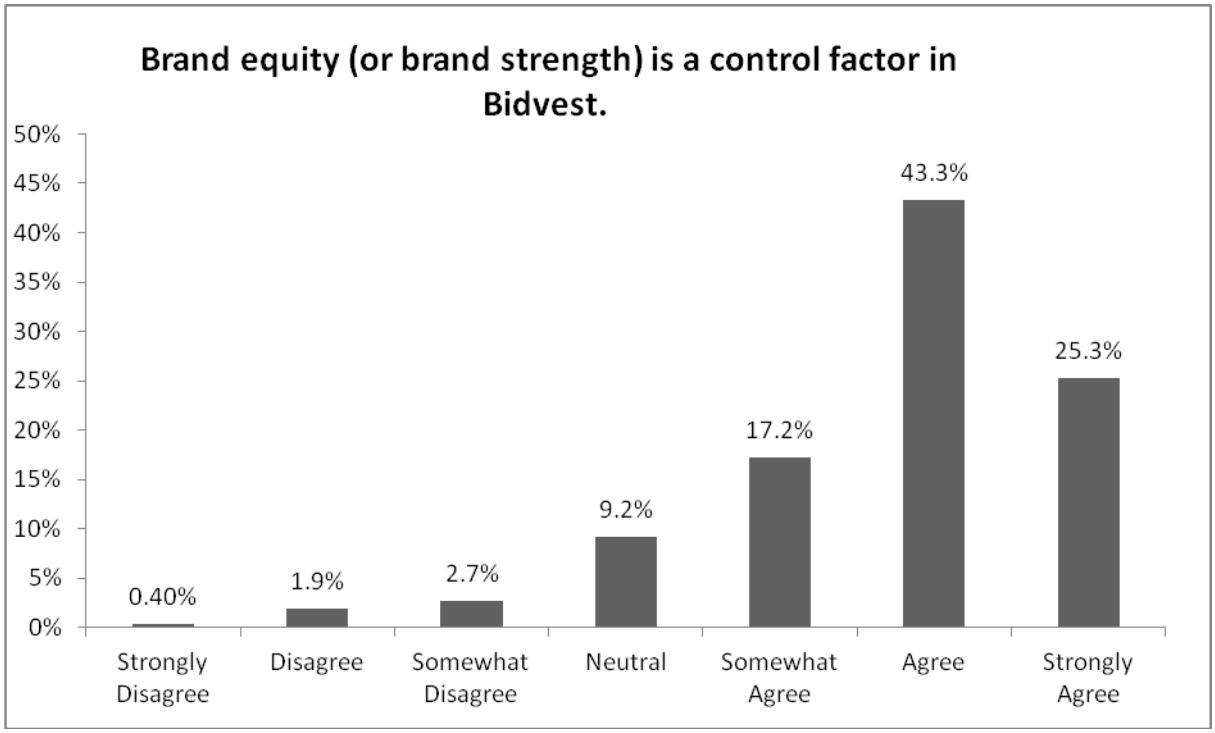


Figure 12: Brand equity (or brand strength) is a control factor in Bidvest.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

The statement “Brand equity (or brand strength) is a control factor in Bidvest” is shown in figure 12. Majority of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 43.3% of the total sample, followed those who strongly agreed with the statement (25.3%) and those who somewhat agreed (17.2%). The respondents who were neutral represented 9.2%, followed by those who somewhat disagreed (2.7%), and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed – representing 2.3% and 1.1% of the total sample respectively.

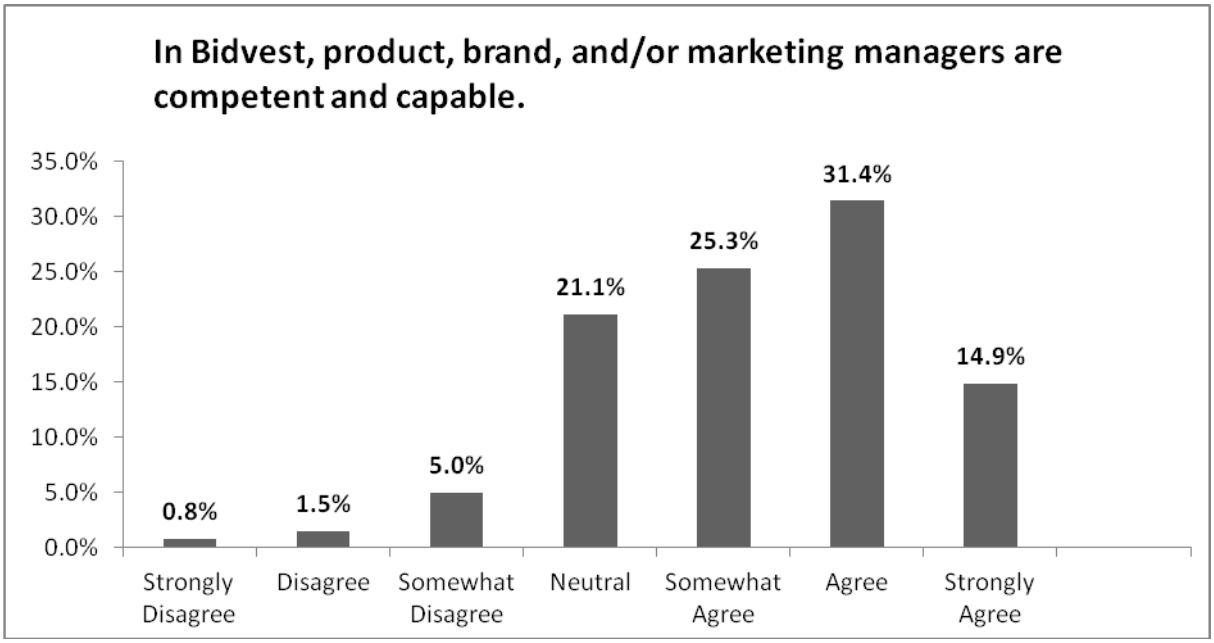


Figure 13: In Bidvest, product, brand, and/or marketing managers are competent and capable.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 13 above illustrates the statement “In Bidvest, product, brand, and/or marketing managers are competent and capable”. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 31.4% of the total sample and those who somewhat agreed with the statement represented 25.3% of the total sample. Those who were neutral represented 21.1% while those who strongly agreed represented 14.9% of the sample. The respondents who somewhat disagreed represented 5%, those who disagreed represented 1.5% and those who strongly agreed represented 0.8% of the sample.

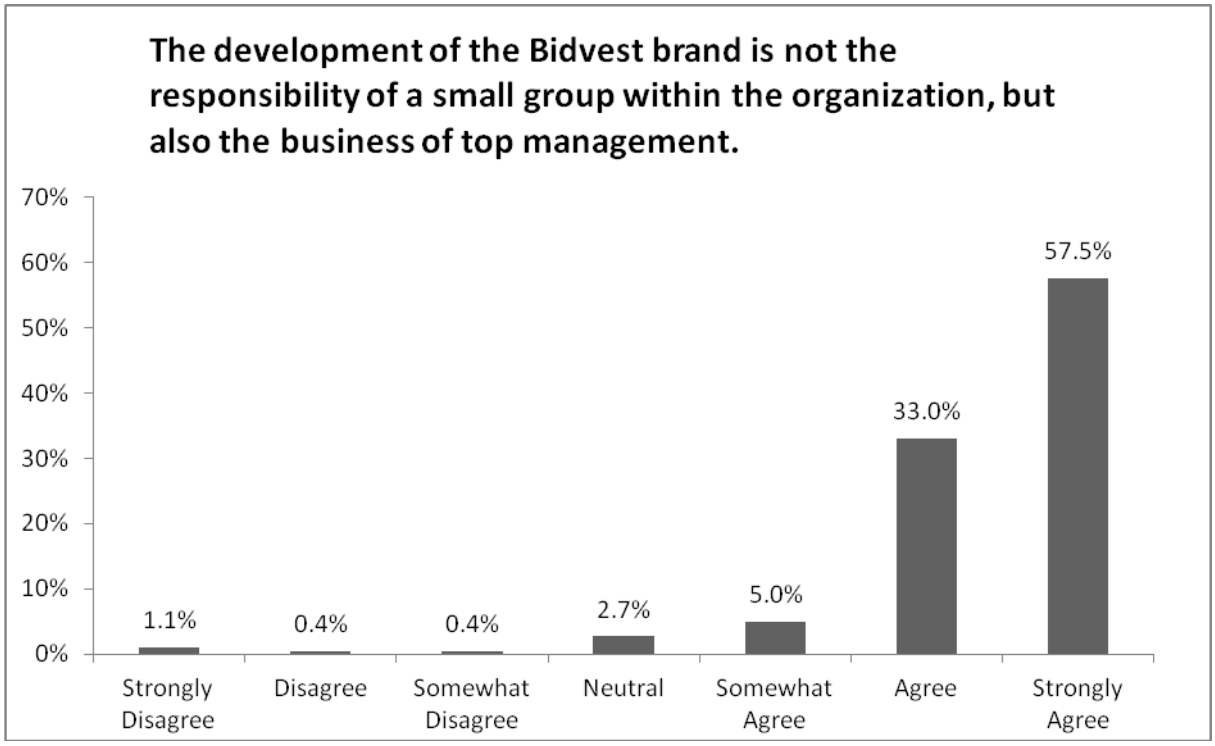


Figure 14: The development of the Bidvest brand is not the responsibility of a small group within the organisation, but also the business of top management.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

In figure 14, the statement "The development of the Bidvest brand is not the responsibility of a small group within the organisation, but also the business of top management" is illustrated. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement representing 57.5% of the sample, followed by the respondents who agreed with the statement (33%) and those who somewhat agreed (5%). In the minority were the respondents who were neutral (2.7%), those who strongly disagreed (1.1%), who somewhat disagreed (0.4%), and who disagreed (0.4%).

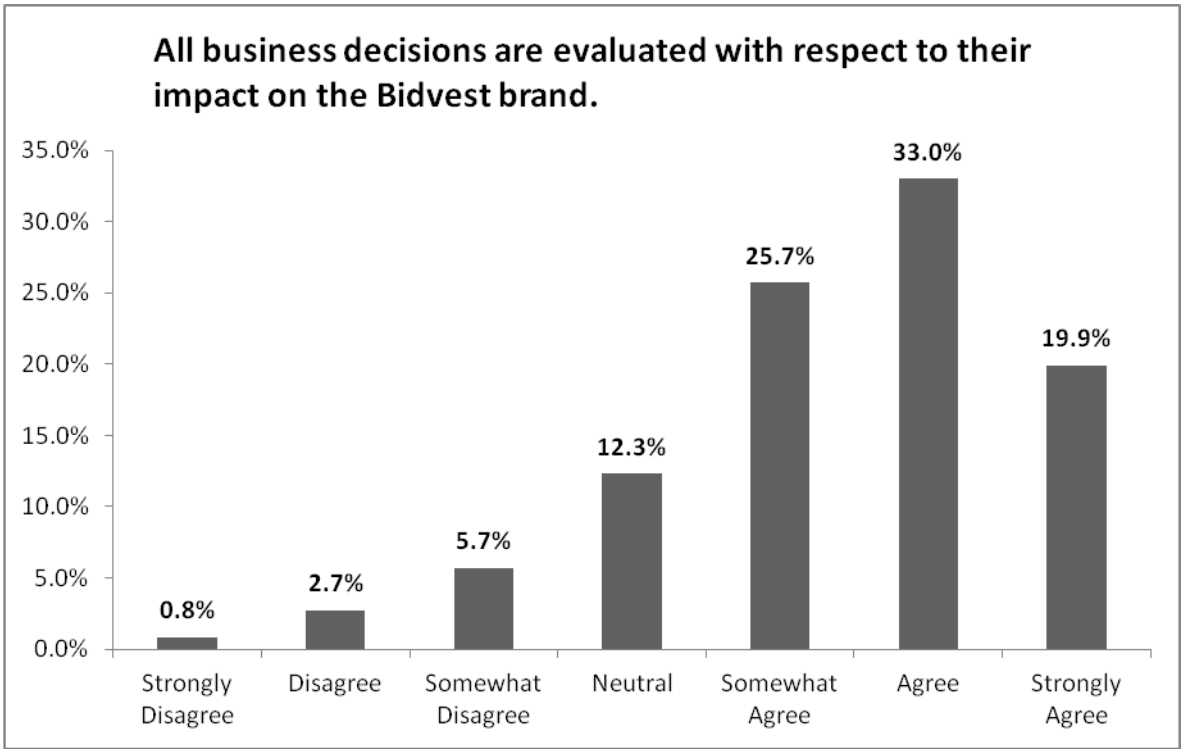


Figure 15: All business decisions are evaluated with respect to their impact on the Bidvest brand.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 15 illustrates the statement “All business decisions are evaluated with respect to their impact on the Bidvest brand.” Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 33% of the total sample. They were followed by those respondents somewhat agreed (25.7%), those who strongly agreed (19.9%) and those who were neutral at 12.3% of the sample. The respondents who somewhat disagreed with the statement were 5.7% of the sample, while those who disagreed and strongly disagreed were 2.7% and 0.8% of the sample respectively.

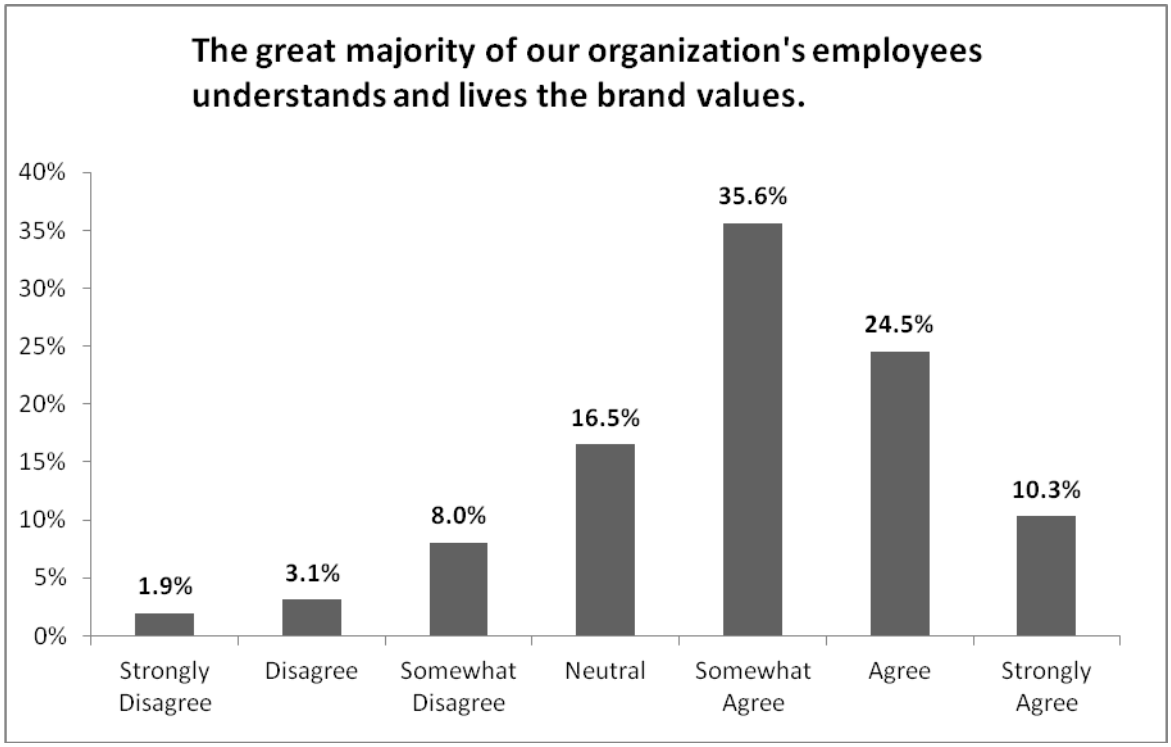


Figure 16: The great majority of our organisation's employees understands and lives the brand values.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016).

Figure 16 illustrates the statement “The great majority of our organisation's employees understands and lives the brand values”. Most of the respondents somewhat agreed with the statement and represented 35.6% of the total sample, followed by those who agreed with the statement (24.5%), those who were neutral (16.5%) and those who strongly agreed (10.3%).Those respondents who somewhat disagreed represented 8.1%, while those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed represented 3.1% and 1.9% of the total sample respectively.

