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Strategies of South African companies competing with multinationals in local markets

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DECLARATION

I, Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana, declare that this research article 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 Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



Signed at …Johannesburg…

On the…16th…day of …February…2023

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I would like to express my gratitude:

To God for His faithfulness, for never leaving my side and for carrying me through challenging and pressured times.

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ABSTRACT

As emerging markets are becoming more enticing to multinationals, the highly competitive leisure footwear industry is also seeing new upcoming local companies in South Africa face competition from these established multinationals. In addition, customers are influenced by various aspects of the markets. Therefore, it is vital to investigate customers' attitudes and perceptions towards the marketing strategies used by these local and global companies. Using a qualitative research design through one-on-one interviews, the study interviewed ten respondents that are sports shoe customers ranging from fitness enthusiasts and operational staff in the fitness industry to a hip hop fan. Respondents were required to be users of leisure footwear to have in-depth knowledge of their preferred brands. Secondary data was also collected from various company websites and online publications, as well as academic journals. The research results provide insights into the strategies used by local and global footwear brands in South Africa, such as product innovation, brand image, local awareness, network access and collaboration. Findings show that product innovation influences customers to buy sneakers as most believe comfort is important in their fitness journey. Customers' attitude towards brand image is positive as they believe in the brand, which motivates them to buy the sneakers. Importantly, 70% of the customers are influenced to buy sneakers by icons they look up to, and most respondents can access the brands they want to buy. Whilst most respondents felt global companies were not locally aware, this did not influence their buying.

Keywords: product innovation, brand image, local awareness, collaborations, network access, marketing strategies, competition, customer attitudes

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As “one of the fastest growing regions in the world, in terms of economics and demographics”, the Sub-Saharan market is ground to possibilities with a demographic of a young, economically active population and a middle-income group that has increased in recent years (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018, p. 3). Opportunistic global companies are entering this market in numbers to compete with local companies (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

Furthermore, this increased attentiveness has made marketing researchers and managers interested in what differentiates consumers in developed countries from those in emerging economies. Additionally, they want to know what possibilities and obstacles are encountered by local and global companies that operate in these markets (Sharma et al., 2018). This research focuses on how South African companies strive for the same market share as global companies in South African local markets and how this influences customers’ views towards the brands. Growing emerging markets generate 36% of the world’s gross domestic product (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). Multinational corporations (MNCs) must consider that marketing strategies will not impact developed and emerging markets similarly. Furthermore, a study looking at the Chinese and Indian markets shows that consumers are influenced by the images and reputation of MNCs, which refers to how they perceive the brands (Sharma et al., 2018).

Similarly, South Africa’s growth as an emerging market greatly affects its neighbouring countries. These influences come through various factors, such as international trade due to increased import demand. This is also evident in how South Africa is commonly referred to as “an engine of growth in Africa” (Arora & Vamvakidis, 2005).

The South African government ‘s commitment to right the wrongs of the past has resulted in the growth of the black middle class through capital expenditure in construction and social grants, as well as affirmative action and black economic empowerment (Mattes, 2015). Whilst growth was a positive factor, the rapid rise in internationalisation was mainly caused by political pressures to address the inequality in the demographics to have a well-rounded representation in the economy (Klein & Wöcke, 2007).

Furthermore, South Africa moved from being self-reliant to being part of the global environment more than three decades ago. Local companies increased their operation through subsidiaries in foreign countries, shown by a consistent upswing from $15 billion in 1990 to $32 billion in 2000 (Klein & Wöcke, 2007).

Various studies have shown how these factors have impacted local and global companies as they compete against each other for the same market. To stay abreast of competition, many organisations inevitably conduct internal analysis that looks at various issues such as technology, improving internal operations processes, availability of resources and reassigning resources (Woodruff, 1997), subsequently providing ways to be innovative with the product.

Additionally, global brands give consumers a feeling that they belong to a global movement. Seeing that this is working well for global brands, it has been proposed that local brands follow suit by piquing the interest of consumers’ attitudes towards their brand’s image, thus creating a feeling of oneness with the local brands (Xie et al., 2015). Puma uses the slogan on their apparel, Cotton made in Africa, to appeal to social and environmentally conscious customers and increase the brand’s awareness amongst the local people (Shah et al., 2013).

Bathu Sneakers and Drip Footwear have changed their market’s attitudes towards local sneaker brands, and they can proudly refer to themselves as an “African shoe brand” (Zwane et al., 2022, p.5). The name Drip comes from township culture lingo referring to a fashionable person as dripping. Sehoana

wanted a brand that would stand out, be fashion forward and one that customers would relate to; he came up with Drip Footwear (Zwane et al., 2022).

Furthermore, local brands can gain market share over global brands by incorporating local culture and marketing the “brand local icon value” (Xie et al., 2015, p.53). This will further ensure that the local brand has a greater understanding of the local consumer’s needs, catering effectively to local demands (Xie et al., 2015). Local consumer culture refers to the consumer who appreciates products that originate from their home country; these consumers are more receptive towards local products (Steenkamp & De Jong, 2010).

The signalling theory refers to a situation where two participants obtain information that is not the same. Furthermore, one partaker will decide how to communicate a signal to the other partaker, the receiver, and the receiver must choose how to translate the signal (Connelly et al., 2011). Therefore, signalling theory influences consumers through global marketing that global products are for the elite and for the consumer who prefers luxury and supreme quality, whilst the local product will appeal to the consumer who is proud of their local ties and are patriotic (Winit et al., 2014). Drip Footwear’s customers have embraced the brand as it resonates with the township dripping culture; they may see themselves as fashionable in the local sense when adorned in their Drip Footwear sneakers. Therefore, the local company has an advantage over MNCs as they have more knowledge of the local market.

Empirical evidence shows some well-established MNCs look for partnerships with domestic companies to engage in contracting and licencing agreements when entering domestic markets to increase their value chain optimally (Mathews, 2006). Studies indicate that the global company Nike has, as part of its sustainability commitment to environmental and social aspects, implemented an innovative strategy in its global supply chain (Porteous, 2013).

Nike has entered into contracts with 700 factories in 42 countries, following the company's minimum lean processes. Nike's 2011 financial year results show that 80% of the company's footwear was manufactured by contract factories (Porteous, 2013). Such connections catapult domestic firms to internationalisation (Mathews et al., 2006). In addition, global businesses must find ways to enter the market through value chain networks, be versatile to changing needs, be able to develop according to African market needs and find ways to appeal to customers and collaborate with local government and local firms to make their brand known (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

MNCs such as America's Nike, the biggest supplier of athletic shoes, and German's Puma, one of the largest sports brands in the world, take advantage of local supply chains. These two brands utilise manufacturers in Thailand and China and do not produce their products (Mahdi et al., 2015).

To emphasise these factors' influence on local and global organisations, the study focuses on key factors, specifically product innovation, brand image, local awareness, the collaboration of organisations and access to networks as impacting companies.

1.2 Context of the study

The study focused on South African sneaker companies Drip Footwear and Bathu Shoes as local competitors to MNCs Nike, Adidas and Puma in the South African sneaker industry and the customer's attitudes to the brands. There has been a rapid increase in the footwear industry, which consists of different brands, thereby exposing consumers to several international brands (Motale & Dhurup, 2016; Zwane et al., 2022).

Drip Footwear and Bathu Shoes are South African companies that seem to have taken the local sneaker industry by storm. Theo Baloyi established Bathu Shoes in 2015 as a local brand for sneakers. Similarly, Drip Footwear was formally

established in 2020 after humble beginnings – the company's founder, Lekau Sehoana, started selling sneakers from the boot of his car. Lekau Sehoana has successfully grown the business. Notably, Bathu Shoes has a wider footprint than Drip Footwear, with 24 stores nationwide compared to 14 Drip Footwear stores. As both brands continue to grow in local markets, they clearly appeal to different demographics, Bathu – high-end and Drip – middle-income (Zwane et al., 2022).

The leisure footwear industry is considered one of the most branded in the global apparel market. Consequently, this adds much value to the brand, which is placed on the company's balance sheet as assets (Motale & Dhurup, 2016). A study of about 6000 South African youths between eight and 23 years old showed that Nike, at 14.16%, and Adidas, at 11.26%, were viewed as "the coolest footwear brands" (Motale & Dhurup, 2016, p.104).

A brands survey indicated Nike as the top brand of preference amongst millennials, followed by Adidas as a close second. Furthermore, about nine million to 17 million pairs of athletic footwear were sold annually in South Africa. This reflects the importance of the footwear brand and its impact on footwear companies, thus providing these companies with a competitive advantage (Motale & Dhurup, 2016).

Whilst local footwear company Bathu Shoes was already established in the highly competitive industry, the founder of Drip Footwear saw a gap and used it to begin the business. Furthermore, Drip Footwear used the country's lockdown situation during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 to accelerate its growth by investing in an online business. The national lockdown restrictions limited people from accessing retailers, and many opted for online shopping. Additionally, as many corporate companies developed work-from-home protocols, many in the working class decided that formal wear was no longer necessary as they were mostly homebound and would rather wear comfortable footwear, including sneakers.

Drip Footwear used this to its advantage to gain more market share, thereby increasing its performance (Zwane et al., 2022).

1.3 Problem statement

There is inconsistency in placing the importance of emerging markets on the global gross domestic product, and not much research has been done on these economies. Research has focussed on developed markets, with a blanket approach used on emerging markets. This may not show a true picture of the players, namely companies and consumers in these markets (Sharma et al., 2018).

This is reflected in Bajaj Auto, India's largest motor scooter producer, which faced competition from the global conglomerate Honda. The global company has expertise in selling scooters, motorcycles and cars; they also have advanced technology and are known for high-quality products worldwide. Bajaj Auto had no intention of forming a partnership with Honda and wanted to keep its market share. Furthermore, India's market wanted affordable, reliable scooters with accessible maintenance outlets. Bajaj Auto set out to develop and produce low-cost scooters through their research and development, and they ensured easily available maintenance outlets. This aggressive strategy worked well for the local company as it gained 11% in addition to the existing market share, resulting in Honda eventually exiting India's market (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

Research further shows that local companies may have more advantages over MNCs, such as well-established distribution networks, as Bajaj Auto had over Honda. In addition, home-grown companies have a better understanding of the market's tastes and expectations of their products, putting them in a favourable position, resulting in a competitive advantage over MNCs (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

Furthermore, Sub-Saharan African businesses may have employed Western European and North American marketing tactics for many years. The uniqueness

of the marketing strategies implemented in these markets further makes it difficult to compare global business with Sub-Saharan Africa (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

There have been several suggestions for further research in emerging markets. Scholars have suggested researching how local culture impacts the global and local marketing strategy of African firms (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018). For example, a study revealed how Shanghai Jahwa, a Chinese cosmetics company, opted to appeal to the locals' tastes despite the young Chinese consumers' change in taste for global cosmetic products. Their strategy remains low-cost, using locally sourced traditional raw materials, appealing to the locals because of their cultural beliefs. This approach of competing with MNCs resulted in the local cosmetic company increasing its sales and gaining a sizeable market share (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

Other research has shown how local consumers have swayed towards culturally specific brands as they see these as authentic and well representative of the local role, as well as its stance in the market (Xie et al., 2015).

Emerging markets are twofold, consisting of developing countries, such as Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, and transition economies, such as Russia and China. Additionally, there is an obvious difference between past studies and MNCs' active interaction within emerging markets. This justifies the need for further research into these markets, providing marketing and strategy theoretical frameworks for firms and other players in the markets (Sharma et al., 2018). This further confirms insufficient information on how local companies compete with global MNCs in local markets. Therefore, the objective of the current study was in-depth research of South African companies, how they compete with global MNCs within South African markets and customers' views of the brands.

1.4 Rationale for the study

The study's objective was to investigate how customers perceive the marketing strategies of local and global footwear brands in South Africa's emerging market. This was achieved by exploring key factors, namely, product innovation, brand image, local awareness, collaboration and access to networks, and how they form based on what global and local companies use to create competition.

Therefore, the comprehension of these key factors is vital. In addition, this will provide further insight into the competitive urge of local companies relative to global companies.

1.5 Research questions

In line with the rationale of the study, the research sought to answer the following questions:

a) How has the brand image of local footwear companies influenced brand loyalty as they compete with global MNCs?

b) How has product innovation impacted local company profitability as they compete with global MNCs?

c) How has local awareness affected local company sales as they compete with global MNCs?

1.6 Research objectives

To discover the main purpose of the study with the use of the previously mentioned literature, the study thereby considers the following important objectives:

a) To establish the impact of product innovation on local companies' profitability in emerging markets.

b) To ascertain the influence of brand image on brand loyalty of local and global companies in emerging markets.

c) To determine how local awareness impacts local companies' sales as they compete with global MNCs in emerging markets.

d) To establish how collaboration by local companies impacts brand recognition as they compete with global MNCs in emerging markets.

e) To ascertain the impact of network access on local companies' profitability as they compete with global MNCs in emerging markets.

1.7 Significance of the study

The benefit of the study was to reveal the participants in emerging markets which are the local companies, MNCs as well as the consumers. Whilst, explicitly showing how these local companies compete in the emerging markets with MNCs for the same market share.

In addition, this brought focus to emerging markets and how factors such as product innovation, brand image, local awareness, collaboration and access to networks influenced local as well as global companies within these markets.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

This conducted study focussed on an emerging economy, specifically South Africa. Therefore, similar studies in other countries operating as emerging economies may have different outcomes and findings. Furthermore, it may be possible this research problem and question could be out of the researcher's study area.

2 CHAPTER 2: APPLICATION OF PRIOR RESEARCH: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and empirical literature. The theoretical section review theories that support this research and, among other things, the industry-based view, institution-based view, the 4As to gaining market share and new players using established MNCs' resources. The second part of the chapter is based on empirical literature and studies the following factors: product innovation, its impact on local and global companies, which may result in competitive advantage and increased profits; brand image, which refers to strategies that local and global companies use to bring awareness to their brand; local awareness and how local companies have a greater advantage over global companies as they have more knowledge of local markets.

Furthermore, the collaboration of companies in emerging markets may result in the availability of resources for MNCs entering emerging markets and exposure to globalisation for local companies. Access to networks is advantageous to local companies and allows them to increase their market share.

2.2 How firms compete

2.2.1 Industry-based view

A consolidation of the institution-based view of international business is necessary especially in emerging economies, in as much as industry and resource-based views are specifically applicable to industry and firms. The reason for firms doing well or not can be based on Porter's theory of industry-based view, which looks at industry factors that affect the firm's performance and strategy. This theory, however, is country-specific and relates to United States firms. Emerging economies differ significantly from developed economies, and

studies show that emerging markets have formal and informal institutions, known as “rules of the game” (Peng et al., 2008, p.921). Additionally, these institutions greatly impact the strategies and performance of local and global companies operating in emerging markets (Peng et al., 2008).

Various institutions in emerging economies are influential to firms, such as political, which may be viewed as formal. These may determine whether the economy is reliable for firms to operate in. Then there are informal institutions, such as culture, which greatly impact how organisations operate. Furthermore, in instances where economies’ performance does not reap benefits, formalised institutions are non-existent or quite weak. Subsequently, the focus is now more on the correlation between institutions and organisations founded in industry-based view, which, in turn, is realised in the organisation’s strategic choices (Peng et al., 2008).

Similarly, emerging economies have followed suit with influential formal institutions, such as antidumping laws, with South Africa having more than twenty times the number of United States lawsuits against foreign organisations (Peng et al., 2008). In addition, these strategies protect the economy, local companies and the people of the country from threats of unlawful behaviour. Such behaviour would suffocate the leisure footwear industry in South African markets, as these products would be sold below market prices. Therefore, formal institutions encourage healthy competition, and local companies can apply strategies that bring awareness to their brand.

2.2.2 Institution-based view

Companies use three marketing strategies to gain a competitive advantage, specifically in emerging markets: (i) relational – used to create and maintain relationships with influential groups and the government; (ii) infrastructure building – these pertain to attending to a lack of “technological, physical infrastructures” (Marquis & Raynard, 2015, p.294), insufficient regulation; (iii)

socio-cultural bridging – this addresses socio-cultural and demographic issues that could impact negatively companies' objectives related to the market (Marquis & Raynard, 2015).

Furthermore, institutional strategy is when companies execute their plans to deal with socio-political and cultural institutions and use these to have an advantage over their competitors. Consequently, MNCs must take matters into their own hands when understanding the markets and establishing the strategies as beneficial (Marquis & Raynard, 2015).

Studies show companies must acclimatise to various institutions when forming partnerships, such as joint ventures, and as new players in markets. In addition, MNCs entering emerging markets must adopt strategies aligned with how their business is run according to the host country's matters (Marquis & Raynard, 2015). Subsequently, to ensure competitiveness with MNCs, local companies, such as Drip Footwear, must be aware of the strategies they adopt and should avoid strategies that may put them at a disadvantage as local companies collaborate with MNCs.

2.2.3 Four As to gaining market share

The 4As framework are proposed as relevant for emerging markets and emphasis placed on the importance of executing a marketing strategy using these 4As marketing conditions (Dadzie et al., 2017). The 4As framework comprises of the following factors: affordability, accessibility, acceptability and awareness. The framework can be used as a marketing strategy to attain non-users to users. This could be challenging, though, as non-users make up half the population living beneath the poverty line and mostly living in rural areas; thus, the lack of infrastructure is an issue in emerging markets. Furthermore, most people are still set in their ways traditionally through the indoctrination of religion and cultural beliefs (Sinha & Sheth, 2018).

Subsequently, to increase market share in emerging markets, it is best to opt for a theoretical framework as a guideline to overcome the emerging market's challenges and gain non-users by changing them to users, thereby increasing companies' market share. As much as emerging markets have much potential, MNCs also experience problems, and establishing a brand locally that is recognised globally may not be the only solution (Sinha & Sheth, 2018).

The 4As can be implemented according to the following key factors:

1. **Affordability**

By offering low-cost products in this market, MNCs could appeal to low-income earners by cutting unnecessary costs, as Capitec bank has proven. The bank's benefit was its ability to gain an unaddressed market by providing unsecured credit without asset backing and getting rid of loads of documentation (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). This further emphasises one of the product-innovation factors and its importance to local companies as a strategy to attain market share relative to MNCs.

2. **Accessibility**

Accessibility is the ease with which a customer can get the product. Emerging markets' biggest issue is non-existent infrastructure. These markets, such as those in Brazil and Mexico, have various local channels through which products are marketed, such as "neighbourhood mom" and "pop stores" (Sinha & Seth, 2018, p.220), which are home-based. In Africa, channels such as street vendors and hawkers can be used by forming partnerships with local supply chain networks not usually used in formal business, such as not-for-gain organisations (Sinha & Sheth, 2018).

Furthermore, collaboration with local organisations provides local companies with competitive advantages over MNCs. In addition, access to networks ensures that local companies' products are accessible to their customers, thereby making it easy to increase sales and gain market share.

3. Acceptability

Acceptability is the level at which the customer approves the product. A product in Chile was developed using a mix of cultural aspects to compete with the local product. The product is a mix of western and local cultures with an old-age medicinal traditional mixture, appealing to the Chilean traditionalist much more than the dissolvable tablet in powder form (Sinha & Sheth, 2018). As such, local companies, such as the Chilean company, that place importance on local awareness in terms of what the locals desire have the advantage over global MNCs that have no idea of what locals deem important.

4. Awareness

In emerging markets, it is important that whilst promoting the product, the potential consumer is also educated in terms of the brand, as the market varies in terms of the educated and uneducated. Therefore, product branding is important, as is using other simple forms of communication like “painting of walls, social events, street theatre, village markets”, and engaging local leaders in the communities (Sinha & Sheth, 2018, p.221). This strategy, bringing focus to brand awareness and image and the local companies’ use of branding, which speaks and appeals to locals and has easy-to-decipher messages, which locals can relate to, places local companies at an advantage over global MNCs.

Drip Footwear implemented these strategies initially by implementing:

Accessibility – the sneakers were sold from the car’s boot as the founder drove to where his customers were based. Once the business was formally established, online shopping was available to the customers, with courier delivery being made available. The brick-and-mortar shops are accessible in shopping malls.

Acceptability – the customers show their approval of Drip sneakers by posting photographs of the product and sharing the excitement of getting their sneakers on social media.

Awareness – promoting the sneakers via social media platforms, television and radio, as well as billboards.

Affordability – the product is affordable to its customers.

Implementing these strategies could increase market share and performance (Zwane et al., 2022).

2.2.4 New players using established multinational enterprises' resources

A study of companies in the East Asia Pacific looked at the rapid successes of players in the global market, specifically researching how they seem to have been established without resources. These achievements dispute the globalisation framework, which states that only resource-based firms have a competitive advantage. What seems like these firms' instant success, referred to as "dragon multinationals", has, in fact, been in the making for ten to twenty years. Some of these firms are in the steel industry and technology, such as the well-known Acer and Ispat International, now known as Mittal (Mathews, 2006, p.1).

These firms have strategically positioned themselves to attract attention to themselves, known as the "pull" process (Matthews, 2006, p.16), as latecomers and newcomers to fast-track their place in global markets and by developing new opportunities in the markets through innovation. This new group of firms in the global market opens questions to the traditional frameworks as newcomers and latecomers do not fall into the category. The newcomers' and latecomers' success in the markets is due to global connections and links rather than resources (Mathews, 2006).

As the dragon multinationals do not have resources, their strategy is to use the resources of other multinationals already in the markets for a longer period to accelerate their growth through partnerships such as contracting. This accelerated success is based on the global outlook of these newcomers and

latecomers from the onset of their business ventures (Mathews, 2006). Similarly, local companies Drip Footwear and Bathu Shoes, once well-established in the sneaker industry locally, could also look into entering global markets. Companies like Acer have prescribed that it is unnecessary to enter these global markets with resources. Subsequently, networks and links could establish newcomers, as well as understanding the environment, learning and complying. This will positively contribute towards the growth of the market share of these companies.

3 CHAPTER 3: PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Product innovation

Product innovation refers to the following concepts: the creation of new products, adjusting existing designs of products, and the use of advanced and more efficient methods in the current production process. The objective is to identify products in the market and find ways to produce advanced features that will add value (Reguia, 2014). In addition, the characteristics are astronomic costs at the inception of research and development to produce at a minimal cost. Initially, information is collected from different sources, such as customers, within the organisation and outside the organisation. Furthermore, the high costs and risks of developing a product through research and development require the company to have a large market share or business partners to afford the expenses of developing new products (Devinney, 1995).

Consequently, local companies are faced with choices of leaving the market and selling out to big global businesses, getting the government to intervene through trade restrictions, or even forming partnerships, which may lead to major power being given to global conglomerates. However, various studies show that locals can compete and have a larger market share, as in the case of Baja Auto described previously. The company was faced with competition from Honda, a global company with expertise, advanced technology and plans to get a share of the market in India. This proved to be a challenge for Bajaj Auto to keep its market share (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

Bajaj Auto set out to develop and produce low-cost scooters as per market demand through research and development and ensured easily available maintenance outlets. This aggressive strategy worked well for the local company as it gained 11% market share, leading to Honda’s exit from India’s market. As in the case of Bajaj Auto, local companies are more successful when they move

away from competing with MNCs by trying to be like them. Instead, they stick to being original, embracing their localness, creating advanced products and improving products they are already producing (Dawar & Frost, 1999). Product innovation through research and development of low-cost scooters gave Bajaj Auto a competitive advantage over Honda, resulting in an increase in market share, thereby culminating in increased profits.

> ***Proposition 1:*** *Local companies that embark on product innovation will achieve a competitive advantage and increase their profitability.*

3.2 Brand image

Brand image is based on how consumers view a brand according to “beliefs, ideas and impression” (Malik et al., 2012, p.13069). It is regarded differently by consumers and the organisation. How customers interpret it is known as the perceived image, whilst the organisation’s interpretation is known as the desired image. The organisation’s objective is to align its brand and ensure it matches the consumers perceived image (Malik et al., 2012).

Therefore, in a highly competitive market such as leisure or sports footwear, brand image plays a very important role for any company within this industry. Components of brand image are “brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality”, amongst others, whilst its medium is vast, consisting of messages, “ambassadors, sponsorships, partnerships, brand relationships and brand communities” (Shah et al., 2013, p.63). Companies will use any of these strategies to carry their brand image. Furthermore, brand image is linked to brand awareness, whereby the brand’s message brings focus to brand awareness (Shah et al., 2013).

Similarly, global brands may be favourable to consumers as they appreciate how these are trusted globally, that quality is equal and the social status the brand provides (Winit et al., 2014). Known as “the top three sporting brands of the

world", the Nike, Adidas and Puma brands highlight the role of companies in social cohesion and inclusion as part of their marketing campaigns and the importance of how customers view brands of this nature (Shah et al., 2013). In addition, there is a notion that brands that are marketed and distributed locally are owned by homebound companies, and brands that are globally showcased are owned by non-local firms; however, this is a misconception. Therefore, consumers that are pro-local consider whom the brand belongs to, as well as brand globalisation (Winit et al., 2014).

As a form of patriotism, consumers will forgo less expensive, visibly better foreign brands for a more costly local product. It is still unclear whether the customer's perception of the global or local brand is based on quality, social class or the standing it brings. Frameworks such as signalling and associative network theories help determine how consumers choose between global and local brands (Winit et al., 2014). Furthermore, consumers could also like that although the brand is owned in the country of origin, it is distributed globally, such as Nike. Whilst consumers in emerging markets like global brands as they are viewed as providing eliteness, higher social standing and power (Winit et al., 2014).

Drip Footwear customers who are pro-local and have a sense of patriotism may have chosen the brand over global brands Nike, Adidas and Puma as it resonates with them as a local brand.

> ***Proposition 2*****:** *The brand image that local companies use to appeal to consumers will affect brand loyalty, thereby increasing the companies' sales.*

3.3 Local awareness

A study shows that a significant number of consumers worldwide are more likely to sway towards brands of a particular stature and status in the global sphere than local brands. As a result of the high competitiveness, local brands are not

faring well against the aggressive performance of global brands. Subsequently, consumers in developing countries go to great lengths to experience the feel-good notion of being part of a global culture and further promote the retailer's global brand (Xie et al., 2015).

Similarly, local brands such as Lenovo, a product of China, a globally recognised emerging economy, have created the same customer experience as global brands do for customers. As much as there is proof of where global brands' performance far exceeds local brands, this is not to say local brands stand no chance of competing with these global brands. In addition, the local brands' use of cultural-iconic value will have more effect, thus tugging at local consumers' heartstrings (Xie et al., 2015).

Therefore, other studies have shown how local consumers sway toward culturally specific brands as they see these as authentic and represent their local role and clear stance in the market. The correlation between perceived local brands and prestige identified in past studies indicates that perceived local brands increase due to local brands identifying with local culture in emerging and developed markets (Xie et al., 2015). Furthermore, "brand local icon value" (Xie et al., 2015, p.53) is highlighted as local celebrities who would purchase sneakers from local company Drip Footwear. In addition, Drip Footwear's first big partnership worth R100 million with a celebrated well-known local rapper, Cassper Nyovest (Zwane et al., 2022) further cements the company's focus on local awareness by knowing local markets in relation to global MNCs.