4.3.2 *Brand commitment measurement items*

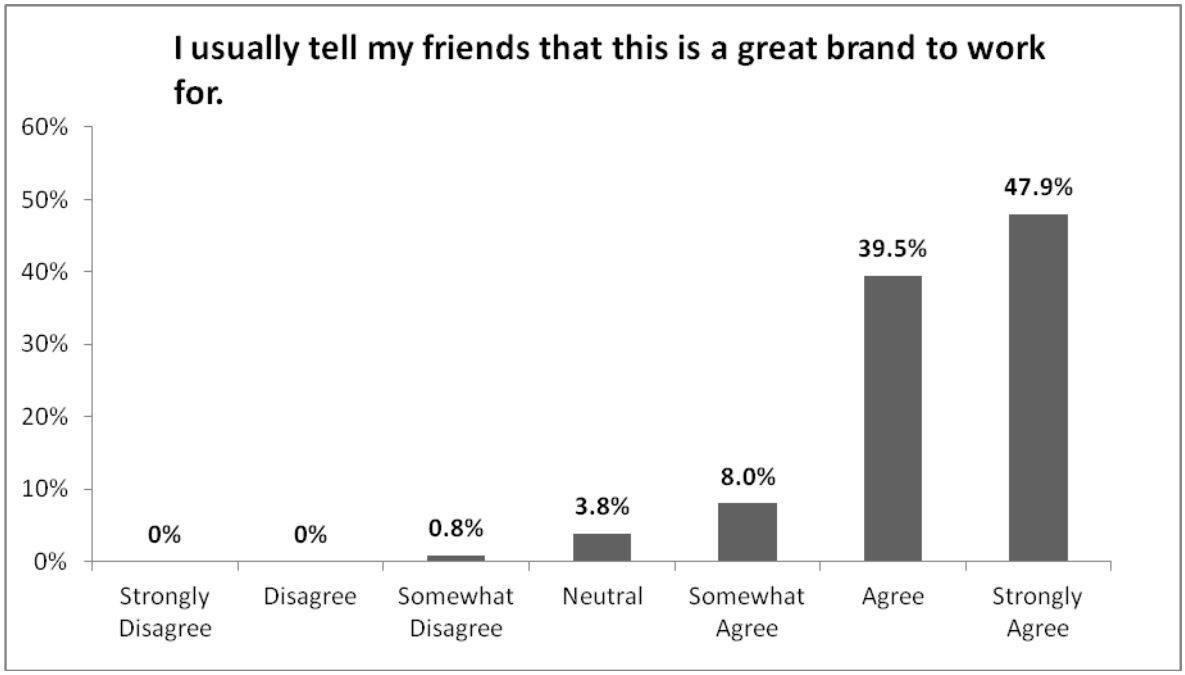


Figure 17: I usually tell my friends that this is a great brand to work for.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 17 illustrates the statement "I usually tell my friends that this is a great brand to work for". Most of the participants strongly agreed with the statement and represented 47.9% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 39.5% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 8% while those who were neutral represented 3.8%, followed by those who are somewhat disagree (0.8%). No respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

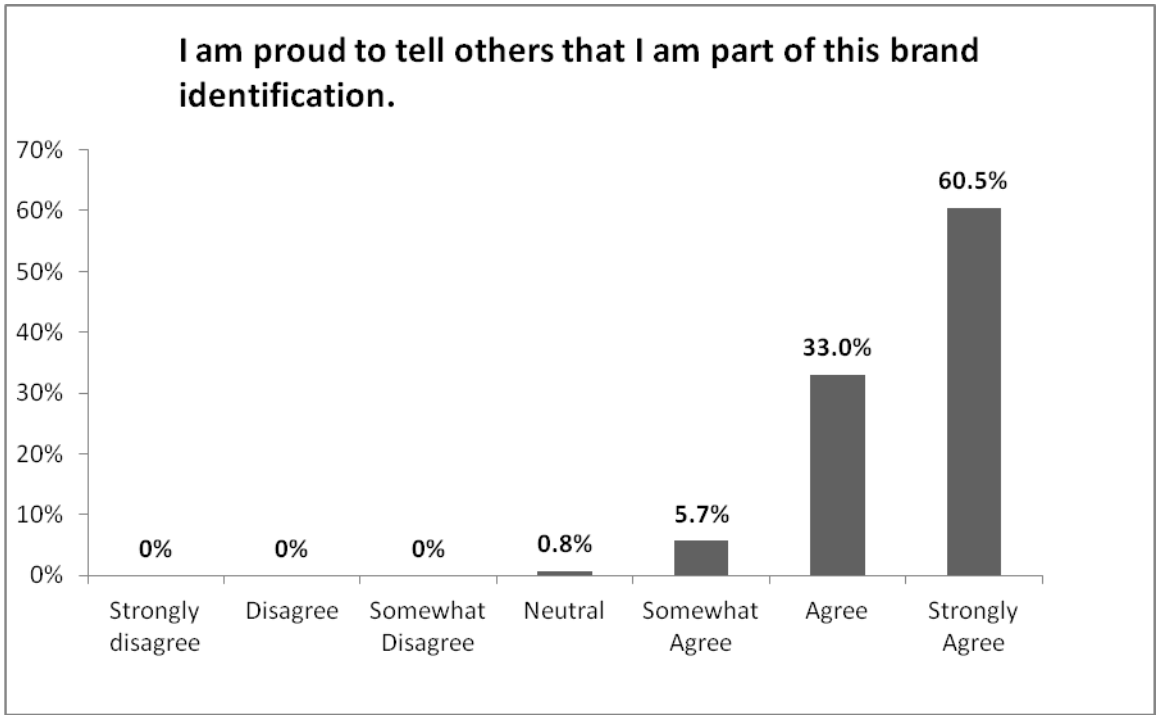


Figure 18: I am proud to tell others that I am part of this brand identification.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

The statement "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this brand Identification" is shown in figure 18. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 60.5% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 33% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed followed at 5.7% while those who were neutral represented 0.8% of the total population. No respondent somewhat agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

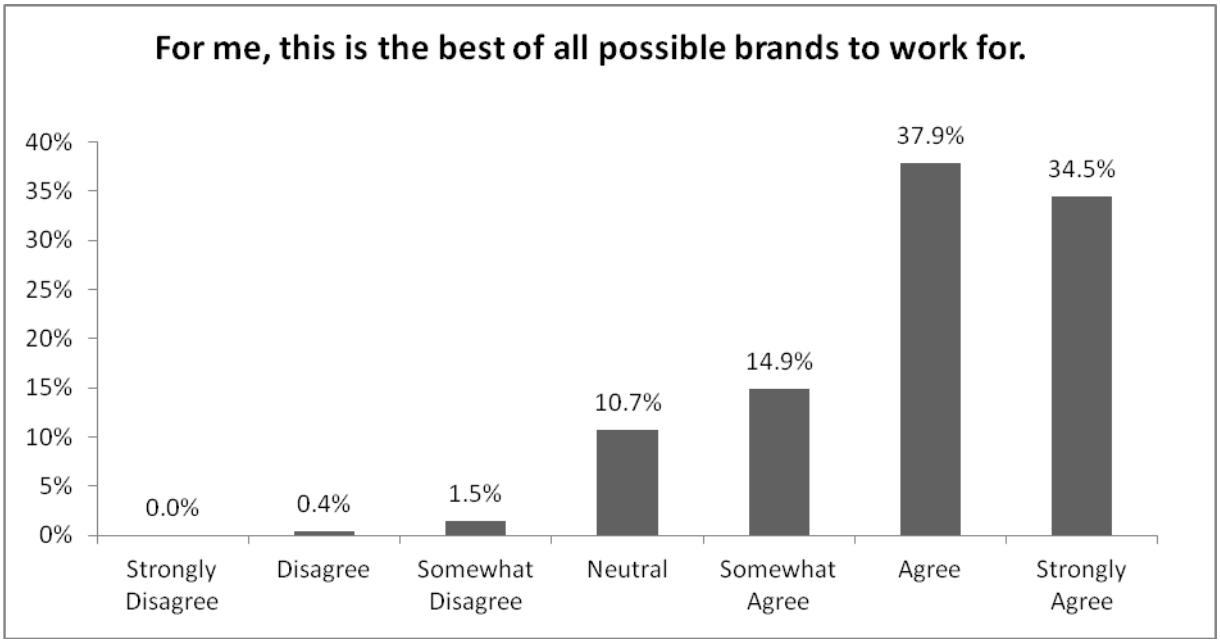


Figure 19 : For me, this is the best of all possible brands to work for.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 19 above demonstrates the statement “For me, this is the best of all possible brands to work for”. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 37.9% of the total sample and those who strongly agreed with the statement represented 34.5% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 14.9% while those who were neutral represented 10.7%, followed by those who are somewhat disagreed (1.5%) and those who disagreed (0.4%). No respondent strongly disagreed with the statement.

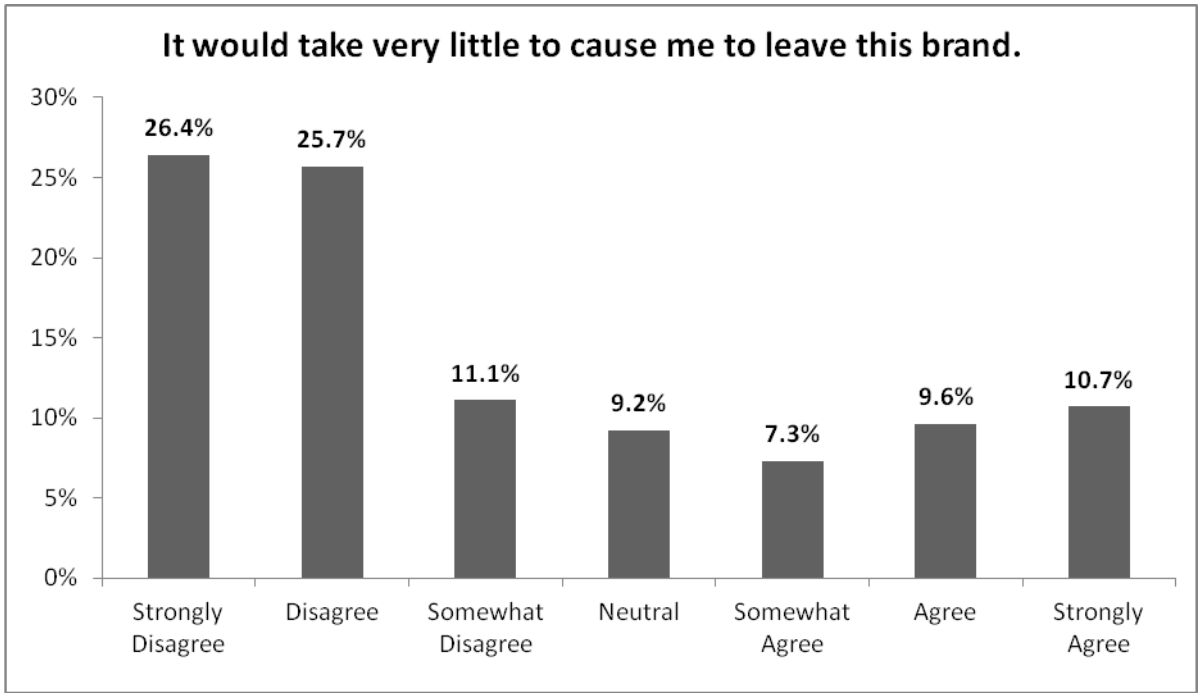


Figure 20: It would take very little to cause me to leave this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Table 4.17, above illustrates the statement “It would take very little to cause me to leave this brand”. Most of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and represented 26.4% of the total sample and those disagreed with the statement represented 25.7% of the total sample. The respondents who somewhat disagreed presented 11.1% of the sample, with those who strongly agreed with the statement closely behind at 10.7%. Those who agreed represented 9.6%, while those who were neutral and those who somewhat agreed represented 9.2% and 7.3% of the sample respectively.

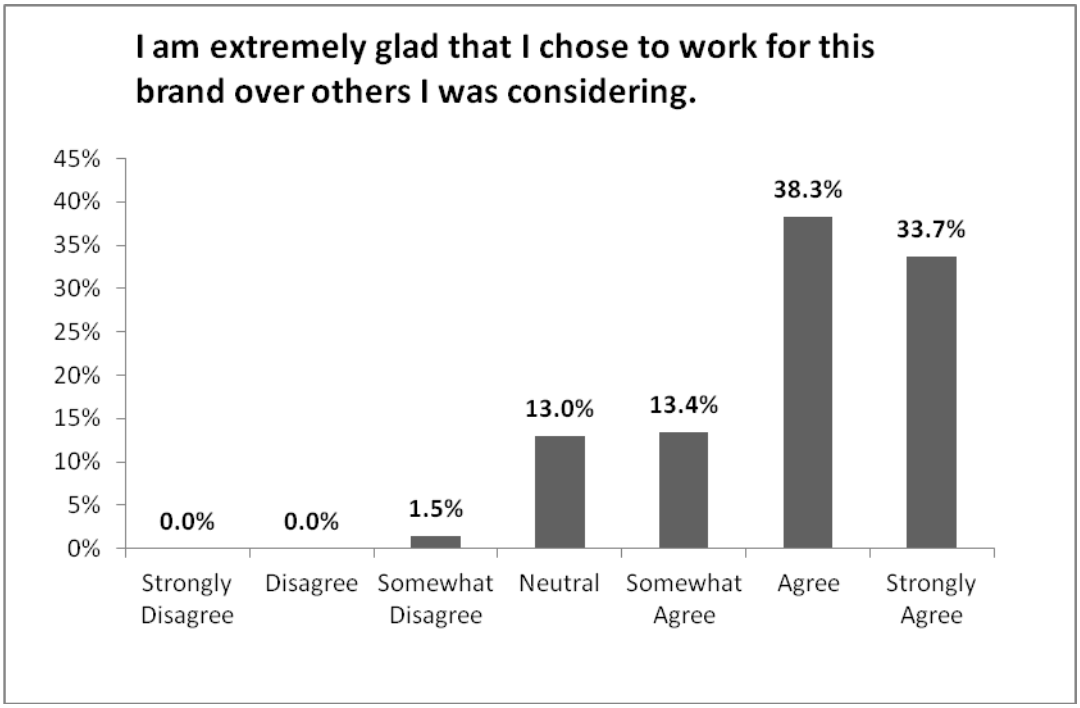


Figure 21: I am extremely glad that I chose to work for this brand over others I was considering.

Source: Completed questionnaires (2016)

In figure 21, the statement "I am extremely glad that I chose to work for this brand over others I was considering" is demonstrated. 38.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement, followed by those who strongly agreed (33.7%) and those who somewhat agreed (13.4%). Respondents who were neutral represented 13% of the sample, while 1.5% of the respondents somewhat disagreed with the statement. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

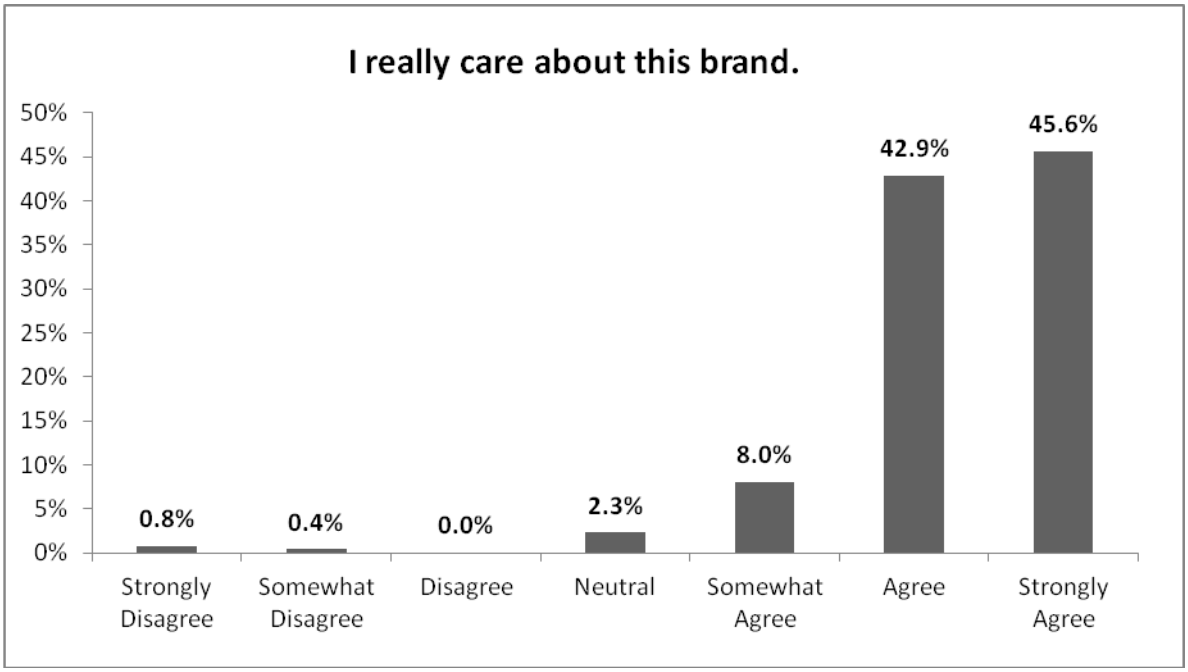


Figure 22: I really care about this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 22, above shows the statement "I really care about this brand". Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 45.6% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 42.9% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 8% while those who were neutral represented 2.3%, followed by those who are strongly disagree (0.8%) and those who somewhat disagreed (0.4%). There were no respondents who disagreed with the statement.