> ***Proposition 3:*** *Local companies that promote local awareness and offer products that meet customer needs accordingly will increase their sales.*

3.4 Collaboration

Collaborations form in various ways, such as mergers and acquisitions, international joint ventures, project-based collaboration or strategic alliances (Xu

et al., 2005). Studies conducted in the construction industry show how global companies would struggle due to stringent regulations and the availability of local resources in China. This would happen if they do not form collaborations with local design companies (Xu et al., 2005). Furthermore, global businesses in developed countries are used to a different market. Emerging markets, such as the Sub-Saharan region, are not so straightforward, which means global businesses cannot use the same strategy used in developed countries (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

Whilst many global businesses struggle to be recognised by locals, some can access local consumers through local government, local businesses and other agencies with a strong societal presence in the communities (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018). In addition, well-established MNCs also look for partnerships with domestic companies to engage in contracting and licencing agreements to increase their value chain optimally through low-cost initiatives. Such connections catapult domestic firms to internationalisation (Mathews, 2006). For example, Nigerian company Dufil Prima Foods partners with local vendors to market its Indomie instant noodle brand, which is now available in Western Europe (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

> ***Proposition 4:*** *Local companies that collaborate with local communities and organisations will increase their sales, thereby increasing their profitability.*

3.5 Network access

A distribution network describes a process within the supply chain of getting and having the product stored from a supplier to the delivery stage when the customer receives the product. A good distribution network can be used to attain supply chain objectives ranging from “low cost to high responsiveness” (Chopra, 2003, p. 1).

Competitors within an industry will mostly use various distributing networks. For example, tech company Dell supplies its hardware directly to the end user, whereas Hewlett-Packard and Compaq utilise resellers to get their personal computers to the customers. Therefore, customers can buy a Hewlett-Packard or Compaq computer directly from the store as it is attainable on purchase, whilst Dell customers will get it after placing an order and waiting about seven days for delivery (Chopra, 2003).

Local companies may have many more advantages over MNEs, such as well-established distribution networks like Bajaj Auto did over Honda. Bajaj Auto took the market share which Honda had when it entered the emerging market by establishing local distribution networks and having easily accessible auto parts outlets (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

In addition, local companies have relationships with their governments, which have stood the test of time. Establishing such relationships may be difficult for foreign companies entering emerging markets who do not have time to develop relationships (Dawar & Frost, 1999).

> ***Proposition 5:*** *Local companies with access to networks will cut costs and increase their profitability.*

4 CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

In research design, thematic analysis is a process used to determine and order efficiently whilst bringing forth an understanding as to what the layout of themes in the data set means and represents. Furthermore, this method provides insight to the researcher, where they can clarify what the collected data means in terms of respondents' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Furthermore, the objective of the analysis is to determine an answer specific to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Therefore, this method is relevant to the study as the data was collected through interviews, by using interview schedules as found in Appendix c. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with primary participants selected based on their experiences and attitudes as customers of leisure footwear brands that were part of the study.

4.2 Research approach

A qualitative approach is exploratory to gain insight as to why people or groups attribute to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study used the qualitative research process, which was an inductive style, consisting of data collected from participants through interviews and set procedures. The analysis of data was developed empirically from specific information and formulated into themes. Furthermore, the data were interpreted to get the meaning. Subsequent to this, a final report was written to present the importance of the complex study.

4.3 Research population

Researchers conduct face-to-face interactions with participants in their space, allowing the researcher to put together information accordingly. Additionally, data collection usually takes place in the environment where participants go through

the experiences that pertain to the problem under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The respondents interviewed were made up of customers with an experience of the brands and who use the brands daily. The population consisted of fitness enthusiasts, sneaker collectors, health and fitness instructors and a hip hop fan. Similarly, the participants selected for the research were specific as the collection of data had to reflect the attitudes of the respondents towards the marketing strategies used by local and global companies in South Africa.

4.3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Interviews are beneficial as respondents can respond based on their experiences. They are also effective for the researcher in overseeing the type of questions asked. Therefore, the advantage of these interviews is the in-depth knowledge and information used to provide solutions and address the problem statement (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Similarly, for the research, the customers were more willing to share information on the brands they use.

The obstacles may be interview settings away from the respondent's natural environment, as well as the researcher's presence, which may influence the respondents giving answers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Senior executive managers were unwilling to participate in this study to provide insight into the companies they manage.

4.4 Sample – Interview structure

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is flexible as it allows the researcher to analyse the data in various ways, such as investigating meaning throughout the data set or looking at a specific experience. Furthermore, the study was conducted predominantly with respondents from a fitness and health background. The sample was ten respondents: two fitness instructors, two sneaker enthusiasts, one hip hop fan, two gym employees, one sport fanatic, one personal trainer and one fitness enthusiast.

4.5 Data collection

In qualitative research, data is collected by the researcher by observing people, talking with them and watching their behaviour and actions within their relevant circumstances (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Primary data collection was affected through interviews with respondents who are customers of the footwear brands. Furthermore, information on the local and global companies was collected through secondary data. The various sources consisted of company websites, social media platforms and various publications on the internet.

The secondary information collected was based on the key factors of product innovation, brand image, collaboration, network access and local awareness. The data collection aimed to address the study's research questions and objectives and offer possible solutions to the problem statement.

The data from the interviews and secondary sources were analysed and formulated into themes. The information was interpreted to gain an understanding of the data, which is documented in this report.

4.6 Research instrument

To document the data, an instrument was used by the researcher to collect data and to enable interpretation of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The qualitative researcher collected the data by studying the recorded information in documents and looking at how participants behaved during the interviews.

The research instrument was in the form of an interview schedule, which focussed on five key factors that are discussed in detail in the literature review. The interview was modelled to create a discussion at the start but limited to the research scope, allowing the respondents to be open and provide insight from a customer's view in terms of brand influence. The questions were not open-ended

but encouraged the customer to be fully conversant in terms of their knowledge and experience to provide valuable suggestions to the questions.

4.7 Reliability

Reliability is enforced by ensuring the case study process is recorded in as much detail as possible. Further suggestions include a standard procedure and database of the steps so others may put these to use (Creswell, 1994). To ascertain the reliability of the responses, there were follow-up questions for respondents to give further explanations of the actual situation.

4.8 Data analysis

When the data was being analysed, it was vital that no sides were taken to make participants look good when the study findings were negative and to remain objective. Furthermore, the rights of participants in terms of privacy should be protected at all times, such as not revealing the true identities of participants during the coding of the data and in terms of their responses during interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

All the collected data were organised into categories and relevant or similar ideas. Thematic analysis was used as a method for analysis of the data by following these steps:

Step 1 – Organise and prepare the data for analysis: Converted the recorded interview into words. Typed up the notes and arranged the data into various categories.

Step 2 – Familiarisation of the data: Previewed the data to get an overview and general understanding of the information and what the respondents were saying.

Step 3 – Begin coding the data: Came up with categories and labelled segmented phrases and sentences accordingly.

Step 4 – Generate themes: Used the coding steps and coding to create themes. Used these themes as headings in the findings of the study.

Step 5 – Representing the themes: Ensured the themes represented the data accordingly. Revisited the data and compared the themes. Checked to see if there was a need to make changes to make the themes work better.

Step 6 – Defining and naming themes: Ensured themes were formulated accordingly to describe and understand the data.

Step 7 – Writing up: Wrote the thematic analysis, describing the method of data collection and how the thematic analysis was conducted.

4.9 Ethical issues

The researcher must ensure that participants are aware of the purpose of the study and consider interactions during interviews that may cause stress to the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, some respondents felt uneasy with providing confidential information, resulting in possible respondents from the companies declining interviews, whilst others did not respond to the request for interviews. The customer respondents were put at ease, and the researcher was upfront by informing them of the purpose of the study, that it is a research project, and the data collected will be used ethically and not misused. This was reflected in the customer cover letters as they appear in Appendix b.

Once the data was analysed, it was stored and will be in an access-controlled area for an appropriate period; APA stipulates five years. Thereafter, researchers can dispose of the data to avoid it falling into the wrong hands (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, the interview recording was stored on a password-controlled device that only the researcher can access, which will be deleted after five years.

5 CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is to present the findings of the collected data analysed and translated to connect the results to the research questions and objectives. The analysis of the collected data from customers for the research was interpreted using an interview schedule which is found in Appendix c, whilst data collected for companies was collected from secondary sources from which tables and graphs were developed. The literature review forms the foundation for this research. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used for the study is in line with the analysed quantitative data presented.

5.2 Results

Interviews were held with ten respondents who are customers of leisure footwear brands. The number of respondents was increased to ten to get suitable data for analysis. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or using the Zoom online platform. All ten interviews were reliable for analysis. The standard and size of data collected depend on how willing a potential respondent is to partake in the research. Others may feel uneasy about being interviewed when they view the research topic as delicate (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Furthermore, there were limitations in securing interviews with the management of selected multinational and local companies as requests for interviews in the form of Senior Management cover letters as found in Appendix a were declined, whilst some did not respond. Thus, data collection for leisure footwear companies was done using secondary sources. The results of the primary and secondary data will be shown through tables and graphs.

5.2.1 Description and profile of respondents and companies

The sample size was ten respondents who are customers, as presented in Table 5.1. In addition, Figure 5.1 below shows the breakdown of the respondents: the majority representation is 50% customers with a sports fitness background, 20% who work in the fitness industry as administrative, operational staff, 20% who collect sneakers and 10% hip hop fan as sneakers are part of their lifestyle.

Table 5.1: The respondents as customers of leisure footwear

Respondent number	Customer type
1	Gym instructor
2	Sneaker enthusiast
3	Fitness instructor
4	Hip hop fan
5	Gym employee
6	Sports fanatic
7	Fitness enthusiast
8	Personal trainer
9	Gym employee
10	Sneaker collector

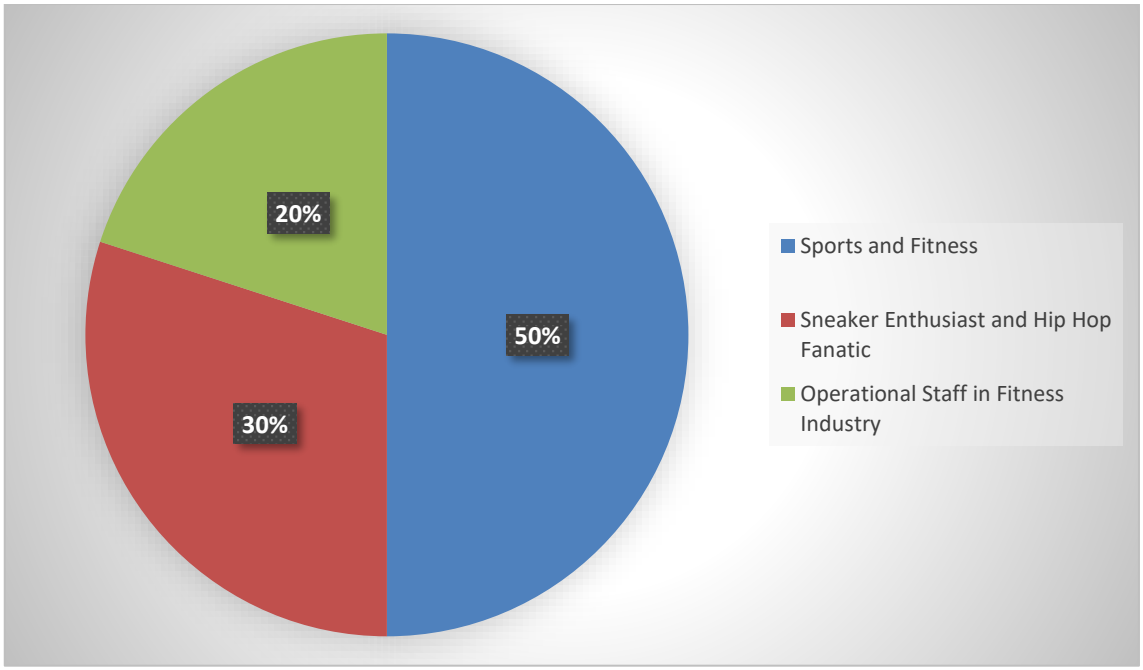

Figure 5.1: Breakdown of customer type

Table 5.2 is a representation of the multinational companies in the leisure footwear industry that were part of the secondary research: Nike Inc., an American multinational created 50 years ago by Philip Knight (Nike, n.d.); Adidas, established in 1949 by German Founder Adi Dassler (Adidas, n.d.); and Puma, which was registered in the late 1940s by Rudolf Dassler after a shoe business fallout with his brother Adi. The objective of naming the business Puma was to develop a sports shoe which would enable athletes to perform and move with the flexibility of a Puma (Puma, n.d.).

Table 5.2 also shows local newcomers in the sneaker industry: Drip Footwear, which has been operating for less than three years, founded by Lekau Sehoana, as well as Bathu, founded in 2015 by Theo Baloyi.

Table 5.2: Presentation of selected multinational and local leisure footwear companies

Company	Type of company
Drip Footwear	Local
Bathu Shoes	Local
Nike	Multinational
Adidas	Multinational
Puma	Multinational

5.3 Customer interview findings

The following findings can be concluded from the results gathered through customer interviews. Thematic analysis was used, and selected questions were summarised as major findings.

5.3.1 Preferred shoe brand

Question 2a: What is the brand that you use?

The respondents indicated the brands they use, as shown in Figure 5.2: 20% use both Nike and Adidas, 40% use Nike only, 10% use Nike and Asics, 10% use Adidas, 10% use both Adidas and Puma and 10% use New Balance. The results indicate Nike as the brand used mostly by the respondents. As one respondent said, *"I use Nike most of the time"*. None of the respondents uses either Bathu or Drip Footwear.

The objective of the question was to determine whether the respondents are customers of global or local footwear brands.