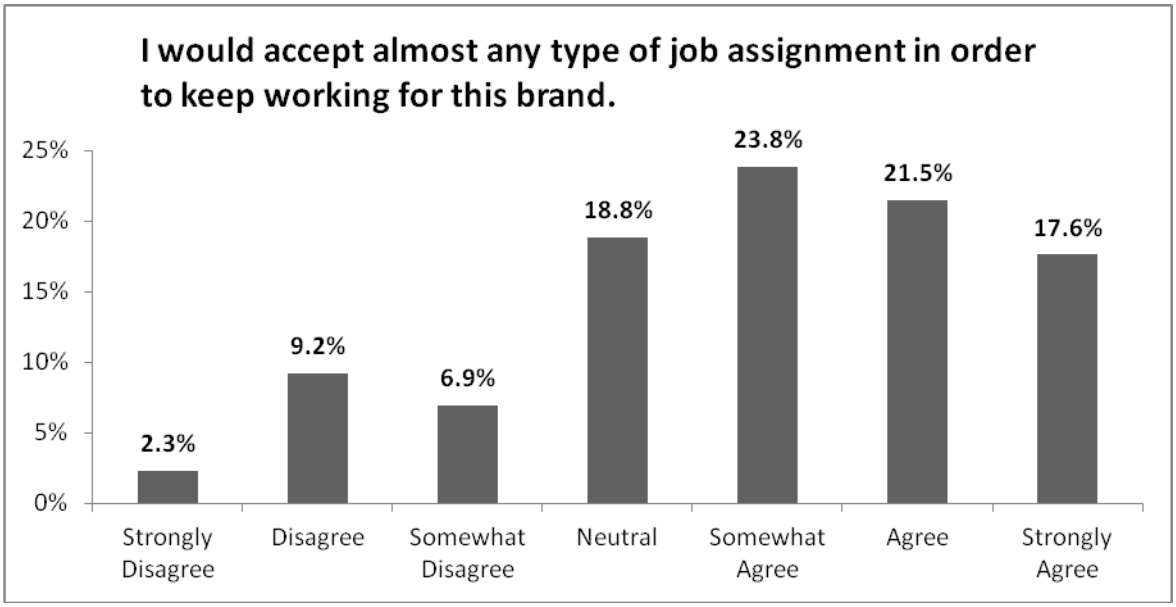


Figure 23: I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

The statement "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this brand" is illustrated in figure 23. Respondents who somewhat agreed with the statement were in the majority at 23.8% of the total sample, followed closely by those who agreed (21.5%). The respondents who were neutral represented 18.8% of the sample and were followed closely by those who strongly agreed with the statement (17.6%). Those who disagreed with the statement represented 9.2% of the population and were followed by those who somewhat disagreed (6.9%) and those who strongly disagreed (2.3%).

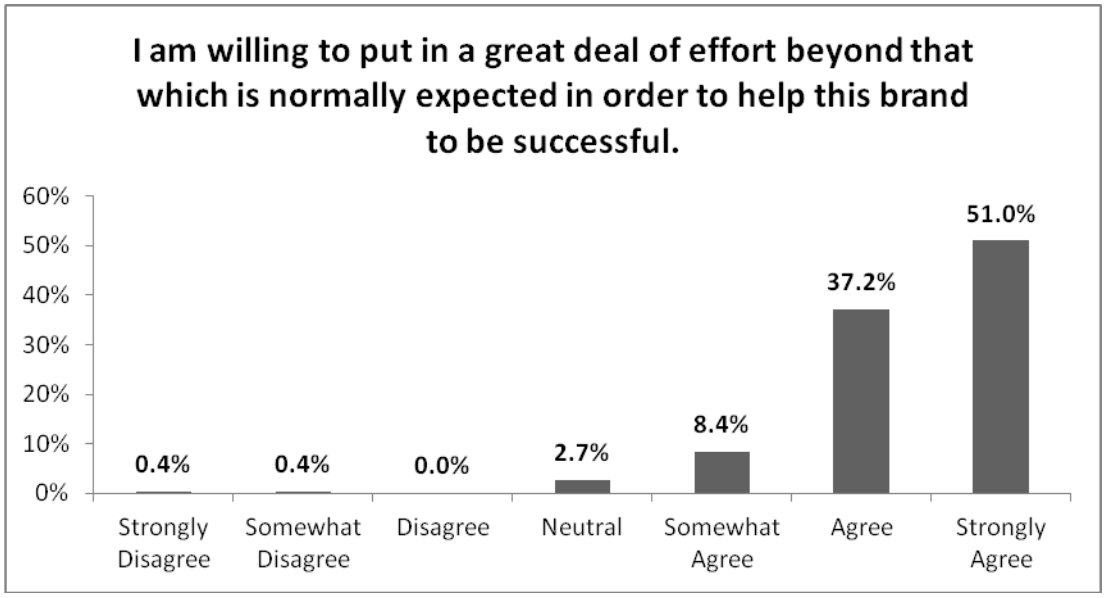


Figure 24: I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that which is normally expected in order to help this brand to be successful.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

In figure 24, the statement "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that which is normally expected in order to help this brand to be successful" is demonstrated. 51% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and 37.2% of the respondent agreed with the statement. 8.4% of the respondents somewhat agreed and 2.7% were neutral. Those who somewhat disagree represented 0.4% of the sample and those who strongly disagreed also represented 0.4% of the sample. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

4.3.3 *Brand trust measurement items*

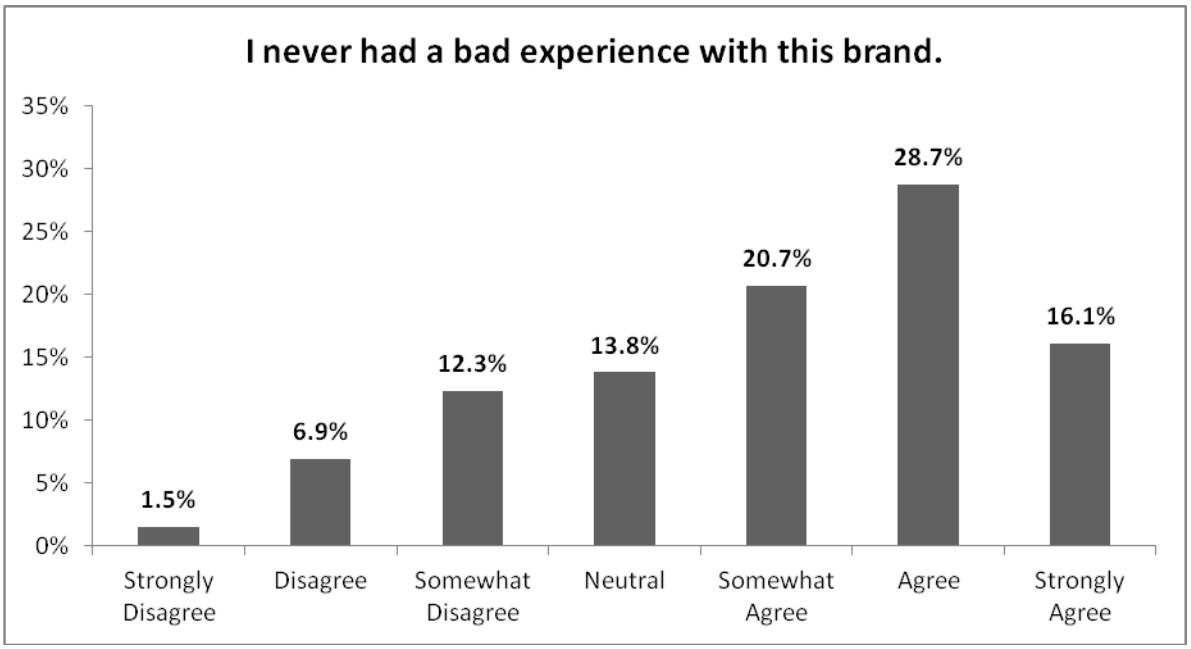


Figure 25: I never had a bad experience with this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 25 illustrates the statement “I never had a bad experience with this brand”. 28.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement and those who somewhat agreed with the statement represented 20.7% of the total sample. Those who strongly agreed represented 16.1% while those who were neutral represented 13.8% of the total sample. The respondents who somewhat disagreed were 13.8% of the sample, and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed represented 6.9% and 1.5% of the total sample respectively.

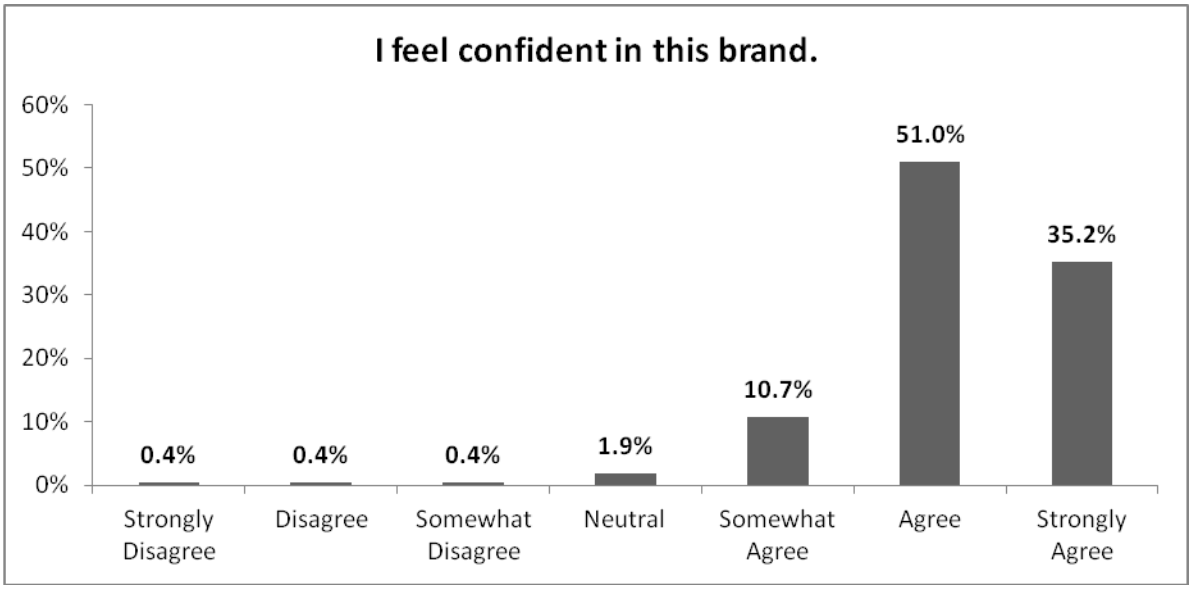


Figure 26: I feel confident in this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

The statement “I feel confidence in this brand” is shown in figure 26. 51% of the respondents agreed with the statement, followed by those who strongly agreed with the statement representing 35.2% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 10.7% while those who were neutral represented 1.9%. The respondents who somewhat disagreed, those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed each represented 0.4% of the total sample.

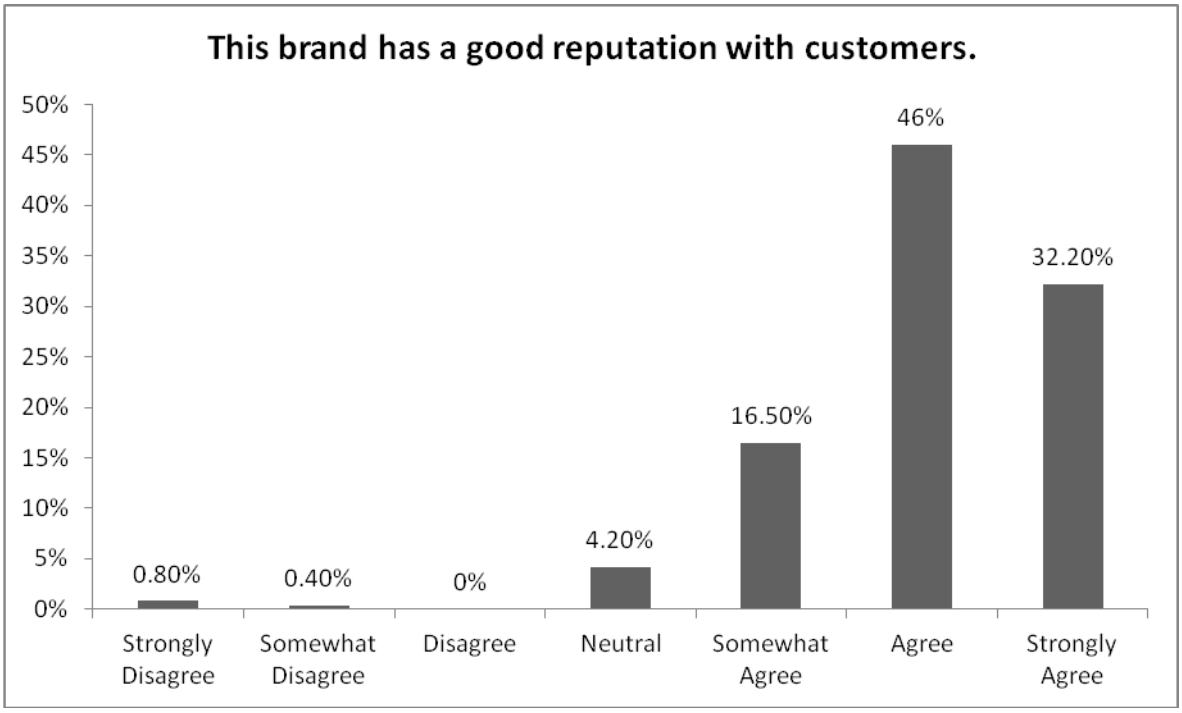


Figure 27: This brand has a good reputation with customers.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 27 illustrates the statement “This brand has a good reputation with customers”. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 46% of the total sample, and those who strongly agreed with the statement representing 32.2% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 16.5% of the sample, while those who were neutral represented 4.2%. The respondents who strongly disagreed represented 0.8% of the sample and those who somewhat disagreed were 0, 4% of the sample. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

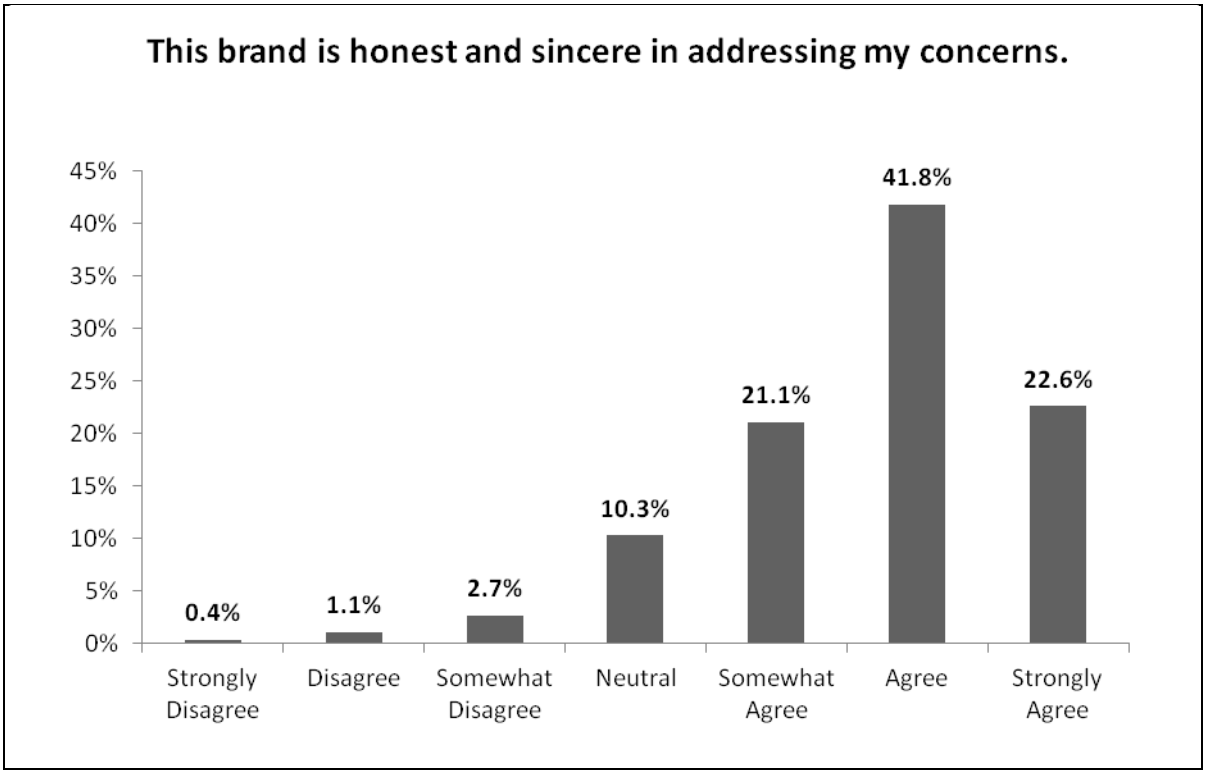


Figure 28: This brand is honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

"This brand is honest and sincere in addressing my concerns" is the statement illustrated in figure 28. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement (41.8%), followed by those who strongly agreed (22.6%) and those who somewhat agreed (21.1%). 10.3% of the respondents were neutral, followed by those who somewhat disagreed (2.7%); and those who disagreed and strongly disagreed represented 1.1% and 0.4% respectively.

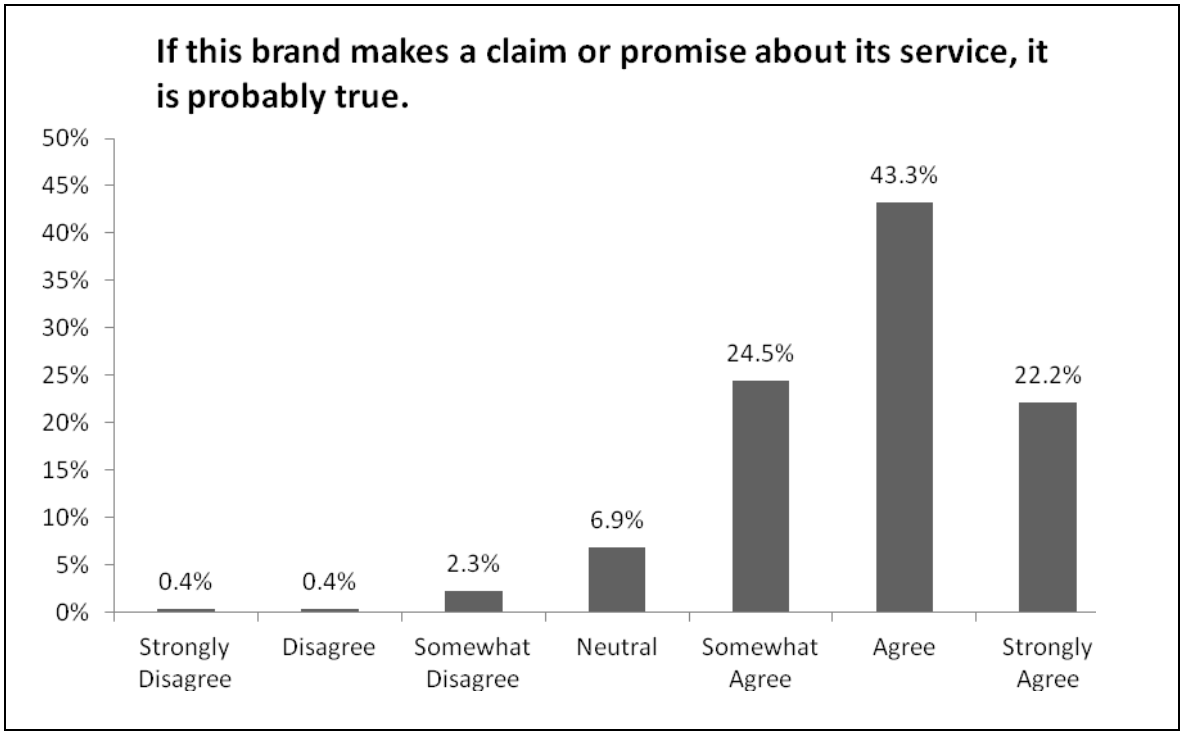


Figure 29: If this brand makes a claim or promise about its service, it is probably true.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016).

In figure 29, the statement “If this brand makes a claim or promise about its service, it is probably true” is demonstrated. The majority of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 43.3% of the total sample, those who somewhat agreed with the statement represented 24.5%, and those who strongly agreed represented 22.2% of the total sample. Respondents who were neutral represented 6.9%, followed by those who are somewhat disagree (2.3%). Those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed with the statement each represented 0.4% of the total sample.

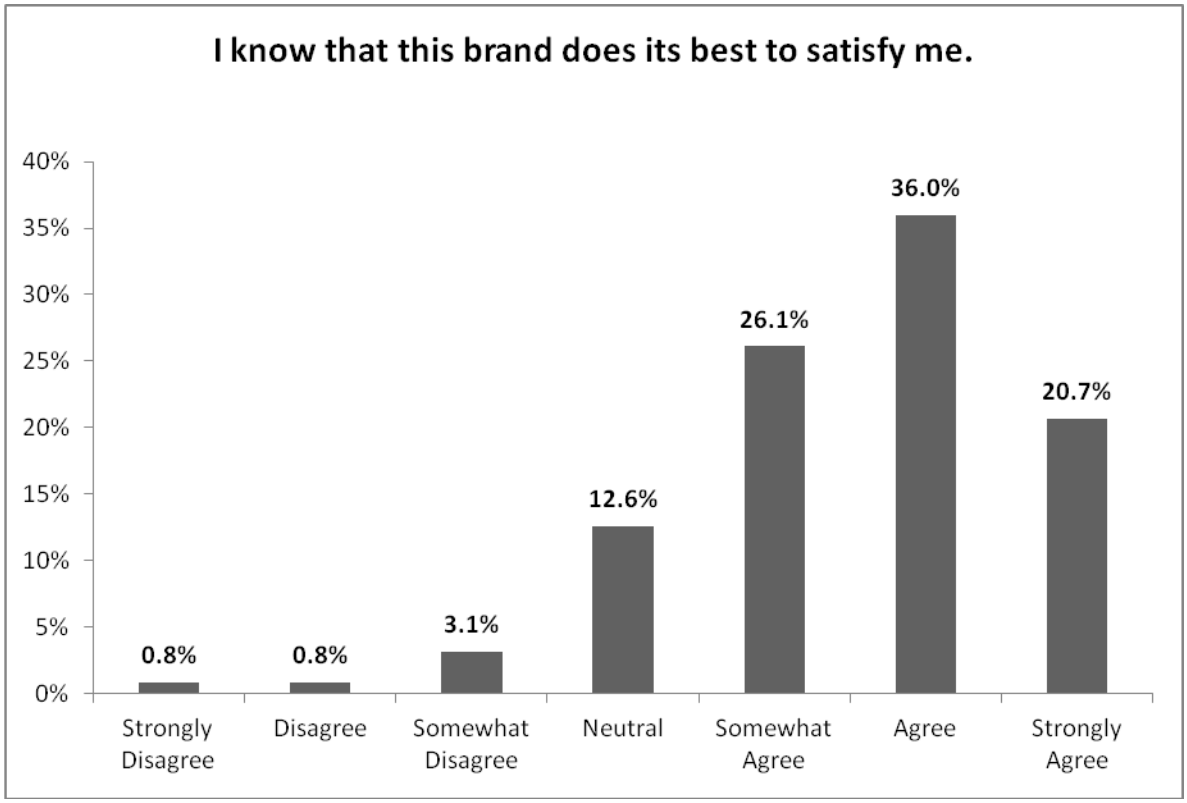


Figure 30: I know that this brand does its best to satisfy me.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016).

The statement “I know that this brand does its best to satisfy me”. 36% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 26.1% of them somewhat agreed and 20.7% strongly agreed. The respondents who were neutral accounted for 12.6% of the total sample, followed by those who somewhat disagreed representing 3.1% of the total sample. Those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed with the statement each represented 0.8% of the total sample.

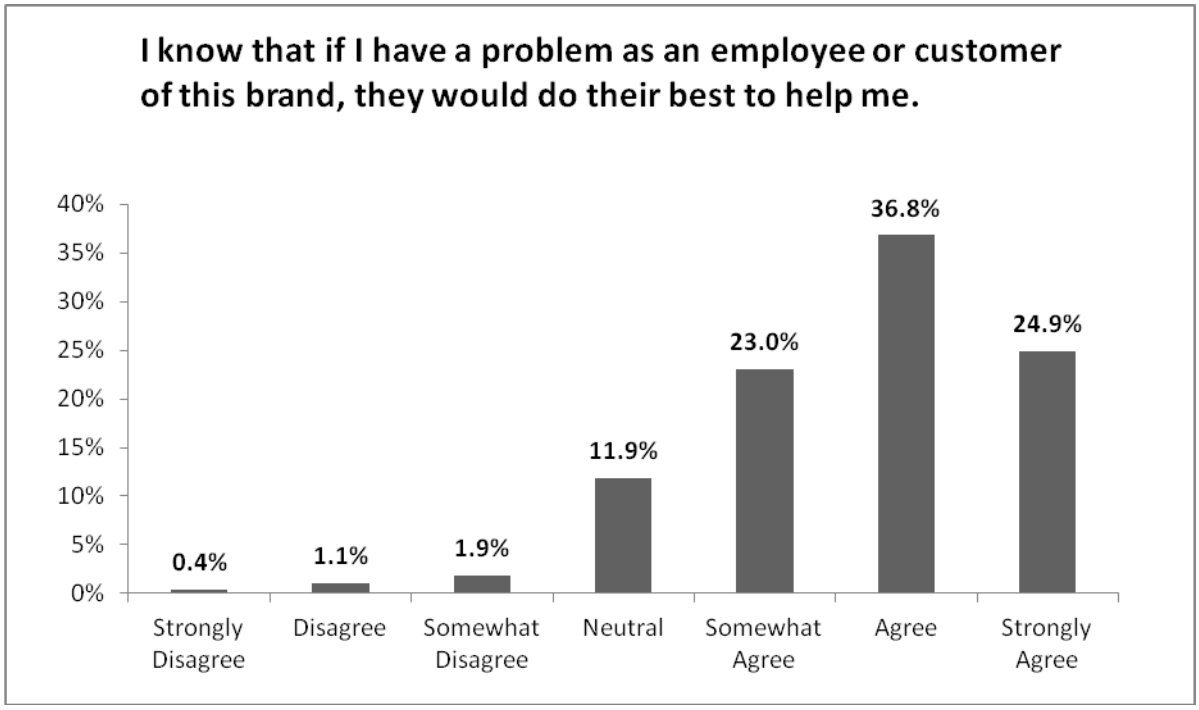


Figure 31: I know that if I have a problem as an employee or customer of this brand, they would do their best to help me.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 31 illustrates the statement "I know that if I have a problem as an employee or customer of this brand, they would do their best to help me". Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 36.8% of the total sample and those who strongly agreed with the statement represented 24.9% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 23% while those who were neutral represented 11.9%. The respondents who somewhat disagreed represented 1.9%, while those who disagreed and those strongly disagreed represented 1.1% and 0.4% respectively.

4.3.4 *Brand loyalty measurement items*

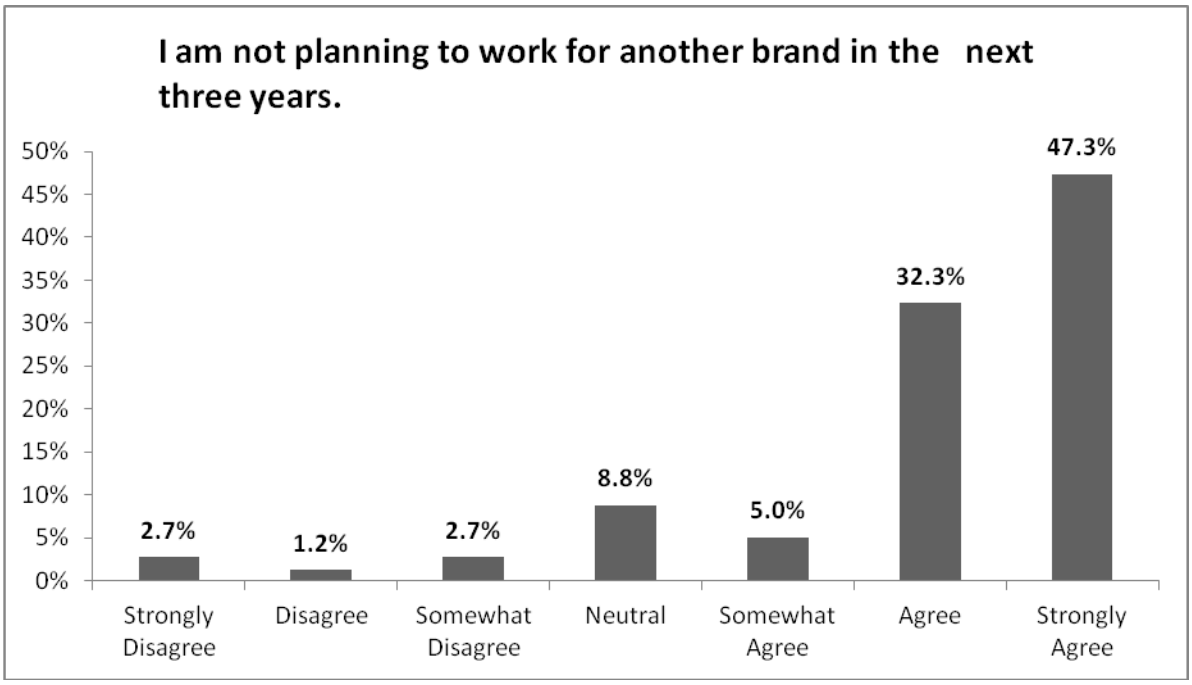


Figure 32: I am not planning to work for another brand in the next three years.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

The statement “I am not planning to work for another brand in the next three years” is demonstrated in figure 32. Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 47.3% of the total sample. Respondents who were neutral to the statement were 8.8% of the sample, followed by those who somewhat agreed with it (5%). Those who somewhat disagreed and those who strongly with the statement each represented 2.7% of the total sample. Lastly, the respondents who disagreed with the statement were in the minority (1.2%).