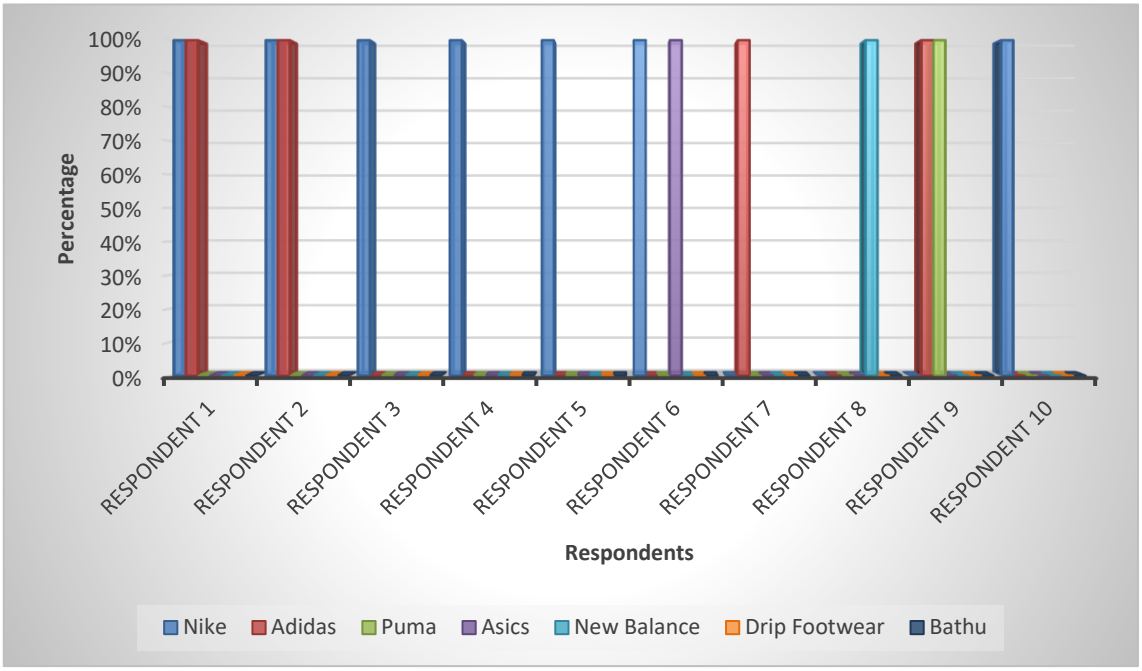

Figure 5.2: Leisure footwear brands used by the respondents

5.3.2 Influencing factors towards brand usage

Question 2b: What informs your decision to buy the brand that you use?

When asked what informs the decision to buy the brand they use and what brand they use, half of the respondents said brand image and the other respondents felt innovation informs their decision to purchase their desired brands. One respondent, a sneaker enthusiast felt that innovation influenced their decision: *"My loyalty towards the brands is based on factors such as technology, ACG* [All Conditions Gear], *functional purpose and functionality, with Nike, it is basically innovation"*. A respondent who is a sneaker collector informed by brand image said, *"The reason I'm loyal to Jordan and Nike is because their release on leisure wear is far nicer than that of Puma and Adidas, which is more sports focussed. Nike is leisure-focused; you look nicer wearing it"*.

Similarly, when asked what informs the decision to buy a preferred brand, a sneaker enthusiast said, *"I was influenced as a child when my parents bought Adidas sneakers for my older siblings; there is a sentimental aspect to this. Also, when I worked with Adidas, I was brought even closer to the brand and what it represented"*.

The question was asked to determine what makes the brands acceptable to the respondent that they would be compelled to buy the product. The findings show that brand image and product innovation inform the respondents' decisions on what they deem acceptable.

5.3.3 Accessibility of preferred brand

Question 4: How accessible is the brand that you use?

Most respondents felt the brands they use are quite accessible through retail shops and online on company websites and apps, whilst fewer found it difficult to access as their shoe size is not regular. The gym instructor who found the brand accessible said, *"I can find the brand easily in places like Sportscene where there can be specials; as I work around the mall, it is easier to find them"*. Another respondent said their brand was not easy to find: *"Not very accessible, my shoe size doesn't permit as it is not easy to get, so I get sizes now with resellers"*. Whilst a hip hop enthusiast mentioned when asked if their Nike brand is accessible, *"I find that the brands are easily accessible* [be]*cause you can find them advertised on social media, online or straight from the stores and thrift shops for vintage Nike shoes"*.

Respondents were asked this question to gauge how easy the brands make it for customers to access their products. The findings show that most respondents find their preferred brands accessible through various networks.

5.3.4 Attitudes towards new product design introductions

Question 6: What appeals to you whenever the brand introduces a new design?

Fewer respondents (30%) are attracted to the brand because of the design, such as the colour and how it looks in terms of the brand image, whilst 70% liked the innovative design of the sole in terms of comfort during fitness workouts, and others felt it was ideal for long hours whilst doing walkabouts and admin work at the gym. A fitness instructor that is attracted by the innovative design said, *"I like innovation, I know a lot of brands come out with new soles like Air soles or a spring sole…but innovation, yes, if whatever innovation it's a new sole and it's a bit springy for running, or it helps you run longer distances to bring more comfort"*. Whilst a gym employee who felt brand image was more appealing mentioned, *"It would have to be the shape and colours, the way they intertwine the colours with the fabric"*.

When asking this question, the aim was to find out what encouraged respondents to be attracted to the new product when it is introduced to the market. Findings show that most respondents find the innovative design acceptable when the brand introduces a new product.

5.3.5 Affordability influence on brand purchases

Question 7: Does affordability affect your decision to use the brand? In what ways does price influence your decision to buy the brand?

Respondents that said affordability affects their purchasing of the brand were made up of more than half of the study's respondents, whilst less than half said affordability does not influence their buying of the brand, i.e., they will buy the product regardless of the price. When asked about affordability, one sneaker

enthusiast replied, *"I will save for the shoe that I want as I look at my purchases as investments"*.

Similarly, when asked whether affordability affects the purchase of the brand, a gym employee said, *"Yes, it does; if the shoe is R2000, I would rather go for the less expensive, as I have to consider other costs like transport to and from work"*.

The purpose of this question was to find out if the brand's price influences the respondents' purchasing decision to either forgo or buy the product. The findings show that more than half of the respondents would rather not buy the product if the price is high, and 40% would buy the product regardless of the price. The results show that respondents believe affordability influences their decision to buy the product, affecting how they view the brand.

5.3.6 Influence of icon collaborations towards brand purchases

Question 9: Do collaborations by the brand with sports or musical celebrities and other icons motivate you to buy?

Most respondents (70%) said they were influenced by icons collaborating with brands to buy their preferred brand. Some of the icons influencing respondents to buy are basketball sports icons, such as Michael Jordan for Air Jordans, Christiano Ronaldo for Nike CR7, and music artists, such as Kanye West for Yeezys for Adidas and later Nike, DMX for Nike. A gym employee that is influenced by icons' collaborations commented, *"They do; if I see somebody that I look up to, maybe it's a musician, an actor, an artist wearing a Nike or an Adidas, I'll go for that sneaker because I saw them wearing it"*.

Furthermore, when asked whether collaborations by brands with icons influence them to purchase the brand, a fitness enthusiast commented, *"Yes, it does; I like reality shows such as the Kardashians, so when I see those people wearing the brand I like, I am definitely influenced to go and buy what they are wearing and*

advertising". Thirty per cent of the respondents said they would rather try the shoes for themselves and decide to buy them based on how they feel and not because they were motivated by a brand's collaboration with an icon. Whereas a respondent who is not swayed by icons' collaborations commented, *"No, I would think that it looks nice, but I wouldn't just buy it because of an icon or celebrity"*.

The question was asked to determine whether respondents were motivated to purchase a brand because of the icons that brought awareness to the products through advertisements and endorsements. According to the findings, more than half agreed they were encouraged to buy the products as a result of the icon's collaboration, which brought awareness to the brand.

5.3.7 Attitudes towards associations of brands with local culture

Question 10: How do you feel the brand has associated itself with the local culture?

Half of the respondents feel the brands they like do not associate with local culture as they should. As a respondent said*," Nike has a character of the US; as a customer, I see things from America's perspective"*. Half of the respondents feel the brands they prefer do associate with local culture. A sneaker enthusiast said, *"There is a billboard in Sandton with Shekhinah, a South African musical icon, with other local icons, and Adidas has done a lot of collaborations with these young up-and-coming celebrities, which is good and inspires the youth who have aspirations in the various industries, especially in the design spectrum that one day they can also work with these brands"*.

In addition, a sneaker collector said, *"Nike as a brand has associated itself with local culture as you will find it in every area in South Africa"* when asked if their brand of choice was locally aware.

The respondents were asked this question to determine whether the brands they like are aligned with and bring about local awareness. The study shows that half of the respondents believed the brands show awareness of the local culture and demonstrated this through the products, whilst the other 50% felt the brands did not show local culture through their products.

5.3.8 Influences of brand positioning with social and environmental sustainability on brand purchases

Question 11: Does the social and environmental sustainability positioning of a brand mean anything to you? If so, how would such positioning influence your purchase decision?

Half of the respondents said that if the brand they preferred was socially and environmentally conscious, they would be encouraged to buy it. One respondent said, *"Yes, it definitely encourages me to buy the brand, although not many brands out there are using materials which are sustainable; it would be great if more of the brands would be committed to the environment"*. The other 50% of the respondents felt it would not matter whether the brand was conscious of the environment and social aspects, as this would not affect their decision to buy the brand.

A gym employee commented by saying, *"It doesn't mean much to me as I feel it doesn't affect me personally. I will buy the shoe of the brand Puma or Adidas regardless, as long as I like it*". Posing this question was to ascertain whether product innovation influenced the respondents to accept the brand. Findings indicate that 50% find the brand acceptable because of the innovative product, and the other half don't.

5.4 Product innovation findings

5.4.1 Global brand findings

As a global company, Nike has instilled a culture of innovation and a winning team mentality. The company's objective is to continuously produce by improving its products for sports people and the world. Since inception, the brand has committed to innovating, so its customers perform at their ultimate. Nike also considers the environment and the impact of production; therefore, sustainability forms a part of innovation by carefully considering the impact of carbon, waste, water and chemicals by partnering with industry competitors and beyond to find ways to preserve the planet (Nike, n.d.).

As one of the respondents, who is a fitness trainer, said about Nike when asked what about the brand appealed to them, *"It's comfort and quality, basically for me is if you spend a lot of money on a specific brand, I want it to last because I basically use it every day"*.

Adidas' mission is to be the best sports brand in the world. They endeavour to produce and sell the best sports products globally whilst providing ultimate service and customer experience sustainably. The company has a research and development section, which is greatly used in its innovation strategy. In 2015, a running shoe was created out of recycled plastic waste recovered from coastal communities and beaches. This has been improved by including recycled polyester in its production (Adidas, n.d.).

Furthermore, they have introduced a "Made to be remade" label; these products are produced with the aim of recycling at the end of their use. They can be shredded and the material reused to make another product, such as the Ultraboost running shoe created in 2021 (Adidas, n.d.). When asked what they liked about Adidas, a fitness enthusiast responded by saying, *"I like the quality and the comfortability"*.

The Puma brand revolves around sport and is, therefore, highly committed to designing, creating, selling and marketing its fast products for the fastest sports people globally, and it has been doing so for more than 70 years. Puma has innovation and design as part of its strategy. Puma developers are constantly improving their products through innovative design to reach their objective of being the fastest sports brand in the world (Puma, n.d.).

5.4.2 Local brand findings

Bathu Shoes has focused on creating sneakers that are of world-class stature. The company has invested in a product development facility to improve product quality. Additionally, the brand is innovative in its designs and ensures product development is enhanced through technological advances. In 2021 the company conceptualised and, through product development, created the Bathu Sky Edition, a Bathu redefined sneaker with redefined quality, redefined sneaker technology and a redefined cool factor (Baloyi, 2021).

Drip Footwear's key focus is quality and design. One such design is called the Drip Firefly, created and based on a beetle known as a firefly. The sneaker is developed to glow in the dark with the heel in the shape of the beetle's tail. The objective is to light up the journey, especially during load shedding, an electricity supply crisis that South Africans are all exposed to currently. The sneaker is not advertised, which means customers only see what it looks like when it is delivered to them (Lekau, 2022).

The company believes in listening to the customer and designing a product that will make their lives easier (Drip Footwear, 2021).

5.4.3 Overview of product innovation findings

Nike has a research and development department unit that uses innovative transformational technology. Designs such as Nike Air are produced using virtual

reality design software. Collaborations by the design team allow real-time and three-dimensional technological tools to evaluate how the product will perform should it pass inspection for production in reality. This advanced technological process, therefore, eliminates wastage and is cost-effective by minimising risks of the product going to production only once it is determined that the product will be accepted by the customers (Nike, n.d.).

As an innovative company, Adidas is constantly looking for ways to create new advanced products that will benefit the company and not harm the environment (Adidas, n.d.).

Whilst the need is to make better sustainable products, Puma's objective is to create fashionable products that works. In 2021, more products were developed to improve previous products, such as the Puma Ultra innovation. The new products were well received by runners and media houses and were later showcased in Tokyo's summer Olympics (Puma, n.d.).

The notion for Bathu Shoes is to produce high-quality sneakers for South Africans, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, making the brand accessible to this demographic (Bathu, n.d.). Drip Footwear ensures they develop products that appeal to the customers by paying attention to what they want (Drip Footwear, 2021).

Findings from the study show that all the brands use innovation as part of their strategy to ensure acceptability by customers. Furthermore, Bathu Shoes and Drip Footwear compete with MNCs by focusing on issues experienced by South Africans. Bathu also appeals to people from disadvantaged areas who are "walking the journey" (Bathu, n.d., p.2), as the tagline says, by creating high-quality sneakers. Drip Footwear has created sneakers that light up in the dark, which is relevant for locals as they refer to the current electricity supply crises.

5.5 Brand image findings

5.5.1 Global brand findings

The Nike Inc. brand is made up of Nike, Jordan and Converse, and its sole responsibility is ensuring long-lasting influence. Their objective is to inspire through innovation and ensure every sportsperson globally reaches their ultimate potential. The company is constantly finding ways to ensure athletes and users of their sports footwear perform at their best by ensuring the products are manufactured in a way that considers sustainability (Nike, n.d.).

One respondent who is a fitness instructor said about the relationship and loyalty towards Nike, *"It started when I was growing up, seeing my uncles and big brothers wearing Nike, and I thought I would look cool wearing Nike, so this is where it started with me, just to impress people…until I got into it in my line of work and I thought ok, now I know more about the different brands and I know which brand is good for me"*.

Adidas is based around sport, as it is an integral part of people's lives in their culture and society. The brand believes it can change lives through sport, which is its purpose and culture. This is demonstrated in the operations of the company and how the company interacts with its customers (Adidas, n.d.). A respondent who is a fitness enthusiast said in terms of why Adidas appealed to them and the brands association with local culture, *"I feel like the reason it appeals to me, I've used it before, and I like the quality, the comfortability…I think it does 'associate' with all cultures in our country"*.

The Puma brand focuses on the values of good sportsmanship, and its objective is to be the fastest sports brand in the world. The company has embarked on increasing brand awareness by revamping its e-commerce systems, improving the enterprise resource planning ordering systems and strengthening relationships with retailers (Puma, n.d.). A respondent who is a gym employee

responded in terms of Puma's brand image, *"Recently, I've been really into Puma, so Puma is really cool right now. Puma looks really nice with formal or casual clothing; it's very effortless".*

5.5.2 Local brand findings

The Bathu brand is about developing sneakers that Africans can identify with. Their objective is to produce sneakers of global standards whilst sustainably ensuring more job opportunities, instilling a positive mindset in people (Bathu, n.d.). The brand's story is not only about sneakers it is a story of perseverance…it is a story of walking your journey" (Bathu, n.d. p.9) which is precisely why the company focuses on engineering sneakers for comfort.

Drip Footwear's objective is to collaborate with its customers by listening to them and making a sneaker designed for the future. The brand aims to "inspire customers to define their great, irrespective of where they come from" (Drip Footwear, 2021, p.2).

When asked about knowledge of local brands Bathu Shoes and Drip Footwear with their association to local culture, one respondent who is a gym employee said, *"This is the first I hear about the local brands, so I will go research about them, see them, I hope it's nice, and I can try them out. It would be nice if there were a lot of brands; we don't have a lot of local brands"*.

Another respondent, a sneaker collector, said, *"I do know a few local brands like Drip from Cassper. I know Bathu it's very nice, it's doing very well right now, like how you influence the local people and get the celeb to endorse. Drip has already been under a celebrity Cassper, Bathu. I see Khany Mbau is a big ambassador…I would give Drip and Bathu Shoes a try as a 'sneaker head', but it needs to be a style that has, say, for example, the selection that I would make depending for an occasion that I would be attending. Bathu has a thin sole, and it has a sort of embroidery look, so for me personally, I have a lot of friends who are into cultural*

activities, so me wearing Bathu shoes with a suit [at] *one of the weddings…With Drip, which is sporty, if I know I'm going away, we're going camping for the hike. I would spend money on the local brands obviously according to the occasion".*

5.5.3 Overview of brand image findings

As a forward-looking brand, Nike's objective is to move the world in the same direction through innovation whilst ensuring their part does not cause harm to the environment. The brand has been built in various ways, such as collaborations with icons in various industries to reach its target market (Nike, n.d.). Adidas strengthens its brand through marketing, which is reflected in the 2021 financial year increased marketing costs by $200 million (Adidas, 2022).

Puma's collaborations with trendsetters and sports icons and strong relations with retailers contribute to increasing the brand's awareness. As part of good corporate citizenship, the company has increased its commitment to social and environmental sustainability, by ensuring sustainability is incorporated throughout its production process (Puma, n.d.).

The company has built the brand and seen it being strengthened by bringing awareness through collaborations with well-known brands and personalities (Mazibuko, 2021). Drip continues to ensure the product they create makes the customer's life easier and impresses customers that they become ambassadors for the brand (Drip, 2022).

As the findings of the research reflect, the MNCs' brand image is based more on a global perspective. In addition, the customer may view themselves as a global citizen. Whereas local companies Drip Footwear and Bathu Shoes use circumstances experienced by South Africans to align their brand. Drip Footwear motivates customers to achieve greatness despite challenges, and Bathu Shoes encourages perseverance despite hard times.

5.6 Local awareness findings

5.6.1 Global brand findings

Nike is aware of the huge market in South Africa, which is made up of sneaker enthusiasts (Bredeveldt, 2022). One respondent who is a sneaker enthusiast, when asked about Nike's involvement in local awareness, said, *"The brand speaks for itself, no matter where you go, whether it's a tavern, a park, a club, a picnic, you'll always find someone with an Airforce One, Jordan One; everyone is influenced by the name"*.

Adidas has demonstrated awareness of the local diversity and culture by partnering with local designers, such as Thebe Magugu, with its designs showcasing a celebration of South African heritage (Claasen, 2022). Puma has increased its presence in all local markets where they operate by collaborating and partnering with well-known sports people and icons in the cultural and fashion environments (Puma, n.d.). A respondent who is a gym employee responded to the question about their brand choice, as well as association with local culture, *"No, I don't think Puma and Adidas are in touch with the local culture. Puma has a little touch-and-go here…I don't think they're trying…there's more to Africa than bright colours and petty shapes. I'm not a fan of bright colours, that's what I'm saying, but I'm African, so if they could find a way to make the shoe subtle, pleasant and nice and African. There's no point in buying something you don't connect with".*

5.6.2 Local brand findings

Bathu Shoes has ensured that its brand is in line with local culture, resulting in the company getting awards. They were recently named 2021's most admired African brand by Brand Africa 1000: Africa's best brands. They also made the cut in ranking at number 52.

The survey was taken over two months in 2021 and resulted in over 80 000 brand mentions and over 3500 unique brands (Stockenstroom, 2021). Bathu Shoes is also among the top 25 most admired African brands (Mazibuko, 2021). In 2019, they were awarded the Avance Media 100 Most Influential South African's Award in the business category (Bathu, n.d.). The CEO and founder was awarded the Forbes Africa 30, under 30 award for business (Bathu, n.d.). Also amongst other accolades received is the Young Entrepreneur of the year in 2019 by South African Business Premier Awards (Bathu, n.d).

5.6.3 Overview of local awareness findings

Nike has chosen three stores globally to partner with on the Jordan 2 shoe, and a local South African store is part of its awareness initiative (Bredeveldt, 2022). Adidas has partnered with local designers, such as Thebe Magugu, with the designs showcasing a celebration of South African heritage (Claasen, 2022).

Bathu Shoes has aligned its brand with the Kasi culture, which is lingo for the South African township culture. Bathu means shoes in local township slang. They have used the possibilities of overcoming strife in life, which is what most township people identify with, and this is precisely the reason founder Theo Baloyi aims to have the sneakers available to people from various backgrounds (Bathu, n.d.).

The founder of Drip Footwear has a lot of local knowledge; he grew up in a humble home located in an informal settlement and has experienced hardship, which is what the majority of South Africans can identify with. The brand name also refers to local lingo, which means street style, a local township culture when a person is dressed in their best or has a good fashion sense (Drip Footwear, 2021). The company has used this local lingo to position itself in the market to resonate with local South Africans.

The findings show that whilst MNCs partner with local designers, celebrities and sports icons, the companies' strategy is directed more to the customer who is from the affluent and developed market. Whereas the Bathu brand is more aware of the local culture as their brand name is the township name for shoes, and the Drip Footwear brand name is the local language for a person who dresses well.

5.7 Collaborations findings

5.7.1 Global brand findings

Nike has collaborated with Shelflife, a local South African sneaker store, with the intention of creating the first-ever Jordan Shoe in Africa, a first of its kind for the continent. Shelflife is one of three stores globally that have been chosen by Nike. The Jordan sneaker was initially established in 1985, a partnership by Nike with basketball player Michael Jordan (Bredeveldt, 2022). A respondent who is an avid Nike sneaker collector, when asked about being motivated to buy by collaborations with icons, said, *"So for me to buy something, it would have to have value, so that's why I would be influenced by a collaboration to buy a particular sneaker. I'll give you Michael Jordan, for example, the Jordan One was his first endorsement…these sneakers come in different colours for the specific sneaker. It's a particular amount, and when I say particular amount, it's easily over R50k to R60k, so that influences value, and the resale amount of that in South Africa can easily be R120k, so you* [are] *making your profit double. So this influences a lot of buys"*. Adidas has collaborated with local designers such as Rich Mnisi with the products in prints and bright colours representing a celebration of the Tsonga culture, which is Mnisi's origin (Stehr, 2022).

Collaborations by Puma are in the areas of sports, with ambassadors and influencers. In South Africa, the company has collaborated with actress and Human Rights Activist Nomzamo Mbatha as their brand ambassador. In 2021, they launched the Shandu collection, an African clan name that paid homage to the brand ambassador's family name (Mkhondo, 2021).

5.7.2 Local brand findings

Bathu Shoes has collaborated with companies such as Nedbank on its YouthX campaign, which looks at game changers as they provide how they have navigated through life whilst providing insight into financial education (Mazibuko, 2021). Vodacom RED, commemorating creativity, innovation and heritage during heritage month in South Africa, is a way of marketing to a different market to grow its market base. They collaborate with personalities such as Somizi, a well-known celebrity and Idols South Africa judge (Carvoda, n.d.).

The Drip Footwear brand has been associated with sponsorships for the South African Music Awards, the Channel O lockdown house parties, and various events taking place in the entertainment industry. The brand has been deliberately associated with music, arts and drama (Drip Footwear, 2021). Furthermore, Drip Footwear has collaborated with FILA, an Italian brand, which according to the founder Lekau, will help increase its reach due to FILA's focus on sport; the new design is inspired by Drip Footwear. Drip Footwear's focus is to be a multifunctional performance and beauty brand (Mphande, 2022b).

5.7.3 Overview of collaborations findings

The Nike collaboration is called the International Flight Club; its purpose is to focus on markets with a high demand for Jordan 2 sneakers, mostly the design desired by sneaker collectors. The resale value of these sneakers amongst collectors can increase up to 500% from the initial selling price based on demand. Nike earns an estimated $3 million every five hours through the sale of Air Jordan sneakers (Bredeveldt, 2022).

Adidas has partnered with sports stars like Lionel Messi and icons from various industries, such as Beyonce, Stella McCarthy and Pharell Williams, as they appeal to the lifestyle side of the brand. They also partner with start-up companies as part of their innovative objective to produce products from natural resources,

such as start-up Spinnova that developed a textile from materials such as wood waste without using harmful chemicals (Adidas, n.d.).

Puma's Shandu collection design is African inspired with prints. The Shandu clan name is a heritage with which most South Africans are proud to be identified (Naidoo, 2021).

The collaboration by Bathu Shoes and Somizi was an immediate success, as the celebrity wore it to the Durban July, a popular annual horse race held in Durban, a city in South Africa. The sneakers were such a hit they became known as "*iscathulo saSomizi*", which directly translates to "Somizi's shoe" (Zakwe, 2021, p.2).

Drip Footwear has used South Africa's urban local culture to position itself within the local market. This has afforded the brand, which is just under three years old, the 65th most admired brand in Africa for 2022 by Brand Africa and being listed in the top 100 global brands at the 12th Annual Global list of the most admired brands in Africa (Drip Footwear, 2021). The brand has also partnered with other big brands, such as BMW (Mphande, 2022a). Drip Footwear collaborated with a local South African shoe designer that the founder met on LinkedIn, a professional social media platform. This partnership resulted in many positive reactions from people that wanted to buy the sneaker (Drip Footwear, 2021).

The study's findings show MNCs collaborate with global and local icons from various industries. However, collaborations with local icons do not seem to have a huge impact on the locals. In contrast, local companies' strategy shows collaboration with local icons with a huge following and a background that aligns with what the brands represent. For example, Bathu Shoes has partnered with Somizi, a celebrity and Idols South Africa judge with a large fan base of 4.8 million on social media (Mhlongo, n.d.) and whose success story is borne out of persevering through hardships. Drip Footwear has collaborated with large events in the entertainment industry and with icons such as South African rapper

Cassper Nyovest who also has a large following among the youth of 5.9 million on social media platforms (Phoolo, n.d.), known for filling up venues such as FNB stadium during his performances. He also has an inspirational story of rising to greatness, which aligns with Drip Footwear's brand.

5.8 Network access findings

5.8.1 Global brand findings

According to Nike's supply chain structure globally, they have the biggest market share of leisure footwear and apparel. Their products are sold through a large network-owned company, retailers, digital platforms, independent distributors, licensees and sales representatives (Nike, n.d.).

A respondent who is a Nike customer, when asked how accessible the brand is, said, *"As a collector, it's very accessible; it's just that when you're looking for the limited kind of sneaker…it sometimes takes up to four months to get the type of sneaker you're actually looking for, but you do get the ones that are everyday wear, accessible from the Nike factories, Woodmead Centre, malls, there* [are] *shops that do your everyday kind of wear…but the limited edition you can look online".*

Adidas use various tools such as direct-to-consumer business and digital transformation, which improved its bottom line by more than $1 billion in 2021 with increased revenues to $21 billion (Adidas, 2022). A respondent who is a fitness fanatic, when asked about the accessibility of their brand Adidas, said, *"I quite think these days everything is easy to order on the app, online* [be]*cause there's centre stores all over you don't have to get into your car and go driving all over.* [Be]*Cause online shopping is just in our faces; it's there all of the time, and a lot of these brands have their own apps; you just go into their own apps and just browse, I think it's quite accessible in this day and age"*.

Puma has focussed on improving and maintaining relationships with retailers by increasing the allocation of its products. They have invested in enterprise resource planning systems to ensure their supply chain works seamlessly to distribute in accordance with orders placed by retailers (Puma, n.d.).

5.8.2 Local brand findings

Bathu Shoes has an online ordering system on the company's website and has increased the number of stores, mostly in malls (Bathu, n.d.). Drip Footwear improved the distribution of its products by upgrading its online ordering system (Drip Footwear, 2021).

5.8.3 Overview of network access findings

Nike's business has increased based on its ability to attain and maintain strategic relationships with suppliers who adhere to specified supply chain rules. The rules pertain to sustainability, human rights, production excellence and governance (Nike, n.d.). Adidas' investment in digitisation to improve customer experience has increased its market share (Adidas, n.d.).