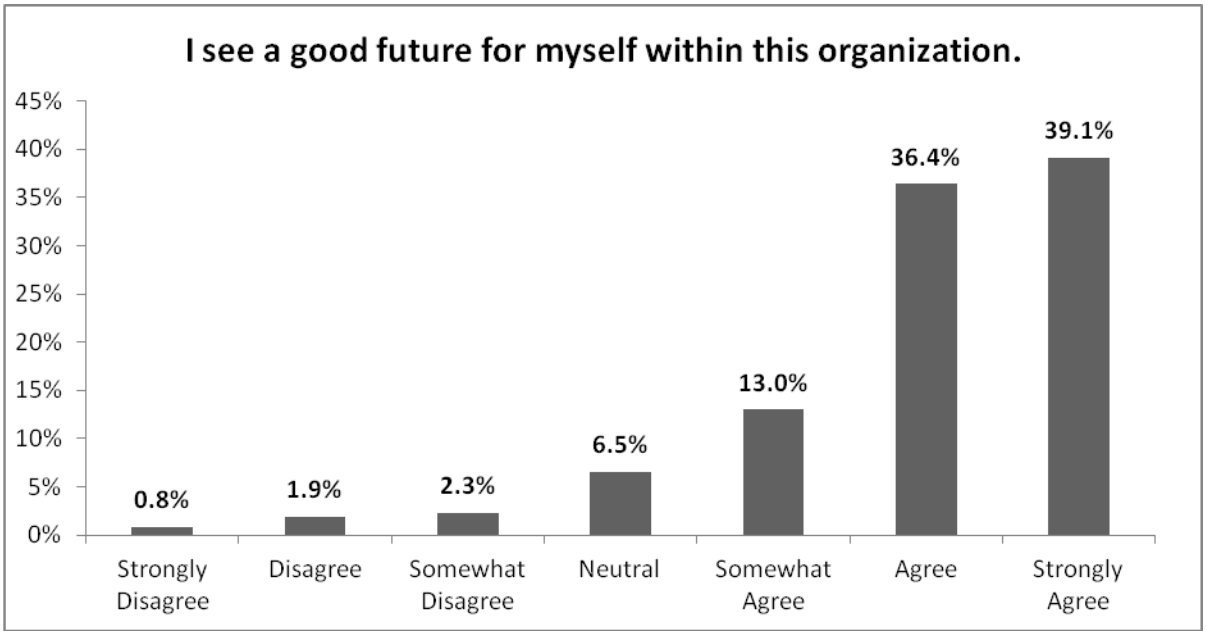


Figure 33: I see a good future for myself within this organization.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 33 demonstrates the statement "I see a good future for myself within this organization". 39.1% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 36.4% agreed with it, and 13% somewhat agreed to the statement. Those who were neutral to the statement represented 6.5% and were followed by those who somewhat disagreed (2.3%, those who disagreed (1.9%) and those who strongly disagreed (0.8%).

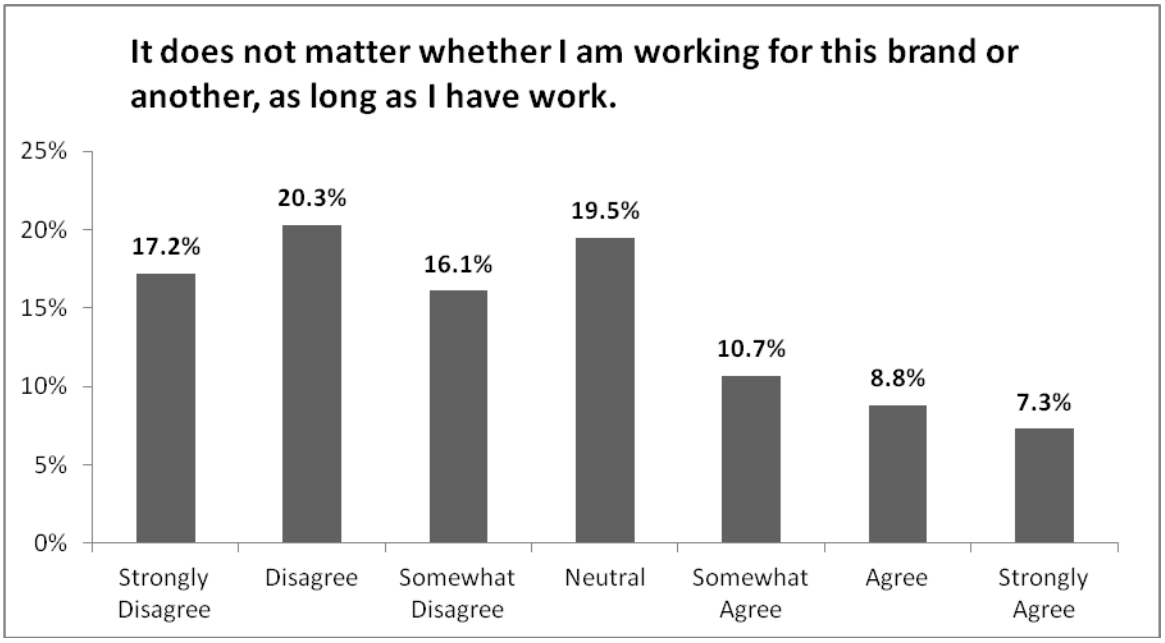


Figure 34: It does not matter whether I am working for this brand or another, as long as I have work. Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

"It does not matter whether I am working for this brand or another, as long as I have work" is the statement demonstrated in figure 34. The majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement and represented 20.3% of the total sample and were followed closely by those who were neutral to the statement representing 19.5% of the total sample. 17.2% of the respondent strongly disagreed, 16.1% somewhat disagreed and 10.7% somewhat agreed with the statement. In the minority were the respondents who agreed (8.8%) and those who strongly agreed (7.3%).

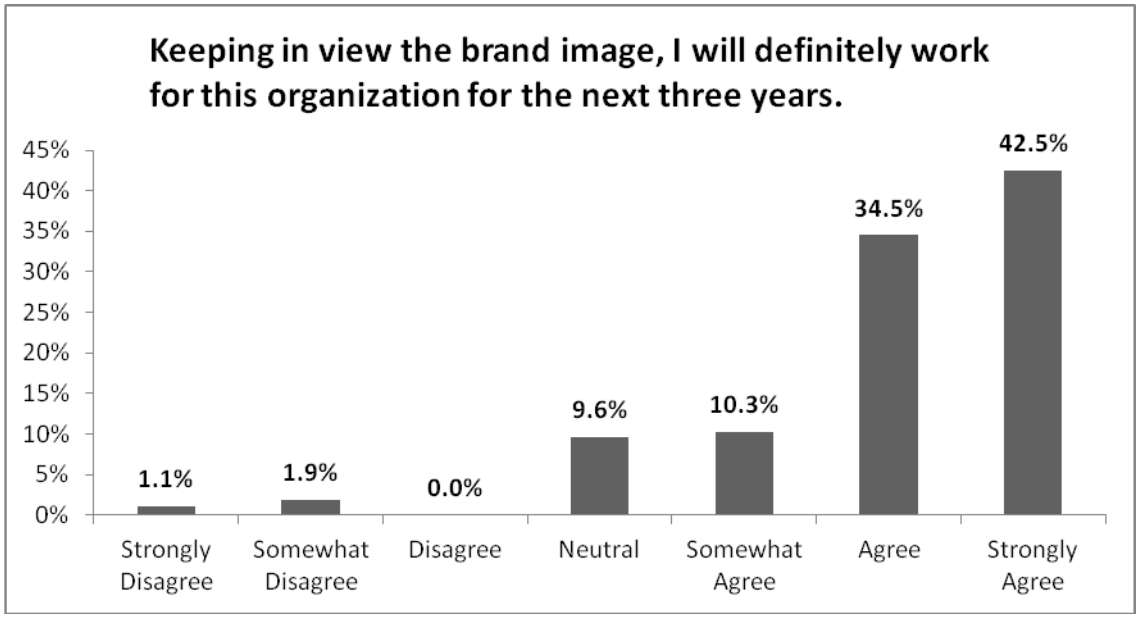


Figure 35: Keeping in view the brand image, I will definitely work for this organization for the next three years.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

In figure 35, the statement, “Keeping in view the brand image, I will definitely work for this organization for the next three years,” is illustrated. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 42.5% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 34.5% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed (10.3%) were followed by those who were neutral to the statement (9.6%). Respondents who somewhat disagreed (1.9%) were followed by those who strongly disagreed (1.1%).

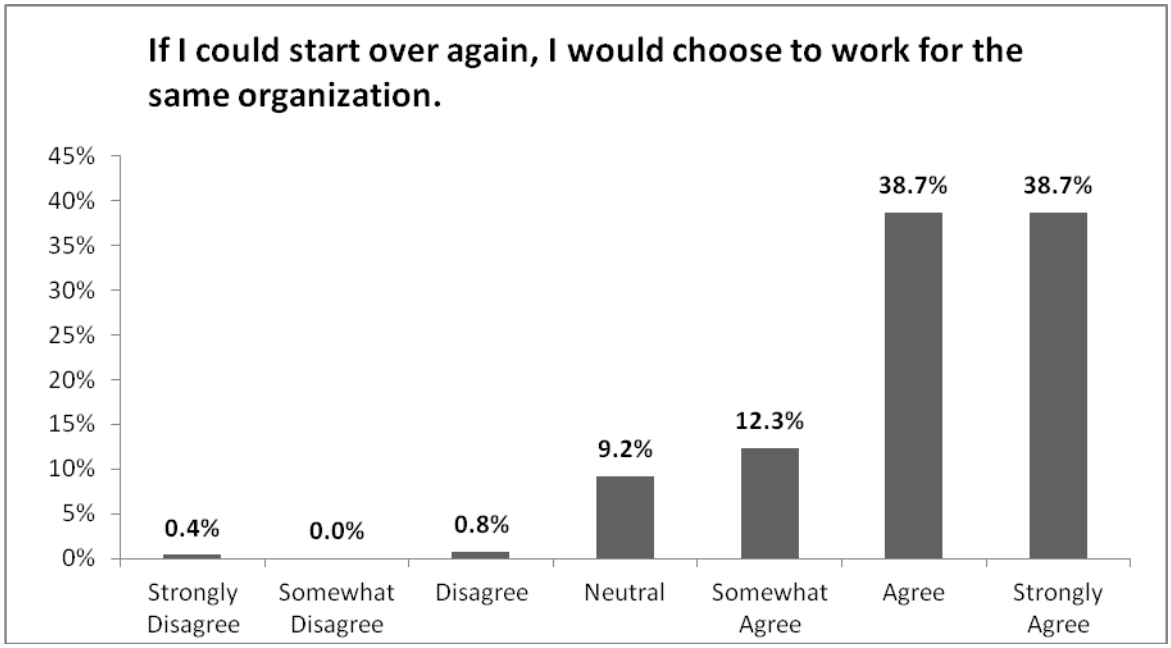


Figure 36: If I could start over again, I would choose to work for the same organisation.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

In Figure 36, the statement "If I could start over again, I would choose to work for the same organisation" is illustrated. Respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed each represented 38.7% of the total sample. The respondents who somewhat agreed (12.3%) exceeded those who were neutral (9.2%). The respondents who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed represented 0.8% and 0.4% respectively.

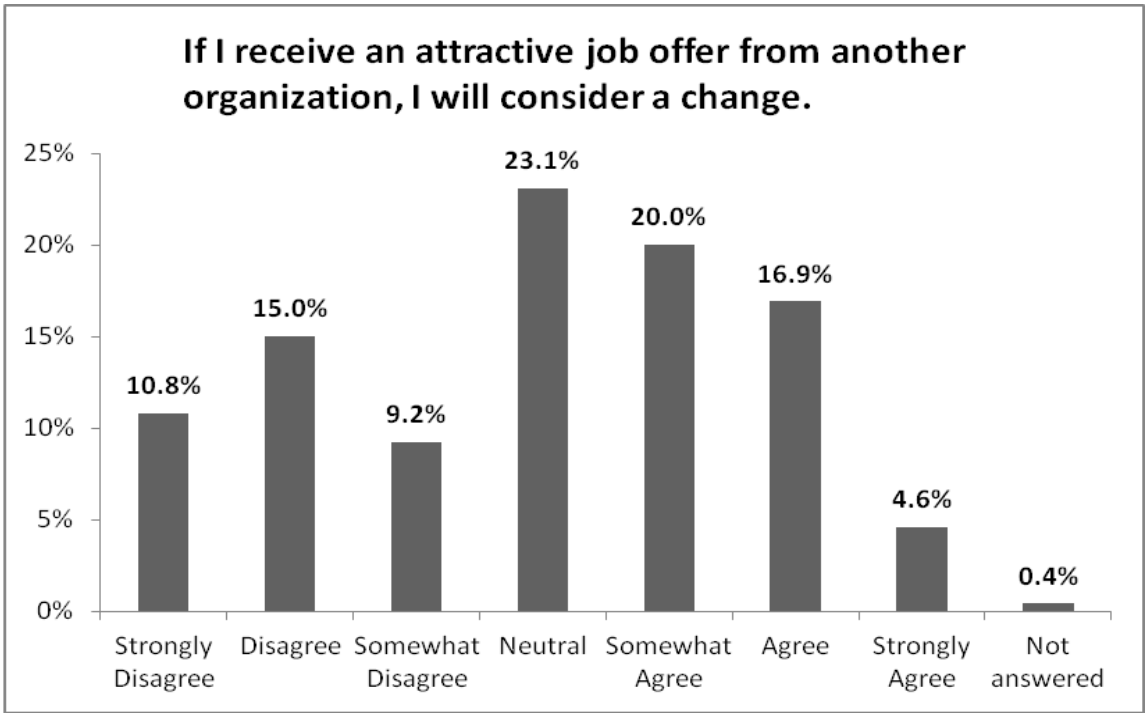


Figure 37: If I receive an attractive job offer from another organisation, I will consider a change. Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 37 illustrates the statement "If I receive an attractive job offer from another organisation, I will consider a change". 23.1% of the respondents neutral to the statement, followed closely by those who somewhat agreed (20%) and those who y agreed with the statement (16.9%). 15% of the respondents disagree with the statement. They were followed by 10.8% of the respondent who strongly disagreed and 9.2% who somewhat disagreed. In the minority were the respondents who strongly agreed, representing 4.6% of the total sample. 0.4% on the respondents did not comment on the statement.

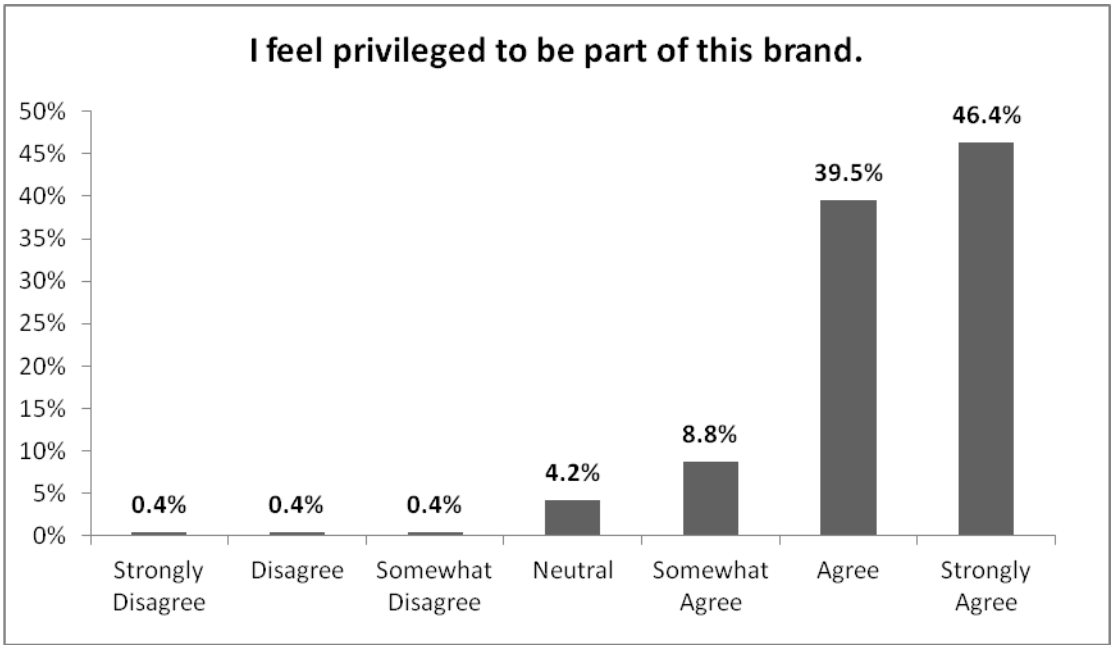


Figure 38: I feel privileged to be part of this brand.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

In figure 38, the statement “I feel privileged to be part of this brand” is shown. Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 46.4% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 39.5% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 8.8% while those who were neutral represented 4.2%. Those who somewhat disagreed, those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed each represented 0.4% of the total sample.

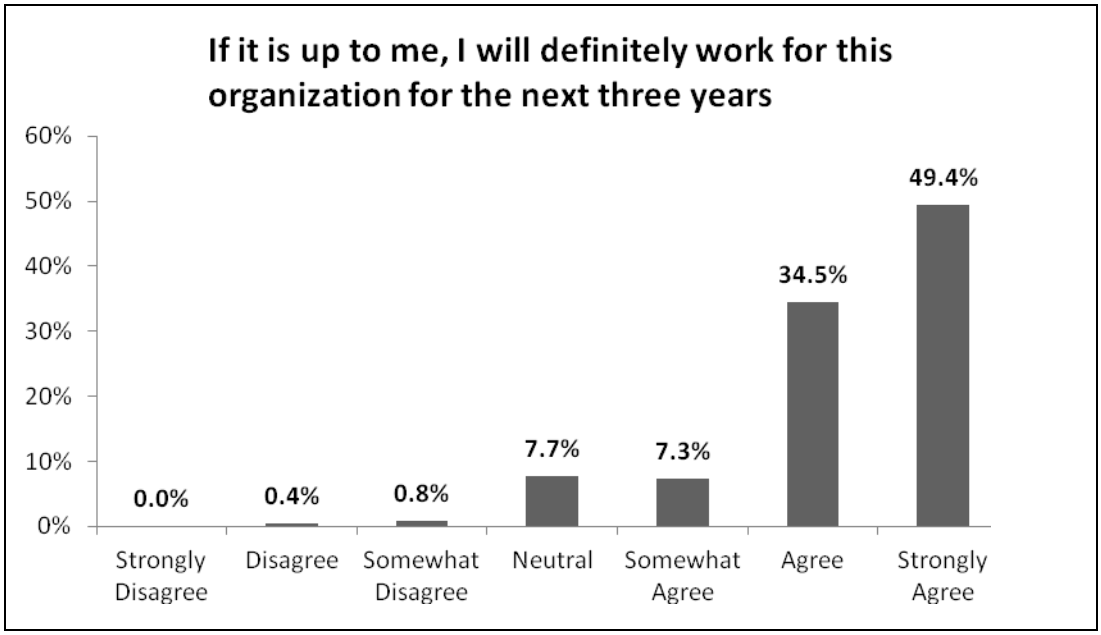


Figure 39: If it is up to me, I will definitely work for this organisation for the next three years. Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Table 4.36, above illustrates the statement “If it is up to me, I will definitely work for this organisation for the next three years”. 49.4% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and those who agreed represented 34.5% of the total sample. Those who were neutral represented 7.7%, followed by those who somewhat agreed (7.3%) and those who somewhat disagreed and those who disagreed – representing 0.8% and 0.4% respectively. No respondent strongly disagreed.

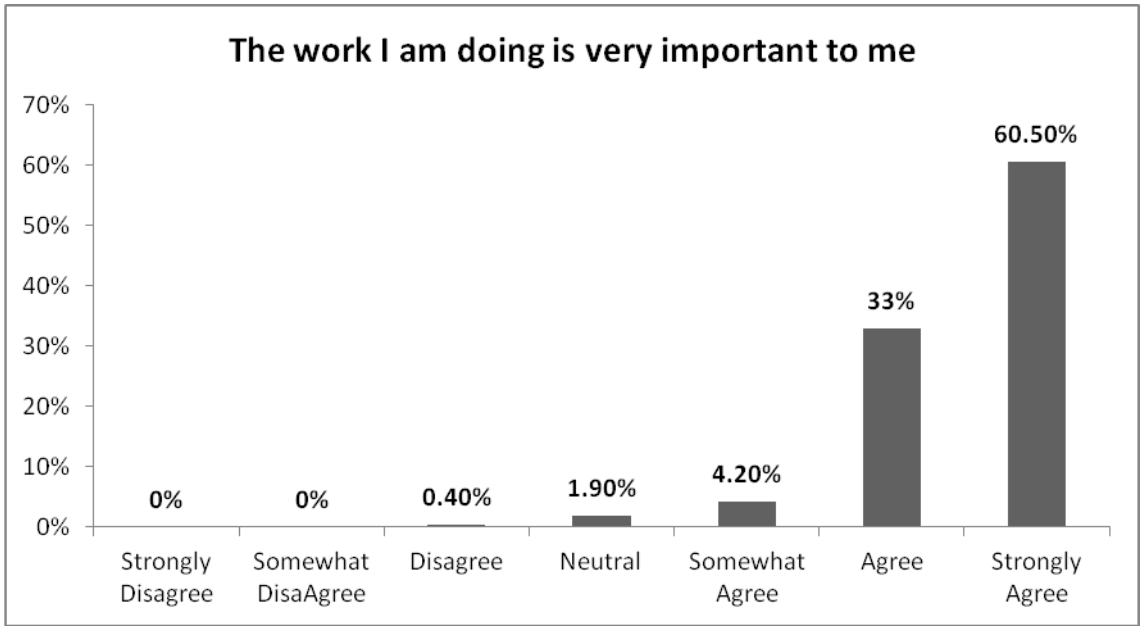


Figure 40: The work I am doing is very important to me.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 40 illustrates the statement “The work I am doing is very important to me”. In the majority were the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement and represented 60.5% of the total sample and who agreed with the statement represented 33% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 4.2% while those who were neutral represented 1.9%, followed by those who somewhat disagreed (0.4%). None of the respondents somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

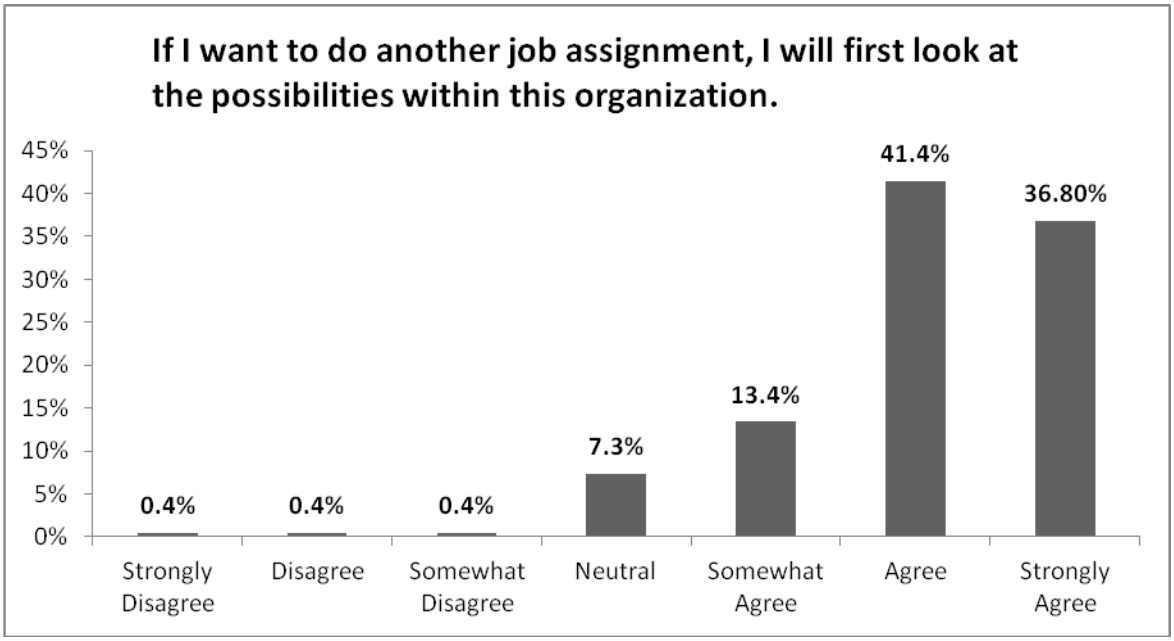


Figure 41: If I want to do another job assignment, I will first look at the possibilities within this organisation.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Table 4.38, above illustrates the statement “If I want to do another job assignment, I will first look at the possibilities within this organisation”. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement and represented 41.4% of the total sample and those who strongly agreed with the statement represented 36.8% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 13.4% while those who were neutral represented 7.3% of the total sample. Respondents who somewhat disagreed, those who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed each represented 0.4% of the total sample.

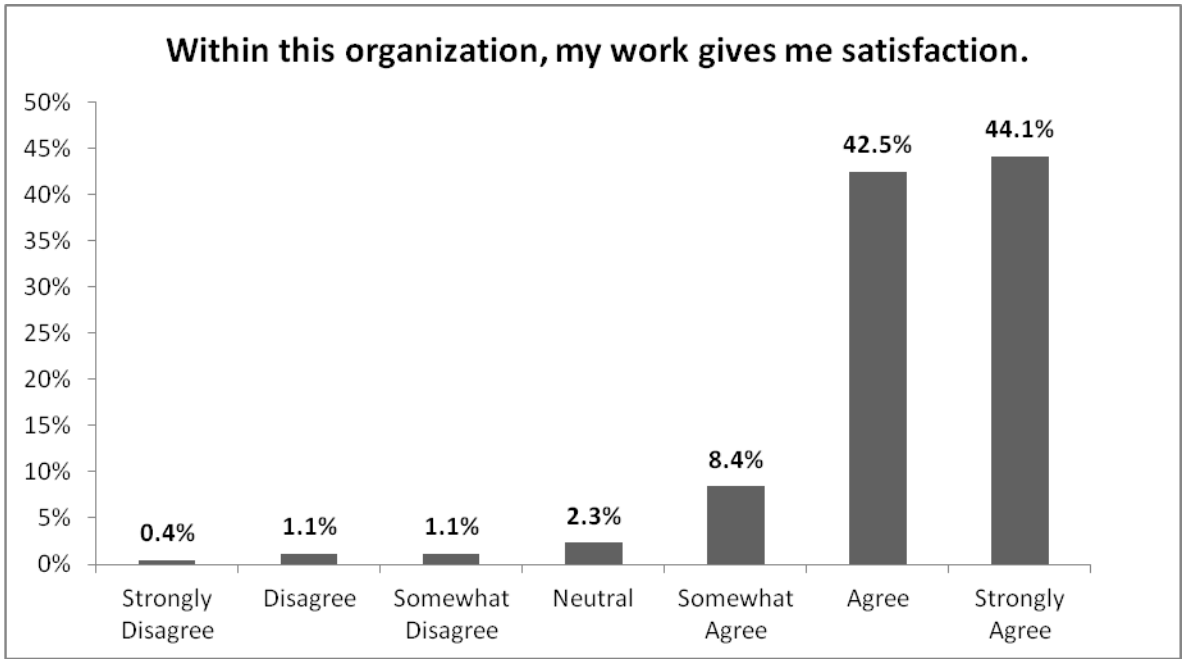


Figure 42: Within this organisation, my work gives me satisfaction.

Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

"Within this organisation, my work gives me satisfaction" is the statement demonstrated in figure 42. Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 44.1% of the sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 42.5% of the sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 8.4% while those who were neutral represented 2.3%. Those who somewhat disagreed and those who disagreed each represented 1.1% of the sample. Lastly, 0.4% of the respondents represented strongly disagreed.

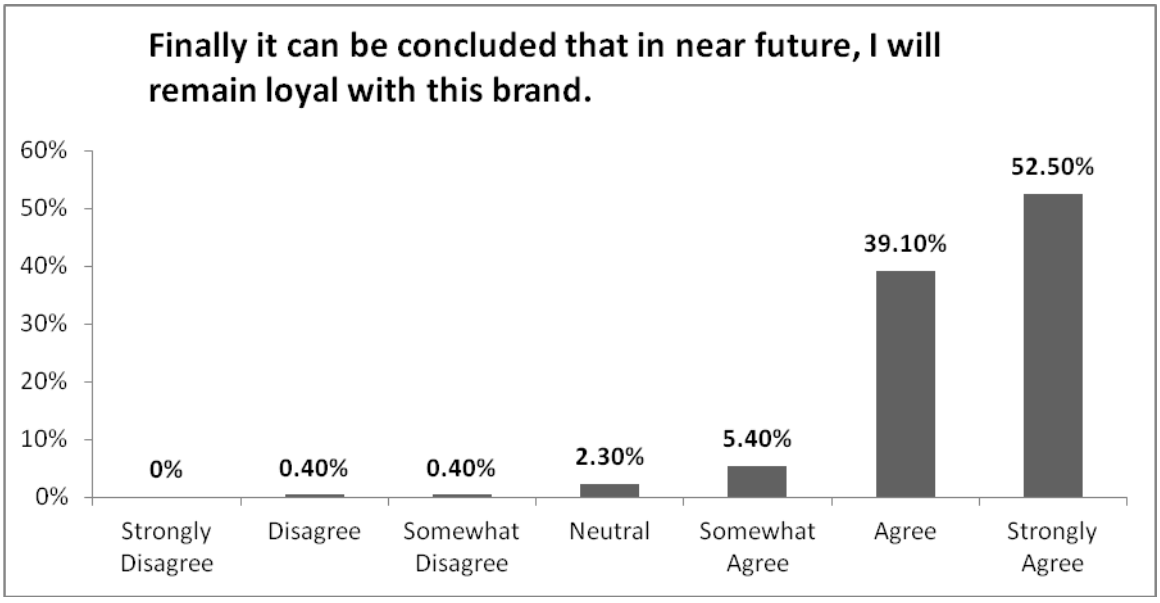


Figure 43: Finally it can be concluded that in near future, I will remain loyal with this brand.
Source: Questionnaires completed (2016)

Figure 43 demonstrates the statement “Finally it can be concluded that in near future, I will remain loyal with this brand”. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement and represented 52.5% of the total sample and those who agreed with the statement represented 39.1% of the total sample. Those who somewhat agreed represented 5.4% while those who were neutral represented 2.3%, followed by those who somewhat disagreed and those who disagreed – each representing 0.4% of the total sample. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement.

4.4 Summary of Measurement Accuracy Statistics

Table 2: Scale accuracy analysis

Research constructs		Scale item		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	Factor Loadings
		Mean	SD	Item-total	α value			
BO	BO1	5.89	0.834	0.724	0.808	0.856	0.500	0.672
	BO2	5.44	0.641	0.804				0.750
	BO3	6.17	0.883	0.838				0.727
	BO4	5.72	0.902	0.829				0.619
	BO5	5.23	0.655	0.774				0.562
	BO6	6.39	0.906	0.734				0.504
	BO7	5.38	0.972	0.611				0.685
	BO8	4.96	0.884	0.617				0.684
BC	BC1	6.30	0.775	0.634	0.852	0.888	0.536	0.824
	BC2	6.53	0.980	0.657				0.820
	BC3	5.92	0.798	0.770				0.837
	BC5	5.90	0.926	0.730				0.717
	BC6	6.28	0.822	0.613				0.561
	BC7	4.87	0.752	0.677				0.617
	BC8	6.34	0.667	0.701				0.698
BT	BT1	4.95	0.880	0.818	0.889	0.915	0.613	0.507

	BT2	6.16	0.669	0.840				0.758
	BT3	6.02	0.977	0.869				0.711
	BT4	5.66	0.921	0.759				0.838
	BT5	5.74	0.735	0.723				0.881
	BT6	5.53	0.833	0.715				0.858
	BT7	5.66	0.780	0.677				0.860
BL	**BL1**	5.98	0.883	0.702	0.912	0.927	0.564	0.649
	BL2	5.94	0.690	0.626				0.735
	BL4	3.41	0.634	0.615				0.761
	BL5	6.01	0.778	0.670				0.820
	BL7	6.20	0.867	0.657				0.743
	BL8	420	0.978	0.620				0.871
	BL9	6.26	0.728	0.639				0.682
	BL10	6.22	0.995	0.782				0.601
	BL11	6.51	0.981	0.654				0.738
	BL12	6.04	0.782	0.701				0.861

Note: BO = Brand Orientation; BC = Brand Community; BT = Brand Trust; BL = Brand Loyalty

SD= Standard Deviation CR= Composite Reliability AVE= Average Variance Extracted

** Scores: 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 –Disagree; 3 – Somewhat Disagree; 4 – Neutral; 5 – Somewhat Agree; 6 – Agree; 7 – Strongly Agree*

4.4.1 *Cronbach's Alpha test*

Literature states that a higher level of Cronbach's coefficient alpha signifies a higher reliability of the measurement scale (Chinomona, 2011). From the results illustrated in Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha value for the constructs ranges from 0.808 to 0.912. All the alpha values exceed 0.6, which is a benchmark recommended by Bernstein and Nunnally (1994). The Cronbach's alpha results indicated in Table 3 thus confirm the reliability of measures used in the current study.