Puma's improved enterprise resource planning systems have contributed positively to its revenue, which saw the figures increase by 32% in the 2021 financial year from the 2020 financial year (Adidas, 2022). Bathu Shoes has 35 stores throughout South Africa and have, as part of its strategy, an e-commerce system to enable customers to buy and specify the type of sneakers they require online (Bathu, n.d.). Drip Footwear's improved online ordering system could contribute to increased revenues.

The study findings show that all brands have improved e-commerce as a strategy to ensure their products are easily attainable. Furthermore, maintaining relationships with key partners in the value chain system. Additionally, Bathu Shoes and Drip Footwear have embarked on an aggressive strategy of increasing

the number of stores in South Africa's malls, with Bathu Shoes having 35 stores (Bathu, n.d.) and Drip Footwear with 21 stores to date (Drip, 2022).

5.9 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to examine the study's findings and provide explanations of the respondent's responses from the interview sessions and the secondary research for the MNCs and local companies. Respondents are informed by brand image and innovate to find the brand acceptable. Most respondents (80%) found the brands accessible through different network access. Respondents found product innovation appealing when a new design is introduced by brands, which is acceptable to them.

According to more than half of the respondents, affordability had a lot to do with deciding whether to buy the product, which impacted the brand's image. Seventy per cent of respondents are influenced too by icons that collaborated with brands to bring brand awareness. Some respondents feel international brands do not associate with local culture, whilst half said the brands involve themselves in the local culture.

In addition, the secondary study findings indicate that the brands have invested in product innovation to ensure their products are acceptable to customers. The local brands innovate to appeal to locals by using relevant situations South Africans can relate to, such as the load shedding issue impacting all South Africans.

The MNCs' brand image is focused on the global customer, whereas local companies Bathu Shoes Footwear use local situations that affect locals to encourage them to identify with the brands, such as persevering and rising above all challenges. Whilst MNCs may have collaborated with local icons to identify with locals, their strategy is directed at a select few. Drip Footwear and Bathu

Shoe’s focus is on the larger South African market, as well as the local township culture.

Collaborations by MNCs are with local icons who don’t seem to have a large following among locals. Whilst the local companies have partnered with local icons that South Africans can identify with who have a “rising against all odds” story, which encourages and brings more awareness to the brands.

6 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter consolidates the study by showing how each research question and objective was answered with the view of contributions the study can make in the future. Limitations encountered whilst conducting the study will also be discussed.

6.2 Research question and objectives

6.2.1 Local companies' brand image and brand loyalty

The findings indicate that the brand image of Bathu Shoes and Drip Footwear has positively affected South African's brand loyalty as both companies have aligned their brand to the local's experiences. This means brands that align their image with the local culture are more likely to gain customer brand loyalty.

6.2.2 Influence of local awareness on local company sales

The findings show that the local companies have ensured they have full knowledge of the locals by appealing to them through local township language in their brand. Therefore, appealing to the locals means more products will be sold, and the company's market share will increase. This shows in the increasing number of stores both companies have opened in shopping malls.

6.2.3 Role of brand image on brand loyalty of local and global companies

The findings indicate that 50% of the respondents are informed by brand image to purchase their desired brand, with most of them being Nike and Adidas customers. This shows the significant effect of multinational brand image on customers' brand loyalty. The respondents are not customers of the local brands.

6.2.4 Local awareness impact on local companies' sales

Findings from the study show that local companies are using the local culture, integrating it into their products and aligning it with their brands to bring awareness. This has resulted in the companies increasing their shops in malls and improving their online e-commerce systems. This means products are in demand, thereby increasing sales.

MNCs have collaborated with local icons to appeal to the locals. Nike identified that South Africa has a niche market of sneaker collectors, which resulted in a partnership with a local store to encourage increased sneaker sales, including limited editions. This means the sale of these sneakers will increase.

6.2.5 Collaboration with local firms' impact on brand recognition

The findings strongly indicate collaboration by local companies positively impacts brand recognition. Bathu Shoes collaborated with Somizi, who is a well-known and celebrated icon. When he wore the shoe for the first time at the Durban July event, the shoe was an instant hit. This association has brought awareness to the Bathu Shoe brand.

6.2.6 Local companies' network access' impact on profitability

Findings show that local companies have increased the number of shops in shopping malls, with Bathu Shoes having 35 shops and Drip Footwear having 21 shops. The companies have also updated their online shopping to ensure customers order easily with improved distribution channels. This shows an increase in the number of customers, which means an increase in sales. There is, however, no indication of the profitability from the findings.

6.3 Limitations of the study

How the researcher interprets the participant's responses during interviews may be uncertain. Therefore, the potential power imbalance between the researcher and participants should be considered at the start of the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The study's limitation was that executive management from MNCs and local companies did not partake in the research. Some declined, whilst others did not respond to the researcher's interview request. Therefore, the study had insufficient data, which made it difficult to arrive at findings that would provide the expected recommendations. Secondary research provided data for MNCs and local companies.

It was challenging to obtain financial statements for local companies as these were not readily available on the company's websites. The lack of financial statements inhibited the ability to gather further information that would answer research questions and objectives that would ascertain the impact of factors such as network access and product innovation on the profitability of local companies.

6.4 Future research recommendations

The recommendations are built on the research limitations, literature review and study findings. In the future, further research can be done as follows:

Emerging markets are addressed in the same note as developed economies (Sharma et al., 2018).

What should be considered is how companies are able and willing to change their strategies when operating in emerging economies as compared to developed markets. Further research should be on conducting a qualitative survey with regards to local companies as well as MNCs conducting businesses in other emerging markets besides South Africa with respect to competitive strategies

utilised in these economies. Additionally, future study should be done on the financial impact of these strategies towards the global economy.

6.5 Final conclusion

The study allowed the researcher to look into the leisure footwear industry and explore the strategies used by local companies when competing with MNCs within South Africa. Useful insights were acquired, providing an opportunity to do further research with MNC and local companies' senior management.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that local companies use brand image to impact brand loyalty positively when they compete with MNCs. Local awareness by local companies resulted in increased sales. However, it was unclear what impact product innovation by local companies had on profitability because the financial statements could not be reviewed. In addition, collaborations by local companies with local icons contributed immensely towards brand recognition.

The qualitative approach was used to gain further insight into the strategies utilised by local companies to compete with MNCs. The study successfully answered most of the research questions and objectives despite the limitations that arose in data collection. The research findings can be used as the basis for further studies on similar topics.

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APPENDIX A: COVER LETTER – SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana and I am a Masters student in Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating local companies and global multinationals competing in South Africa as the emerging market, under the supervision of Dr Emmanuel Quaye. The aim of this research project is to understand emerging markets and investigate how South African companies in the leisure footwear industry compete with global multinationals in South Africa. Your company is one of the companies that will form part of the study in the research project. The research project topic is **"Strategies of South African companies competing with multinationals in local markets"**. As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve answering questions, which will be a single interview and will take around 45 minutes to one hour. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the face-to-face interview using a digital device. This recording will be stored in a password-controlled device and only the researcher will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after five years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. It is important to note as you will be speaking in an official capacity as CEO/Executive/Senior Manager of your company, you may be identifiable based on your official role. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password-controlled device and will be kept for five years. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana

Researcher: Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana, 935181@students.wits.ac.za, 072 930 8602

Supervisor: Dr Emmanuel Quaye, Emmanuel.quaye@wits.ac.za, (011)717 3544

APPENDIX B: COVER LETTER – CUSTOMERS

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana, and I am a Masters student in Business Administration at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating local companies and global multinationals competing in South Africa as the emerging market, under the supervision of Dr Emmanuel Quaye. The aim of this research project is to understand emerging markets and investigate how South African companies in the leisure footwear industry compete with global multinationals in South Africa. The research project topic is **"Strategies of south African companies competing with multinationals in local markets"**. As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This activity will involve answering questions, which will be a single interview and will take around 45 minutes to one hour. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the face-to-face interview using a digital device. This recording will be stored in a password-controlled device and only the researcher will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after five years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project, you will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. It is important to note as you will be speaking in an official capacity as CEO/Executive/Senior Manager of your company, you may be identifiable based on your official role. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.
If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password-controlled device and will be kept for five years. With your permission the data collected from this research project may be used by other researchers. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za
Yours sincerely,
Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana
Researcher:
Astrid Nonhlanhla Nkwanyana, 935181@students.wits.ac.za, 072 930 8602
Supervisor:
Dr Emmanuel Quaye, Emmanuel.quaye@wits.ac.za, (011)717 3544

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

The respondents are all familiar with emerging markets as some manage local companies and others global multinationals which operate in these markets. The listed questions will be posed to guide the respondents to respond accordingly and they are **senior managers** of local and global companies.

Interview Schedule 1 – Senior Managers

Question 1

For the purpose of the interview, please can you provide me with some background about your company?

Question 2

How do you compete in this highly competitive industry with the established global MNEs?

Question 3

What strategies do you follow to ensure you are successful as a local sneaker brand?

Question 4

How have you managed to be profitable?

Question 5

How has having access to networks affected your company?

Question 6

Do you have an R&D section in the company and how is this beneficial to the performance of the company?

Question 7

What informs the decision to develop a new product in your company?

Question 8

How does the cost of new products impact on the company profits?

Question 9

How do you ensure you minimise the risk in your company of a new product not being accepted?

Question 10

What marketing capabilities do you utilise to ensure your target market is aware of company's brand?

Question 11

How do you go about building a strong brand?

Question 12

What sort of local knowledge do you have that has benefitted the success of your company's brand?

Question 13

What collaborations does your company take part in, and what impact does this have?

Question 14

Who is your ideal target market?

The respondents to this interview schedule are **customers** to the local companies and global MNEs and they are familiar with the brands.
The listed questions will be posed to guide the respondents to respond accordingly as the customers.

Interview Schedule 2 – Customers

Question 1

Can you briefly tell me about yourself?

Question 2

a)What is the brand that you use?

b)What informs your decision to buy the brand that you use?

Question 3

Why are you loyal to the brand?

Question 4

How accessible is the brand that you use?

Question 5

What about this brand appeals to you?

Question 6

What appeals to you whenever the brand introduces a new design?

Question 7

Would you say the brand is affordable?

Question 8

How do you personally identify with the brand?

Question 9

Do collaborations by the brand with sports or musical and other icons motivate you to buy?

Question 10

How do you feel the brand has associated itself with the local culture?

Question 11

Does the social and environmental sustainability positioning of a brand mean anything to you? How so? How would such positioning influence you purchase decision?

APPENDIX D: RESPONDENTS' INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Respondent 1 – Interview date – 3 November 2022

Question 1

Can you briefly tell me about yourself?

As a hobby, I am a spinning and a body pump instructor I also do water aerobics. Full time I am a consultant. I also like running as well so when it comes to footwear I am quite particular on the brands that I choose when I do sport. I look for things that are like what's out there in the market, something that is good value. My hobby is exercise and leisurewear from an exercise point of view I am quite particular about the brands that I use when I go to gym.

Question 2

What informs your decision to buy the brand that you use?

So it all depends on for what specific event or what I'm looking for at that point. So if it's a running shoe that I would use if I were to go running, I am a fan of Saucony because I know they're durable and if I buy it or Asics is a brand I use cause if I buy it for running I know it will last me 2 to 3 years for the kind of running that I do. If it's something for the studio, shoes for the studio, I like using Nike. I don't prefer using Nike for running cause of their soles actually wear out after a year. I also researched a brand called Walker running shoes just because it's for people who've got wide feet and I got a high bridge and wide feet, so it all depends, so Nike for me has a very good sole where it grips floor when I'm doing aerobics for any studio work. From a running point of view Asics will be the choice because of the durability and quality and its good value for money. Like I've said I've tried the Walker shoes because they are for people with broader feet and they say it's supposed to be a bit more comfortable.

It depends when I chose my brand I normally look at someone that is a runner and see what brand they're using and ask them why they are choosing this specific brand. I will then go to the internet and form my own opinion about the brand and if I have decided on the brand then I will go and see if there is a specific release or a specific design for specific year and I will then go and see what fits my foot before I actually get to buy a brand. It is quite a process to buy a specific brand for me, like I know for studio with Nike works so I sort of stick to it with Asics with running with a specific shoe which has a name and all they do is add a number with their new makes and then I buy the next number if I need a running shoe which is every 2 years or so. I try a number of brands, I also like Adidas but I find their shoes are too narrow.

Question 3

Why are you loyal to the brand?

So what I look at when I buy brands is it affordable, is it good quality and how long its *gonna* last me. Like with Adidas I bought a pair and found their comfortable to walk in but not to run in, it's sort of trial and error, if it's a good brand if its durable or if it lasts a long time I will sort of stick to it. If I buy brand which I've paid a lot of money for and it breaks within the next couple of months, I decide look I paid a lot of money for this brand I will not invest in this brand again. So my purchase is based on past purchases, so if I did purchase if and if I was happy with the standard or quality of the shoe that I have purchased.

Question 4

How accessible is the brand that you use?

So with Nike, it is quite accessible you can get it in any sports warehouse and specialised shops and actually Asics as well. Normally what my problem is I wear quiet a big woman's shoe I wear a size 9 running shoe, so if I go shopping in the ships they normally go up to size 8. I do struggle to get a size 9 now and then. So it's not the brand that is not accessible, it's mostly I struggle with sizing.

Question 5

What about this brand appeals to you?

It's comfort and quality, basically for me is if you spend a lot of money on a specific brand I want it to last because I basically use it every day. So I normally find that if something lasts a month especially when it comes to gym and running shoes, they can be quiet pricey if I bought something and it was quite pricey and something happens to it, I won't buy that brand again and then I sort of start investigating if there aren't any sort of better brands out there.

Question 6

What appeals to you whenever the brand introduces a new design?

That will be depending on if I'm looking for a new shoes at that point, so most of the shoes I get their newsletters if they're releasing a new shoe, I will have a look at it, if at that point I'm looking at a gym shoe or running shoe and what they've brought into the market is something that I need to replace. To me the style is very important and it is nice, they have good colour and actually looks good. But its more about comfort and secondly if I do buy it, it's the quality that it lasts for what I will use it for. Sometimes brands like Nike Air, they brought in a shoe with a new sole. So I would go and read reviews on it and I won't go

straight and buy it after its released, I would sort of let someone else try it out first and the read the review see what they say and form my own opinion of it.