4.4.2 *Composite Reliability (CR)*

The Composite Reliability test was also carried out in order to study the internal reliability of each construct, as recommended by Chinomona (2011), Nunnally, Bernstein, and Berge (1967). A Composite Reliability index that is larger than 0.7 signifies sufficient internal consistency of a construct (Nunnally et al., 1967). In this study, the results of Composite Reliability, in Table 3, which range from 0.856 to 0.927, confirm the existence of internal reliability for all constructs in the study.

4.5 VALIDITY

Validity tests were performed and convergent validity and discriminant validity were assessed. Both tests are explained below as well as their respective results.

4.5.1 *Convergent validity*

Convergent validity establishes the extent to which a construct converges in its indicators by providing an explanation of the items' variance (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Apart from evaluating the convergent validity of items by means of monitoring correlations in the item-total index (Nusair & Hua, 2010), factor loadings were also tested in order to identify convergent validity of measurement items as suggested by Sarstedt et al. (2014). According to Nusair and Hua (2010), items display good convergent validity when they load robustly on their common construct. Past studies maintain that a loading that is greater than 0.5 symbolises convergent validity (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

Incidentally, the final items utilised in the current study loaded well on their individual constructs with the values ranging from 0.504 - 0.871 (see Table 3), with the exception of two measurement items, namely BL3 and BL6 whose values were below the 0.5 threshold. This thus signifies good convergent validity where items are explaining more than 50% of their respective constructs. The item-to-total correlation values are all above the recommended 0.5 benchmark. In fact, the item-to-total correlation values range from 0.611 to 0.869.

4.5.2 *Discriminant validity*

Proceeding from the discussion of discriminant validity aforementioned, Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2013) assert that when establishing whether or not there is discriminant validity, what must be done is to identify whether the observed variable displays a higher loading on its own construct than on any other construct included in the structural model. A way to ascertain the existence of discriminant validity is to examine if the correlation between the constructs is less than 1.0, as proposed by Chinomona (2011). As illustrated in Table 4 below, the inter-correlation values for all paired latent variables are less than 1.0, therefore confirming the existence of discriminant validity. In effect, the majority of the correlation coefficients, with the exception of brand commitment–brand loyalty (0.806), were less than 0.6. This is an indication of acceptable discriminant validity. The coefficient 0.806 can be deemed marginally acceptable.

Table 3: Correlation between the constructs

RESEARCH CONSTRUCTS	BO	BC	BT	BL
Brand Orientation (BO)	1.000			
Brand Commitment (BC)	0.546	1.000		
Brand Trust (BT)	0.607	0.575	1.000	
Brand Loyalty (BL)	0.513	0.806	0.547	1.000

Note: BO = Brand Orientation; BC = Brand Community; BT = Brand Trust; BL = Brand Loyalty

4.5.3 *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*

According to Chinomona (2011), the average variance extracted approximation mirrors the total amount of variance in the indicators explained by the latent construct. A good demonstration of the latent construct by the item is identified when the variance extracted estimate is greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Fraering & Minor, 2006; Sarstedt et al., 2014). Therefore, the results of AVE (Table 3) which range from 0.500 to 0.613 authenticate a good account of the latent construct by the items. The acceptable AVE values further validated the existence of discriminant validity.

4.6 STRUCTURAL MODEL TESTING

As the second process in Structural Equation Modelling (Chen et al., 2011), structural modelling was performed. In essence, the process is conducted for the intention of assessing cause-and-effect relationships among latent variables (Nusair & Hua, 2010). This method comprises multiple regression analysis and path analysis, and models the relationship between latent variables (Chen et al., 2011). Figure 44 below is a depiction of the path model. Similar to the CFA model, the ovals symbolise the latent variables while the rectangles symbolise the observed variables. The unidirectional pointer signifies the impact of one variable on another.

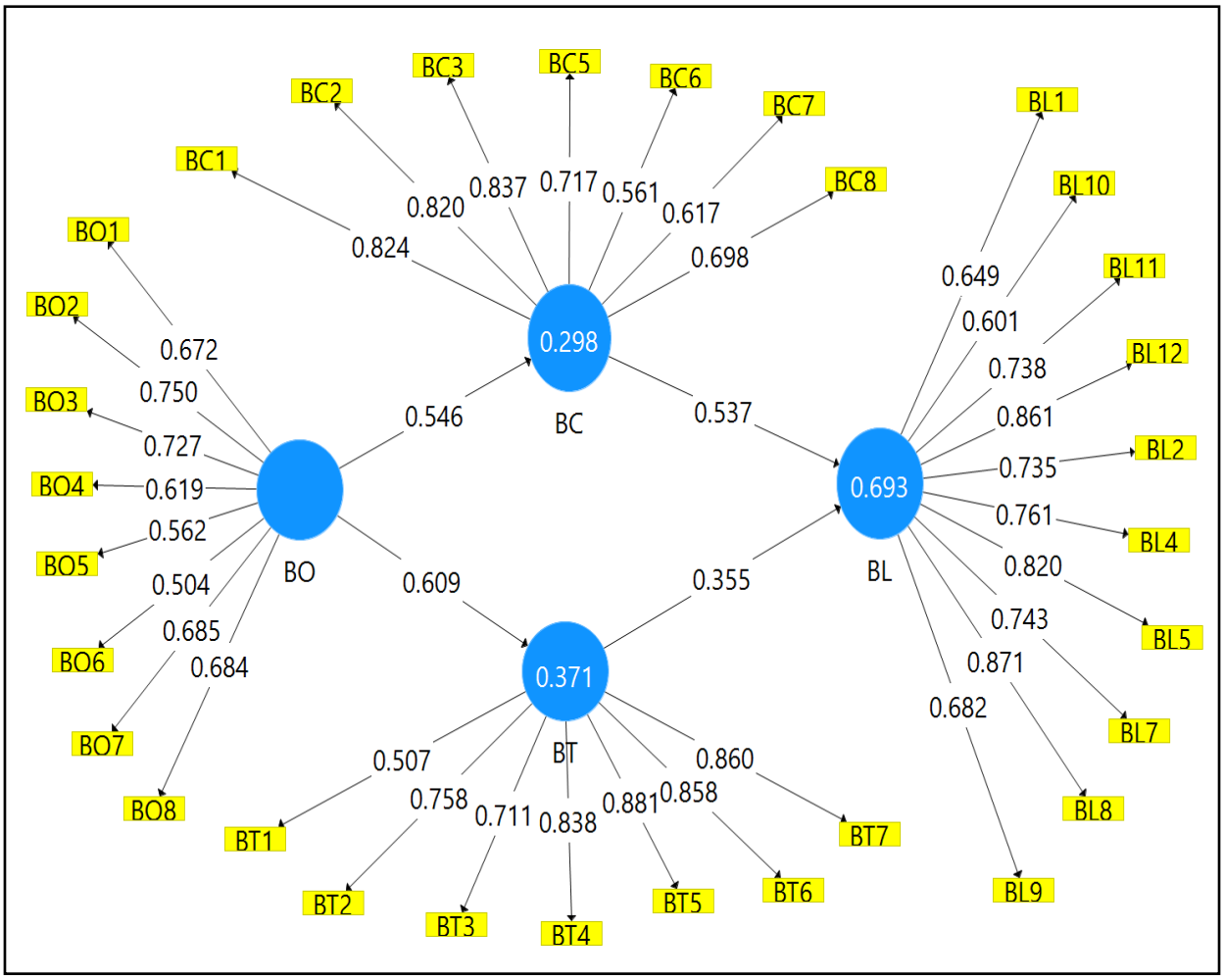


Figure 44: Final path model

Source: own

Note: BO = Brand Orientation; BC = Brand Community; BT = Brand Trust; BL = Brand Loyalty

4.7 Hypothesis testing

As the hypothesised measurement and structural model has been evaluated and concluded, the next action was to evaluate the cause-and-effect relationships among latent variables through path analysis (Nusair & Hua, 2010). According to Byrne (2001), Nusair and Hua (2010), SEM states that specific latent variables directly or indirectly influence other specific latent variables with the model, causing estimation results that depict how these latent variables are associated. For this study, estimation results

obtained through hypothesis testing are illustrated in Table 4. The table demonstrates the proposed hypotheses, path coefficients, t-statistics and whether a hypothesis is rejected or supported. Literature suggests that t >1.96 are indicators of relationship significance and that higher path coefficients indicate strong relationships among latent variables (Chinomona, Lin, Wang, & Cheng, 2010).

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Proposed hypothesis relationship	Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	T-Statistics	Rejected/ Supported
Brand Orientation (BO) ⟶ Brand Commitment (BC)	H_1	0.546	9.482	Supported and significant
Brand Orientation (BO) ⟶ Brand Trust (BT)	H_2	0.609	10.293	Supported and significant
Brand Commitment (BC) ⟶ Brand Loyalty (BL)	H_3	0.537	9.208	Supported and significant
Brand Trust (BT) ⟶ Brand Loyalty (BL)	H_4	0.355	7.882	Supported and significant

Drawing from the results in Table 4 above, H_1 (t=9.482), H_2 (t=10.293), H_3 (t=9.208) and H_4 (t=7.882) are supported significantly since the t-statistics are more than 1.96. Furthermore, all the posited hypotheses are positive, as expected, and are thus all accepted.

4.7.1 *Brand orientation and brand commitment*

The findings obtained from the test of H_1 confirmed that there is a relationship between brand orientation (BO) and brand commitment (BC). A path coefficient of 0.546 was realised after testing H_1. This means that brand orientation has a strong influence on brand commitment – the second strongest relationship after brand orientation - brand

trust relationship. Furthermore, the results indicate that the relationship between brand orientation and brand commitment is positive and significant (t=9.482).

4.7.2 *Brand orientation and brand trust*

The results obtained from the test of H_2 confirmed that there is a relationship between brand orientation (BO) and Brand Trust (BT). A path coefficient of 0.609 was realised after testing H_2. This means that brand orientation has a strong relationship with brand trust. This is the strongest relationship of all the posited hypotheses. Moreover, the results indicate that the relationship between brand orientation and brand trust is positive and significant (t= 10.293).

4.7.3 *Brand commitment and brand loyalty*

The results drawn from the test of H_3 confirmed that there is a relationship between brand commitment (BC) and brand loyalty (BL). A path coefficient of 0.537 was realised after testing H_3. This means that brand commitment is significantly related to brand loyalty. It is the third strongest association when compared with other proposed relationships. Moreover, the results indicate that the relationship between brand commitment and brand loyalty is positively related to brand loyalty in a significant way (t= 9.208).

4.7.4 *Brand trust and brand loyalty*

The results obtained following the test of H_4 confirmed that there is a relationship between Brand Trust (BT) and Brand Loyalty (BL). A path coefficient of 0.355 was realised after testing H_4. This means that brand trust has a stronger effect on brand loyalty – although it is the weakest of all the posited relationships. Furthermore, the results indicate that brand trust and brand loyalty are positively and significantly related (t=7.882).

4.7.5 *Overall analysis of hypotheses testing results*

Individual path coefficients of H_1, H_2, H_3 and H_4 were 0.546; 0.609; 0.537; and 0.355 respectively, as seen in figure 44. Generally, these results indicate that brand orientation (BO), brand commitment (BC) and brand trust (BT) all have strong influence on Brand

Loyalty (BL) – directly or indirectly since the relationships are all significant. Drawing from the research findings, all the predictor and mediating latent variables have strong individual relationships with brand loyalty.

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the empirical results drawn from the research. Firstly, descriptive statistics of the study were presented. To follow was an address of the item scale results. Subsequently, reliability and validity tests were performed respectively and both tests drew results confirming reliability and validity of measurement. Structural equation modelling was them performed. CFA and structural modelling was executed. The main principle was to observe whether brand orientation, brand commitment and brand trust have a positive influence on brand loyalty in a South African B2B setting. All the four hypothesised relationships were supported significantly.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE HYPOTHESES

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the deductions made from the results presented in chapter 4. This chapter first provides an overview of the findings. The findings of each hypothesis are then discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

5.2 Overview of the findings

The current study sought to investigate the predicting influence of brand orientation and mediating roles of brand commitment and brand trust in the brand orientation – brand loyalty relationship. The results indicate that brand orientation has a strong influence on both brand commitment and brand trust. In turn, brand commitment and brand trust have a direct influence on brand loyalty. The four hypotheses developed by the study were examined. Findings regarding each of the hypotheses are discussed in the following subsections.

5.2.1 *Brand Orientation and Brand Commitment Relationship*

The first hypothesis (H_1) sought to investigate the impact of brand orientation on brand commitment. Findings have revealed that brand orientation has a positive relationship with brand commitment. It was revealed that this relationship is significant at t-statistic of 9.482, as seen in table 4. This means that, while brand orientation has a positive impact on brand commitment, the relationship is significant and strong. Based on these findings, it can therefore be affirmed that to some extent high levels of brand orientation by organisations are likely to have a positive and significant effect on the employees' commitment to the brand.

The findings are consistent with those of Burmann and Zeplin (2005), who concluded in their study of the relationship between internal branding and brand commitment resulting in brand citizenship behaviour, that three components of brand orientation, being brand communication, brand leadership and brand-centred human resources- related activities,

have a positive impact on brand commitment. The study also confirms findings of a study by Javanmard and Nia (2011) that brand orientation components have a positive effect on employees' brand commitment in the context of the Islamic banking sector. Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2009) confirm from their study that the brand orientation elements such as human resource management and marketing management directly forecast increased employees' brand commitment. Findings from a study by Balmer, Powell, Punjaisri, and Wilson (2011) in the hotel industry in Thailand also reveal that there is a positive link between brand orientation elements and employees' brand commitment.

Therefore, current and previous findings imply that employee brand commitment is strongly influenced by the organisation's brand orientation. This was expected, based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2, since the organisation's brand orientation is likely to create employee brand commitment which would lead to brand loyalty.

5.2.2 *Brand Orientation and Brand Trust Relationship*

The second hypothesis (H_2) examined the impact of brand orientation on brand trust. The results indicate that this relationship is significant at t-statistic of 10.293 as illustrated in table 4. This also means that brand orientation has a stronger influence on brand trust than on brand commitment. Findings indicated that brand orientation also has a positive relationship with brand trust. The higher the level of the organisation's brand orientation the more likely is the employees' brand trust to increase. This notion is confirmed statistically to a large extent.

In their study, Piehler, Hanisch, and Burmann (2015) found that dimensions of brand orientation are essential requirements for employee brand trust. Alhaddad (2015) also found that an element of brand orientation, brand image, has a significant and positive impact on brand trust. They further concluded that an additional manner for an organisation to strengthen brand trust is to be consistent and confident in all functions of the organisation.

Thus, internal marketing communication efforts and human resources management, as part of brand orientation, can be utilised to obtain brand trust from employees.

5.2.3 *Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty Relationship*

The third hypothesis (H_3) explored the impact of brand commitment on brand loyalty. A positive and significant relationship between brand commitment and brand loyalty was revealed. This relationship also appeared to be significant at t-statistic of 9.208 (table 4). This means that brand commitment has a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty. Thus, the implication is that once an organisation has gained the employees' commitment to its brand, it will eventually win their loyalty. In effect, brand commitment has a stronger influence on employee brand loyalty than brand trust.

In their study, Raïes and Gavard-Perret (2011) revealed that an individual who is committed to the brand is more likely to spread positive word-of-mouth about it. This finding confirms the vital predictive role played by brand commitment regarding brand loyalty. The results of the study by Javanmard and Nia (2011) also confirmed that employees' brand commitment has an effect on brand loyalty in the Islamic banking sector. Findings from the study by Mathew et al. (2012) revealed that brand commitment creates brand loyalty and, this in turn, adds to the growth of brand equity. According to their results (Mathew et al., 2012), it is possible to make employees brand loyal through enhancing their commitment, this loyalty will have an impact on their performances. Demir, Yüzbasioglu, and Bezirci (2013), in their study, also corroborated that brand commitment has a direct effect on brand loyalty. The findings of the study by Goyal, Maity, Kaur, and Soch (2013) support the finding that commitment has a positive effect on loyalty.

Based on the previous and current research findings as discussed above, it can therefore be confirmed that when employees are committed to an organisation's brand, it will most likely result in them becoming loyal to it.

5.2.4 *Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty Relationship*

The last hypothesis (H_4) examined the impact of brand trust on brand loyalty. Findings revealed that this relationship is significant at t-statistic of 7.882. This means that brand trust strongly influences brand loyalty. A positive and significant relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty was exhibited in the results of the study. Perhaps, as a

result of the employees' brand trust, they are also likely to end up being loyal to the organisation's brand.

In a study conducted by Hoq, Sulatana, and Amin (2010), the results showed that the relationship between trust and loyalty is significant, which means that trust affects loyalty. The findings of the study by Setó-Pamies (2012) revealed that trust influences loyalty. The results of a study by Alhaddad (2015) showed that brand trust has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. A study conducted by Chandio et al. (2015) also revealed that there is a highly significant and positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty. It is further found that brand loyalty is an outcome of brand trust. The study by Chinomona (2016) also confirmed that the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty is very strong.

Based on the research findings reviewed above, it can therefore be affirmed that brand trust leads to brand loyalty. Therefore, when individuals trust a brand, it is likely that they will become loyal to it.

5.3 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to scrutinise the results of the current study presented in chapter 4. The chapter provided an overview of the findings of the study. The results showed that brand orientation has a strong impact on both brand commitment and brand trust. Sequentially, brand commitment and brand trust have direct impact on brand loyalty. The hypotheses exhibited significant and positive relationships between constructs. For each hypothesis tested, findings of previous studies were provided in order to confirm the results of the current study. The next chapter provides the conclusion and implications of the study, followed by the recommendations relating to the study. The chapter concludes with limitations and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion as well as theoretical and managerial implications of the study. These sections are followed by the recommendations for achieving the research objectives. The limitations and suggestions for future studies are then discussed, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

6.2 Conclusion

Tests were conducted in order to address the investigation of the impact of brand orientation on brand loyalty in relation to brand commitment and brand trust. It has emerged from the results of the study that brand orientation does indeed have an influence on both brand commitment and brand trust which in turn, also influence brand loyalty positively and significantly. However, brand orientation has a stronger influence on brand commitment than it does on brand trust; and brand trust has a stronger influence on brand loyalty than brand commitment. Conclusions regarding each hypothesis and drawn from findings associated with them, are discussed below.

6.2.1 *Brand orientation and brand commitment*

The study's first empirical research objective was to investigate the impact of brand orientation on brand commitment. The findings acquired after analysis revealed that brand orientation impacts brand commitment in a positive manner. It can therefore be concluded that the implementation of brand orientation in the South African B2B sector will have an important effect on employees' brand commitment. Findings also revealed that the relationship between brand orientation and brand commitment is significant. Thus, the results indicated that brand orientation has a stronger influence on brand commitment than it has on brand trust.

6.2.2 *Brand orientation and brand trust*

The study's second empirical objective was to investigate the impact of brand orientation on brand trust. The findings realised after analysis indicated that brand orientation has a positive influence on brand trust. Therefore, it can be accepted that the implementation of brand orientation in the South African B2B environment will have an impact on employees' brand trust. Findings also made it apparent that the relationship between brand orientation and brand trust is significant. It is therefore concurred with by the study that when compared to brand commitment, brand orientation has a stronger impact on brand commitment than it has on brand trust.

6.2.3 *Brand commitment and brand loyalty*

The study's third empirical objective was to examine the impact of brand commitment on brand loyalty. The findings obtained after analysis revealed that brand commitment has a positive and strong influence on brand loyalty. It can therefore be concluded that brand commitment will have a potent effect on brand loyalty. Findings also made it evident that the relationship between brand commitment and brand loyalty is significant. It can therefore be accepted that when companies make efforts to promote brand loyalty among their employees, they have to first consider the need to facilitate brand commitment among their staff.

6.2.4 *Brand trust and brand loyalty*

The study's final empirical objective was to investigate the impact of brand trust on brand loyalty. The findings acquired following analysis conveyed that brand trust has a positive and strong influence on brand loyalty. As such, it can be accepted that when employees trust a certain brand in the South African B2B setting, their attitudes are likely to be more positive towards the brand, and eventually they will desire to be loyal to the brands. The findings also revealed that the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty is significant. The study therefore submits that when companies want to promote brand loyalty among their employees, they have to consider building brand trust among their staff because it has a much stronger effect on brand loyalty.

6.3 Implications

6.3.1 *Theoretical implications*

This study assisted in contributing to the brand and brand management knowledge, particularly brand orientation literature, by offering a conceptualisation of brand orientation as it relates to brand loyalty in a business-to-business context; and the mediating roles played by brand commitment and brand trust in facilitating this relationship. The application of the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) was significant in underpinning the attitudinal and behavioural process that employees would undergo from the implementation of brand orientation strategies to the stage when they are brand loyal.

The study contributed to the current and existing literature on brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty. The study also contributed to the limited literature on the relationship between brand orientation and brand trust. The findings of the study revealed that, although there is a positive and significant relationship between the two constructs, the relationship between brand orientation and brand commitment proved to be even stronger. Furthermore, the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty proved to be stronger than that between brand commitment and brand loyalty. This offers an opportunity for future research into the interplay of brand commitment and brand trust as mediators of the brand orientation-brand loyalty relationship.

6.3.2 *Managerial implications*

On the whole, these findings indicate that the study's theoretical proposition is valid and acceptable. It is also evident that brand orientation has a positive and significant impact on both brand commitment and trust which in turn, strongly influence brand loyalty. However, brand orientation has a stronger influence on brand commitment than it has on brand trust. In addition, both brand commitment and trust have a positive significant impact on brand loyalty, although brand trust has a stronger influence on brand loyalty than brand commitment. This means that marketing managers and human resources managers ought to work together and consider utilising brand orientation to influence both brand commitment and trust in order to achieve the optimal effects on brand loyalty.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

To re-iterate the words of Gromark and Melin (2013), brand orientation captures an individual's passion for brands and becomes an organisation's form of expressing a desire to develop and communicate corporate identity. Companies ought to enforce brand orientation as a core strategy to ultimately get loyalty to their brand by instilling the principles and values of the brand into their employees. They need to encourage the employees to live the brand so that it becomes part of their lives. Employees have to witness the delivery of the brand promise.

Employees ought to be empowered by companies to know and understand the corporate name, corporate identity, the brand vision, the product or service, the targeted group, the trademark, and brand positioning. This will enable employees' trust in the brand and commitment to it. Once the trust and commitment for the brand are established in the hearts and minds of employees, they become loyal to it, and in turn, they become the brand builders and brand advocates to potential and existing customers.

Findings of the current study have prompted suggestions that are likely to lead to customer brand loyalty in South African business-to-business context. These are discussed below.

6.4.1 *Brand Orientation and Brand Commitment Recommendations*

The findings have conveyed that brand orientation has a positive impact on brand commitment. Moreover, the relationship between the two constructs is significant. The study therefore recommends that in their efforts to promote employee brand commitment, the marketing managers should pay more attention on brand orientation since this factor has a stronger effect on brand commitment, as indicated in the path model results. Managers must create passion for brands through leading by example. Top and senior managers must become internal salespeople for the core values of the brand to the employees. When they do branch visits or reviews, they must inspect how employees utilise, position, and promote. The intention is not to interfere in the employees' jobs, but to show employees the importance top management places on the brand.

At inductions of new employees, the brand's mission and vision must be communicated to new recruits. This will ensure that the employees know and understand what the brand stands for, and it makes it simple for them to commit to the brand and to delivering its objectives. Existing employees must be re-inducted at least once a year as a reminder of the core brand values, also to remind them on what they have committed to brand knowledge, an element of brand orientation, is connected with employees' brand commitment. As in the case of brand trust, well-timed information to the organisation and brand can allow employees to earn strong brand knowledge, and competently communicate the brand promise to customers. Thus, managers have to match strategic brand intentions and brand values with employees' expectations and competencies, in order to strengthen the commitment of employees.

Managers must create a healthy environment that supports and encourages knowledge sharing among all employees, and eliminates the possible barriers between employees. This can be achieved through the implementation of incentive schemes for increasing knowledge sharing. Managers must involve all employees in the sharing of ideas and implementation of procedures and policies. Employees are the foundation stone of any organisation, and should be provided with the proper tools to enable them to apply their skills and knowledge at the workplace. This will encourage strong brand commitment from employees.

6.4.2 *Brand Orientation and Brand Trust Recommendations*

The findings conveyed that brand orientation has a positive influence on brand trust. In addition to that, the relationship between the two constructs is significant. As such, the study recommends that brand orientation can also be used to influence employee brand trust. A great basis for the formation of brand trust is shared values, an essential element of brand orientation. Managers must ensure that they understand what their employees care about and whether or not the brand cares about the same things.

Marketing managers must embark on internal branding campaigns that will allow employees to experience the brand and its promise. This will ensure that the brand dwells in the hearts and minds of employees, enabling them to commit to the brand. Integrity and honesty are the key qualities that contribute to brand trust. Management must share accurate information about the brand with all

employees. Management must also ensure that the information is communicated appropriately and transparently. This will allow employees to connect with the brand and to trust it.

6.4.3 *Brand Commitment and Brand Loyalty Recommendations*

It was also acknowledged from the findings that brand commitment has a positive and strong influence on brand loyalty and that the relationship between the two constructs is significant. The study therefore recommends that brand managers consider adopting brand orientation strategies that impact on brand commitment in order to influence employee brand loyalty. Some strategies to consider are information sharing programmes which would encourage brand knowledge among employees; incentive bonus schemes which can be viewed as rewards for employees' engagement with the brand; and internal branding campaigns that will keep the employees committed, and resulting in them to becoming brand loyal.

6.4.4 *Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty Recommendations*

The study's findings furthermore conveyed that brand trust has a positive and strong influence on brand loyalty and that the relationship between the two constructs is significant. The study therefore proposes that in order to promote employee loyalty, the marketing practitioners should give attention to creating employee brand trust. This is achieved through honest and transparent communication with the employees about everything related to the brand, by means of different communication channels such as staff meetings, conferences, emails or newsletters. This is such because brand trust has a stronger impact on brand loyalty than brand commitment does. Therefore, marketing managers are encouraged to utilise brand orientation in order to influence employee trust and consequently, brand loyalty.

Since brand loyalty has become an important tool used by marketing and brand managers to create repeat purchase behaviour among customers and hence, business sustainability in South Africa, it is therefore, recommended that brand managers should consider investing in promoting brand orientation internally to achieve employee brand commitment and brand trust which ultimately have a strong influence on brand loyalty.

From a general perspective, brand trust and brand commitment, are important mediators in the brand orientation and brand loyalty relationship in South Africa, not only for customers but for employees who are the companies' primary customers.

6.5 Limitations and future studies

The current research has some limitations. First, the current study has been restricted to testing the relationship between four variables only, namely brand orientation, brand commitment, brand trust and brand loyalty. Other researchers can use these constructs in other B2B sectors in emerging and developing markets. However, including other research constructs such as brand experience, brand satisfaction and brand advocacy might generate insightful findings. The study recommends that future research should utilise other constructs and generate an expanded conceptual model.

Perhaps, additionally future studies should consider comparing these results from South Africa with findings from other African or developing countries. If such a comparative study is conducted, it will provide practical insights on the influence of brand orientation on brand loyalty beyond South African borders.

Very limited literature exists on brand orientation and brand trust relationships. Although the study has made an attempt at increasing knowledge in this regard, it is recommended that further contribution be made toward enriching this literature.

Although the current research and its theoretical supposition are supported by empirical evidence, future studies should attempt to investigate the underlying factors influencing particular causal relations and other outcomes otherwise not identified. In doing so, more knowledge with regard to antecedents of brand loyalty in the B2B sector will be uncovered, thus making a further contribution to existing literature on the subject.

The sample used in the study was limited to top and senior management. Future studies could expand the research sample to all occupation levels to include junior management, semi-skilled employees and unskilled employees. Quantitative research method was utilised for this study. Future studies could consider conducting qualitative research or mixed-method research. The research design selected for the study was cross-sectional.

Further studies could utilise research studies such as case studies, longitudinal or experimental designs.

6.6 Summary

This chapter was intended to make inferences from the findings and to make recommendations. The chapter was structured under five main headings. Firstly, a conclusion of the findings was provided. This was followed by an emphasis of implications that these findings have. Thereafter, the chapter provided final deductions of the study. Recommendations were then made. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the limitations that were encountered and suggestions were made for future studies.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Thank you for paying attention to this academic questionnaire. The purpose of the study is to examine brand orientation, brand commitment, and brand trust and how they influence brand loyalty.

I would therefore, like to request your assistance in completing the questionnaire below. The research is purely for academic purposes and the information obtained is confidential and will be kept as such. It should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete the entire questionnaire.

SECTION A

GENERAL INFORMATION

The section is asking your background information. Please indicate your answer by ticking (✓) on the appropriate box.

A1 Please indicate your gender:

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3

A2 Please indicate your ethnic group:

African	1
White	2
Indian	3
Coloured	4
Other	5

A3 Please indicate your age group:

25 - 34 years old	1
35 - 44 years old	2
45 – 50 years old	3
Above 50 years old	4

A4 Please indicate your employment term at Bidvest:

Less than 1 year	1
1 to 4 years	2
5 to 9 years	3

10 to 14 years	4
15 years and above	5

A5 Please indicate your position:

Top Management	1
Senior Management	2
Other	3

A6 Please state your Division within Bidvest:

A7 Please indicate your department:

Finance	1
Human Resources	2
Marketing	3
IT	4
Operations	5
Business Development	6
Transformation	7
Other	8

SECTION B

Brand Orientation

Below are statements about brand orientation in Bidvest. You can indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding number in the 7 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please tick only one number for each statement

BO1	In Bidvest, we have a clear idea of what our brand stands for.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO2	We use all our marketing activities to develop the Bidvest brand and enhance its strength.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO3	We recognize the Bidvest brand as a valuable asset and strategic resource, which we continually develop and protect in the best possible way.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO4	Brand equity (or brand strength) is a control factor in Bidvest.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO5	In Bidvest, product, brand, and/or marketing managers are competent and capable.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO6	The development of the Bidvest brand is not the responsibility of a small group within the company, but also the business of top management.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO7	All business decisions are evaluated with respect to their impact on the Bidvest brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BO8	The great majority of our company's employees understands and lives the brand values.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

Source: Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010)

SECTION C

Brand Commitment

Below are statements about brand commitment. You may agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate number provided below where:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please tick only one number for each statement

BC1	I usually tell my friends that this is a great brand to work for.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC2	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this brand Identification.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC3	For me, this is the best of all possible brands to work for.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC4	It would take very little to cause me to leave this brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC5	I am extremely glad that I chose to work for this brand over others I was considering.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC6	I really care about this brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC7	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BC8	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that which is normally expected in order to help this brand to be successful.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

Source: Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010)

SECTION D

Brand Trust

Below are statements about brand trust. You are required to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below by ticking the appropriate number where:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please tick only one number for each statement.

BT1	I never had a bad experience with this brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT2	I feel confidence in this brand.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT3	This brand has a good reputation with customers.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT4	This brand is honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT5	If this brand makes a claim or promise about its service, it is probably true.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT6	I know that this brand does its best to satisfy me.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BT7	I know that if I have a problem as an employee or customer of this brand, they would do their best to help me.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

Source: Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010)

SECTION E

Brand Loyalty

Below are statements about brand loyalty. You may agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate number provided where:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please tick only one number for each statement

BL1	I am not planning to work for another brand in the next three years.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL2	I see a good future for myself within this organisation.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL3	It does not matter whether I am working for this brand or another, as long as I have work	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL4	Keeping in view the brand image, I will definitely work for this organisation for the next three years	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL5	If I could start over again, I would choose to work for the same organisation.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL6	If I receive an attractive job offer from another organisation, I will consider a change	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL7	I feel privileged to be a part of this brand	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL8	If it is up to me, I will definitely work for this organisation for the next three years	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL9	The work I am doing is very important to me	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL10	If I want to do another job assignment, I will first look at the possibilities within this organization	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

BL11	Within this organization, my work gives me satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
BL12	Finally it can be concluded that in near future, I will remain loyal with this brand	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

Source: Chauhan and Mahajan (2013)

THE END