I like innovation, I know a lot of brands come out with new soles like the Air soles or a spring sole then I sort of wonder if does it help but I probably won't be the first person who actually tries it, I'd probably have someone that's done a review on the shoe and give me their thoughts. If the reviews look good I would probably go and try it on and see how it fits and sort of decide. But innovation yes, if whatever innovation, if it's a new sole and it's a bit springy for running or it helps you run longer distances to bring more comfort. It depends what they sort of segment of the market they marketed at or what feature they enhance that would appeal to me.

I'm a big fan of Nike Air, the way the shoe fits or feels I like but the problem is that Nike Air soles if you go running with it after a while the soles do go down a bit. I know they introduced or brought out a newer one where they said it was an improved sole and it was better. But I had some people saying it's not much better. Sometimes the change in design holds true, but I also think what e.g., the Nike brand, they have shoes for various activities, depending what you buy it for and what you are looking for. I think they sometimes improve, other times not really improved of the old design. Sometimes it is a complete change and great that will affect and changes the whole market. Like a specific brand like Nike will create sneakers with soles with holes in it and you will find some brands will follow and if it really takes off in terms of sales. Sometimes you get buyer's remorse when the product is not really that good as envisaged.

Question 7

Would you say the brand is affordable?

If it's a really good product, I wouldn't say I'm a really big spender like some people really do spend thousands of rands on shoes, I would say I am more in the middle of the market I don't believe in spending too much on it. If it's a quality product in the middle of the market and I know the brand, then I would buy it. I sometimes also a lot of times when they do a new release like specifically for running shoes, like Asics they will every year the number of the brand changes to 17, or 18, or 19 then they slightly change the look and feel of it and normally if the new design comes out, they have the previous design on special and because I am not phased on having the latest and greatest I would buy the previous one, cause the price then drops. I don't mind spending money on it if I know it's a good quality product. If I did spend a lot of money on the product and it is not a good product as I thought it would be I wouldn't buy the brand again, at that specific price. If it was on special, maybe I would consider it but for specific shoe, say gym or running then I would say no. I think it's a fine

line in the market between quality and what you pay for I've always believed if I pay a bit more for something that will last me a bit longer is better than buying a cheap shoe and it only lasts 2 or 3 months. The things that I buy must last me longer than a year, I think it's a good investment especially when it comes to running cause they are highly priced. For a studio shoe they are a little bit cheaper, if they will last a year as well. They also don't go through wear and tear that running shoes go through they tend to last a bit longer, in that way you also don't spend that much money because basically if you have a good fit, a good sole, good quality that will last a year then its ok. So in terms of price, my motivator is more quality than the price bracket, but if a brand puts itself in a very high price bracket and not that good quality then I won't get that brand from experience.

Question 8

How do you personally identify with the brand?

The image in terms of most brands, like if for example you look at Nike, Adidas they all support different people in sport, different icons. I think it's great but in terms of influencing me that much. That is quite important to me, but it's not really an image thing it's about comfort and quality. When I see Asics woman on tv or an advert, I can't say I identify as an Asics woman, for me it's about feeling comfortable and I know I'm wearing a good brand. Neither do I feel like a Nike girl in studio, I just know that I am comfortable and this shoe is exactly what I needed for this type of sport that I'm doing at that point. I also think that I am now more mature it is different, in my younger years I would buy Nike and walk into the gym and feel I'm "It", I feel like the blond lady on the advert. In my older years it's not about the image, it is about being comfortable. I think as much as I enjoy the Nike adverts, I think the image part would be more for the young and they won't motivate me to go buy. I enjoy Nike, I know its quality but I won't associate my personality with the lady on the advert who goes for a run, but I do agree with the advert that they are a comfortable shoe.

Question 9

Do collaborations by the brand with sports or musical and other icons motivate you to buy?

If, for example, a really top runner uses the brand I use, I would say so they I know I chose the brand so the top runner agrees with me. I don't am not the type of person that would go out and buy the brand just because a certain singer wears that brand and go and buy the brand. I would rather be more of a quality type of person, it would probably motivate me if I see somebody wearing it then I would probably go and research it but I think it's important but it won't

be my main motivator to go for a specific brand, just because they have a specific image. I think I'm older and passed that stage, in your younger years you still wear something cause it will be cool, cause everybody is wearing it. I think I'm at a point in my life where yes, it shouldn't look ugly I need to agree with what they support in terms of carbon print, recycling. I may look at the brand where it is advertised by the icon, but would not necessarily buy it.

Question 10

How do you feel the brand has associated itself with the local culture?

Sometimes I find it hard, if they have a specific road show they will associate themselves with the local culture or a campaign in South Africa. I think it's more their culture, I know they will do a specific colour and they will say certain colours of a particular shoe is only available in certain countries. I don't think the international brand in South Africa play such a big role I think when they do a road show they will aim it to the local market and try to appeal to the local market but I don't think they go out of their way to really incorporate local thing. It's more like it is what it is and they do their marketing by slightly tweaking their marketing campaign to appeal more to South Africa but I don't think it's a big drive to adapt to the culture really. I don't think they put that much trouble to the local culture, to see what the culture it. I don't think the international brands look at the market as an aged based thing and appeal to market by using popular sport and music icon. I don't think they go to too much trouble to go local. I haven't tried local brands, but have seen a lot of billboard adverts, Drip Footwear I did go research to see it's a South African brand. The reason I have not tried them out is that I noticed they were more leisure wear shoe that you can wear with jeans and not your gym shoe. If it was a local brand of international standard by all means I wouldn't mind supporting them, I just at this point haven't found any brands. What I've found with local is that yes the price may be good but sometimes the quality is not that great or if it is a local brand that is good quality, it seems a bit pricey. But that aren't that many local brands that have captured my attention, I know about Drip but it hasn't intrigued me to investigate a bit more. Most of the time when I wear like the Walkers, when all the international brands were minimising your soles and making sure the shoe is light, they instead made thicker soles, and put more things on the shoe which made it heavier and unfortunately this would not be comfortable for me when I am running. When I buy a shoe for a specific sport and end up not wearing it, then I usually turn the shoe into leisure wear instead of using them for a sport, so I wear the Walkers for leisure. It's not that it's not a comfortable shoe it's just that I can't wear them for running. I don't have local brands that I have tried out I have seen them advertised.

Question 11

Does the social and environmental sustainability positioning of a brand mean anything to you? How so? How would such positioning influence you purchase decision?

I think in today's age or where we are now, I wouldn't actually buy a brand that doesn't give back to the environment. So normally if I do look at it, I like to look at soles and that they are made of recycled material or this is made from a lightweight material and its used less water to manufacture it. It does influence me I would be disappointed in the brand that I like is not into environmental sustainability. I think all companies should look at recycling at this point where we are.

Respondent 2 – Interview date – 4 November 2022

Question 1

I am a sneaker enthusiast, a designer who worked briefly for Adidas as well as a photographer.

Question 2

As a youngster, I was influenced by his older siblings when our parents would buy them branded sneakers such as Adidas. I told myself as a child when I grew older I would also get Adidas sneakers as there was a sentimental factor to me having this sneaker brand when I was older which connected me to my family. Other brand purchases which I use such as Nike, New West, Jordans are influenced by icons such as DMX, Colby and Michael Jordan.

Question 3

My loyalty towards the brands is based on factors such as technology ACG functional purpose and functionality. With Nike it is basically Innovation and Adidas it is the nostalgia, when I was younger and seeing my older siblings wearing the sneakers with pride.

Question 4

Not very accessible, my shoe size doesn't permit as it is not easy to get, so I get sizes now with resellers.

Question 5

The make and the design is what appeals to me first in the brands as well as the fact that when I was younger my parents bought Adidas sneakers to my older siblings.

Question 6

What appeals to me about these brands is comfort, affordability, the look and the material of the sneaker.

Question 7

It definitely does, I once bought a shoe that was more than R3k which I now regret, I now buy sneakers which are below R3k.

Question 8

I personally identify with the brands:

Adidas – I worked there for years and wore the brand as well as a youngster saw myself as an adult buying this brand and doing the same with my family as our parents did.

Nike – I see myself in terms of sportsmanship

Jordans – Nostalgia, when I am wearing these and having people in the community who know what the particular brand is about when Michael wore the brand or silhouette and what he was doing. It becomes a conversation starter.

Question 9

Yes, they motivate me looking at DMX, Colby and Michael Jordan. People I look up to in the various sphere when I am wearing the brands I feel I can be like these icons.

Question 10

There is a billboard in Sandton with Shekhana a South African musical icon with other local icons and Adidas has done a lot of collaborations with these young up and coming celebrities which is good and inspires the youth who also have aspirations in the various industries especially in the design spectrum that one day they can also work with these brands.

Question 11

The environmental sustainability positioning definitely encourages him to buy the brands. Although not many of the brands are leather these days only high-end sneakers such as Louise Vuitton, there are too many sneakers out there and it would be great to have more brands being committed to environmental sustainability.

Respondent 3 – Interview date – 29 November 2022

Question 1

Name is “F”, I’m a fitness instructor the reason you would have asked me for the interview is because as an instructor we wear sneaker/takkies a lot and we must be familiar with the brands so this would have been I think your reason to ask me. I’ve been an instructor for 4 years.

Question 2

It started when I was growing up, seeing my uncles and big brothers wearing Nike and I thought I would look cool wearing Nike, so this is where it started with me just to impress people. Not that I knew about the different brands and stuff, at the time it was just a name to me. Until I got into it in my line of work and I thought ok, now I know more about the different brands and I know which brand is good for me. The brand that I use is Nike, it has been in South Africa for some time I like their new sneakers, their new developments.

Question 3

My reasoning for loyalty is I feel you have to choose something and stick to it. Not that the other brands are not that good or as good, it’s just that for me it was about preference. I made a choice and I decided to stick with it and me sticking with it I think with the price range is affordable in comparison to the other brands such as Under Armour. It is more affordable for me although it can be more expensive at times, but I am able to find affordable Nike sneakers at times. I like the comfortability as in my line of work, especially with the jumping in studio it is possible to hurt yourself and that is why I need something that is more comfortable and I feel like since I have been using Nike, I haven’t been having so much problems and that is why I will stick to Nike it works for me and I see no reason why I should change something that works well for me.

Question 4

I can find the brand easily in places like Sportscene where there can be specials, as I work around the mall it is easier to find them cause I just wait for the right prices as Nike can be quite expensive these days, I just wait for them to reduce the price and buy them during specials. The full price, it is too expensive and will not be able to buy.

Question 5

Firstly it would be the design, I would have to be attracted to it I have to see it first and once I like it then I will say let me try it. You will find that when I wear it the comfortability of it is like I’m on top of a sponge, like I don’t feel anything like

I am walking smoothly. Yes so it started by being attracted to them then I had to wear them to see how it feels when I am wearing them.

Question 6

To be honest, I have outgrown that one to be quiet honest before I would go to SHESHA a sneaker outlet early in the morning at about 3am wait in the line just for a new sneaker. Back in those days as a youngster we wanted to attract and we'd walk in groups to show off who is wearing a new sneaker which has not been worn by someone else, back in the day when I was younger. Now things have changed, I now wear sneakers for my line of job so I don't feel my day as I'm working out cause now when I go to bed and I start feel my knees, and ankles start to hurt.

Question 7

Yes, at times it does cause I would want this kind of sneaker but because it is still new, I can't afford it at that time cause of the price range at the time and especially the economy of today you have to think before you buy something. Sometimes I have to wait for the new range of sneakers to go on special, but at times they don't go on special cause their out of stock and finished. Like an Airforce you can never find this line on special to be honest, every time they come out, they are bought out fast. So you have to save for these if you really want them. It's hard to spend money just on one thing I already own sneakers, so I can't just spend another R4k on sneakers as if it's just lying there waiting for sneakers. It has to be something I think through now that I'm grown up one day I have to start acting now before I have a family I have to find a way to say now this is how far I can go let me rather buy something that I will need. What I like about them if you buy something today, they will last you longer so I don't mind spending that R4k one time knowing it's going to last me 4 years. Then buying something/sneakers for R500 and you will still buy another after 6 months. So as much as it will cost you a lot of money, at least it will last you for a long time.

Question 8

Nike most of the time they use models they use people who look good. So when I'm wearing Nike I feel like I look as good as those models, when I'm wearing a t-shirt that will tighten me well and my nice sneakers are good I have the walk and all eyes are on me then I feel ok, like I'm proud of the Nike brand.

Question 9

Yes, cause most of the time you will know cause there is a new product or sneaker as these icon will advertise on tv, in magazines so on magazines they

will use celebrities like sport Christiano Ronaldo and when they use these icons, I will want to buy the sneakers. I think some things are more attractive when someone famous is wearing them. So yes they do make a difference to me. To me on my side the footballers will influence me your Neihmas when they're wearing the pumas, your Ronaldo on Nike CR7, Renaldo influences me so much that it started with the shoes but I'm now even wearing his perfume. That's how celebrities influence, you want to feel as good and important as they are. Start small by wanting to look like them by buying the sneakers and seeing that they are quite comfortable.

Question 10

I find that most of the designers come from the local people so they bring in those traditions from the different cultures, like the beading from the Zulu cultures, Pedi cultures, you find the takkies will have some symbol maybe a Shaka symbol, just to say this one was made in South Africa, it may be a brand from overseas but now as us South Africans will want to introduce it more to the youth. Cause we can't always import things there has to be something from and made in South Africa, even if you have to bring companies from overseas, but let us have our own designs and I feel like Nike has started doing and have been doing it for some time now, just giving people the platform to bring in those local ideas and I like the look sometimes the looks are good sometimes. I mean wearing something you feel proud of about yourself. Even if I have to go to the UK when I'm wearing the sneaker, it will say I'm South African I don't want to go there and only when I'm speaking they say where are you from but when I'm wearing things I look like them. No that's not ok, I feel like I want to introduce myself, especially when I'm visiting other places and by wearing something that says I am South African, I walk proudly.

Question 11

There are people that will complain on Instagram, twitter and how you treat the sneakers. Social media has an influence on sneaker, you end up getting people on social media, you can be introduced to people. You can get to know about various products of particular brands.

We are always welcome for improvement, like even now the cars are going electrical if we don't accept change on the improvement we will remain behind. The only thing I feel is that if there is a change, let it be affordable for everyone. I feel like when things come, it is only for a certain people and others are looked at later on cause now some people are able to experience the product whilst others are left with the left overs. I mean if they're going to come up with a product like that which is environmental conscious then it has to be afforded by everyone. Like a product of R3k is affordable in comparison to R50k like how

am I going to be able to buy that means it’s not made for me. So it has to be for everyone so that we can all have the same experience, let us all talk about it not only one person telling us about it and you can’t even comment on it.

As a person I am always looking for new things, so if you advertise the product if you will be using the models the good looking people and you say the sneaker Nike is new, then I say it looks good attractive, I will want to try it on and if its good affordable it will be something I would want to buy.

Respondent 4 – Interview date – 1 December 2022

Question 1

I'm a media enthusiast, went through undergrad where I did drama, television studies and did a lot of media related things went into in to film as well. I went into a lot of background in terms of what we see on tv so I got to learn about culture and I got involved in culture which is why I am a hip hop fan now and hence in the culture the hip hop culture there is a lot of shoe things involved and branding involved.

Question 2

I think I'm trying to shy away from looking at brands or from looking at names, cause one thing I've realised with access to information I've allowed myself to find what I am looking for and the colour scheme and the way that it looks and I can find it cheaper in different sites like the Alibaba express, the Shein, there is always ways to find that item which I am looking for cheaper. So the whole brand idea has sort of fallen away for me.

In terms of brands I would say I like Nike cause I grew up loving basketball and all the sports that I played basketball is the one that stuck out to me cause it related to the music that I listened to which is hip hop which has always been related to Nike. I'm not saying that I don't look at the others, but Nike has always just the brand that I will look at first then I will look at the others.

Question 3

For me more than anything its comfort and the way it makes me feel. I think it's only fair if I'm going to get dressed to be looked at but internally I'm uncomfortable it makes no sense. I'd like to of course be respectful to the occasion if there is an occasion or the place as they say "when in Rome do as the Romans do" so I try to make sure to keep to that part but I make sure that I am comfortable when I do it.

Question 4

One thing I have realised is that brands are relatively accessible at this point cause you can find them over Instagram, you can buy things on Instagram, you can buy stuff online straight from the store. There's a various number of stores that sell different versions of the same thing also if you are going to focus on the brand, then you're probably attached to it emotionally, that's what I'd like to think. It's like an emotional response or like an emotional response to that brand. But outside of that if you focus on looking good, there's a couple of things you can find, I mean people thrift nowadays I think that's the one thing. Thrifting is going to a shop and getting things cheap, almost second hand some

of them are like relatively cheap cause there would be something wrong with the stitching at the store and now people can go and find it and can pick it up for a 1/3 of the price. So for a person who thrift, you can actually find a Nike although the Nike could be vintage but they found it for a good R120.00 or at Park Station you can find some really good stuff.

Question 5

Emotional, too many memories thinking about the fact it's like having understood the story about who Phil Knight is and he used to be a tennis player how it grew from a tennis shoe to a basketball shoe because of Michael Jordan understanding the story of Michael Jordan from Michael Jordan to Spike Lee introduction which is now becoming a film thing it now becomes a cultural thing and that's how it builds its own culture. It becomes the culture and I think that's what I like the culture behind it, when you think of Nike you think "Just do It" the tagline. Perseverance, that always trying you think about them on the sports field they always champion, look at what they did with Lebron James, they supported a sports player who played for the NFL and what happened was during the national anthem he decided to take the knee cause he felt they weren't allowing black people their rights, cause the NFL was not prepared to have a discussion around that subject he took a decision to take the knee during the national anthem. This caused an outrage, other players decided to join in and Nike took a stand behind him cause I guess that's their whole ethos to stand behind somebody who is going to change. Their common status quo they "Just do It" and they persevere through whatever people think. I think that's why I'm attracted to it. It's an emotional thing.

Question 6

I think I'm more forgiving even if there is bad publicity about them I kind of forgive them more than any other brand. There is a certain level of trust whereby I'm trusting that whatever idea they came up with it's their new thing that's what they've been doing. If I didn't see it I will allow it to go through, if I did I will pretend I didn't see it, anyway it's not my interest. I allow that to be and more often than not they come up with stuff that I like so I can't really say if they do something that is not attractive I'd be more forgiving. I'm a big fan of culture of how you influence every part of a person's life, for example, if someone like Trevor Noah you associate him with comedy, with entertainment. If somebody says Nike to me, I immediately think basketball why? Lebron James, Michael Jordan just to name two. The story behind it me also trying to play basketball, Lebron James was a young man who at 18 got a million dollar contract was said to be pretty much one of the greatest players ever and since then hasn't had any bad scandals, except that he moved teams he's been an upstanding guy

that's inspiring for me and he maintains his loyalty with Nike. Again that's the association they're also loyal to him they built a centre in his hometown and they also have a Lebron James sports facility at Nike. Nike is also loyal Lebron James as a brand and that enables them to also make money through this.

Question 7

I'm in a bit of a weird spot cause I'm a guy with a big foot so to find a Nike that's a size 10 its highly unlikely that it is going to be beneath R1500.00 standard. So for me to go out and buy a Nike it has got to be "the shoe" that I really want. Which is difficult cause in one, South Africa the job market is not really open currently, though I don't want that to be the reason but it's a factor. Two, a branded shoe is not that important for me right now unfortunately it is not an asset so I can wait. I can get these in the lifetime when I have the money for this space in time. Nike is not affordable, if you can you can get a fake but are you willing to deal with looks of "its fake" but people talk about it being fake anyway if you get the real thing, so what's the point of getting "a brand" so what I think when I get a Nike I will make sure it's what I really want and I can afford it and I can make it happen right now.

Question 8

I think there's a manner in which that Nike has been associated with the hip hop culture, that for me is where I think the strongest link lies. I think for me hip hop is in everything now, so therefore the Nike will come along with me if I'm thinking about hip hop in terms of the sports, the athleticism Nike is a part of that if we're talking my favourite artist Kanye West who was once signed to Nike, had one of the biggest shoes ever Yeezes there was a Yeezy 1 and a Yeezy 2 before it went to Adidas so when Kanye West released Yeezy 2's they are considered the "red Octobers" it was a time when I also started listening to Kanye West music so you understand I first discover his music, the first shoes at the time is a Yeezy 2 it's a Nike "the Air", everyone is doing Nike the basketball players are doing the Yeezy's it's all there it's not far so the hip hop culture is the thing, that how I'm personally in it, that's how I identify with the brand.

Question 9

Yes, unfortunately yes. There are obviously times when the brand would or they would fall out and things wouldn't work out and that's acceptable but I like the shoes that say they have done with hip hop artists and the basketball players, some of the biggest basketball players are sponsored by Nike it's so unfortunate that why they don't have Steve Curry is because they didn't want him to write on the sneaker. He's the guy who shoots from anywhere, and his

team won the championship last year they were the best team and he is signed by Under Armour and I think that's probably why they're doing so well. So for myself I think because of Kanye West, Lebron James, Michael Jordan which is obviously the Jordans as well which is in itself a brand I'd like to be involved in, I'd like to buy but unfortunately I can't afford Air Jordans. As a basketball player everyday would be Air Jordan for me but of cause affordability. I think in a different time and space I would be able to get to that lifestyle and then be able to wear Air Jordans all the time but it's not a necessity like I said, I would wait until I am able to afford these.

Question 10

That's a difficult one, I don't think they have. I feel with the idea of a brand it has a character and because its American, you can't help but see things from an American's or America's perspective. What I mean to say is there's no one who's in South Africa I feel whose able to give them the cultural references that Nike jump on this do this, I've seen some collaborations they do but it's never, it's not as big as what they do in America, it's just for "Air" let's get some attention for person, I don't think it's ever genuine locally. I don't think locally they've allowed themselves to go the culture route, they're still going in America this is what goes, we'll add a bit of you but its "us".

Question 11

I love the fact that we started off with the affordability part of things, cause from my perspective as an African man in South Africa young in age and adult I'm not as enthusiastic as I am about culture. I have to be realistic in terms of what I can afford and unfortunately the stuff that is sustainably climate thinking is always so expensive. I mean I don't want to be pointing at brands, but I mean look at what people say about people who shop at Woolies vs people who shop at Spar. When Woolies advertises they think about health benefits, they're thinking this is organic. Spar they're selling you what they're selling you are you buying or not? They have a customer base cause people care for you or "good for you" that's their tagline. The point is for me it's difficult to be thinking about what they're doing in terms of climate and things global which are sustainable for the future. I'm stuck in a position where I'm thinking about what is it *gonna* serve me now. When I buy a shoe as a person with a size ten foot I have to think about this shoe how long is it *gonna* last me what am I *gonna* use it for, I can't just buy cause they use 30% less rubber and I was willing to pay an extra R500.00 I don't have that type of money so I think unfortunately that kind of falls away. At the end of the day for me its comfort and affordability.

I've had the opportunity of attending fashions shows recently and in South Africa we have a lot of talent, we have a lot of brands, diverse brands that could

be big but I think it is unfortunate that we are seeing it from a first world perspective we still have to get to the bottom of things whereby let's start with employment, let's get people employed where we can create competition, where we can have people now actually think about I have a preference for a brand and not think about price. Nowadays is South Africa we don't have the money we don't have an economic situation where we can make certain choices and that's the culture. Which means the brands that exist now are emerging that have the money to make things happen, I think they should think of lets make things comfortable for people here, let's make it affordable for people here, once everyone is able to. Imagine Mr Price is able to make affordable t-shirts, cargo pants, crocs cause this is what is in fashion right now, imagine if they could make that affordable for everyone sounds a little bland right, but everyone is speaking from a first world perspective people would rather move money out of a Louise Vuitton store and not be comfortable and rather have views of how do I look instead of being comfortable. Comfort and affordability is a necessity for us as South Africans.

At the point that I am right now, I wouldn't look at the local sneaker manufacturers as some of these brands were ordering from Ali Express. They're not necessarily making the sneakers themselves they don't have people who would say I made this shoe, it always seems it's not an original, it's seems like it's a copied version of something they hoped no one saw. So locally its *gonna* take some time, I appreciate that there are local brands especially as a person who's more into sneakers than I would any other shoe. It's so sad that now the first thing that they'd choose to do is buy in bulk, let's be innovative do the whole ground work learn how to design, go find out what make a difference between a Steve Madden shoe, a Jimmy choo if that's your forte. If you're doing sneakers, why is Puma able to sign people like Armelo Bova, Armelo Ball a basketball player that plays for the Sharp opponents, basically at 16 he was playing professionally and that is because his dad played for the NBA and then the dad started a brand for them called big baller brand. One of players who was signed onto the NBA by the brand, the shoes would break whilst he's playing. The same player ended up signing with Nike by the time the youngest of his kids ended up playing with the NBA he was playing professionally, he doesn't sign with Nike but he signs with Puma and it's not Puma is making the best innovation shoe, but how come they were able to catch his attention when his older brother is signed with Nike. So you see other people are making the effort other people are going out to find out let's find out how other brands are manufacturing their sneakers, find out about the laws. Everyone knows that Nike uses sweat shops, it's just that many people are enthusiastic about the brand. If South African creators I wish could make the effort to find out how to have the skill and have it so that when they present it to us we're not just taking

it as sheep, cause that's what it feels like. It feels like you've disrespected me as a consumer you're giving me something I can get cheaper, that to me is disrespectful. That's *gonna* hurt me emotionally therefore I will forever see that as a bad move. I would respect even a local manufacturer who can make 100 shoes at a go as long as they're innovative. It would be great if the local designers would share their skill with those that don't have it to create more jobs and create a culture of sharing the skill especially as South Africa has a high unemployment rate. Creating a legacy in the designs that locals make, Phil Knights, the guy that created Nike the fact that he gave the agent who signed up Michael Jordan it shows in the culture "Just do It" that person's perseverance, it is an emotional action. Why can't we create more soul in the content in the things that we can do in South Africa. It is the economy which at this point limits us, but surely that should make locals be more creative and find means to do it better, without the money. That's what we have always done as South Africans and Mzansi as the consumer country that we are we learn to improvise, to make out of nothing all the time. We found a way as a country to get around the traumas, that's the culture of being adaptable being different, being vibrant, going for it, I guess it's a Nike thing. South Africans have got the knowledge they need the people who have the know-how and share the skill, create the stuff and stop being just consumers have the knowledge and if we can do that now our legacy's will do the talking, our kids will be able to choose between Nike and or something local. It's not going to be the price it will be have you seen the KwaZulu Natal shoe of the year have you seen the new shoe, share the knowledge and create. So that we can be able to have the money to buy and spend and invest in ourselves.

Respondent 5 – Interview date – 4 December 2022

Question 1

I work in a gym, we wear sneakers every day.

Question 2

I use Nike most of the time, the decision for using Nike is comfortability cause I stand for more than 6 hours a day so if it is not a comfortable sneaker it won't make my 8 hours of working easier cause sometimes some sneakers if the sole is not comfortable I get pain on my heels, pain on my feet. So that is one thing that I don't like, so it is comfortability when I choose sneakers.

Question 3

Nike has been treating me fine for now, all the sneakers from the brand make my 8 hours more comfortable.

Question 4

Very accessible cause I can find them anywhere in the malls almost every mall has a shop that sells Nike sneakers.

Question 5

I don't know whether it is the style or the fact that it's the Nike shoe, but it appeals to me more than the other ones. I've tried the other ones like Adidas, still they don't appeal to me that much.

Question 6

The design, the colour, the sole, I don't want those big soles like I'm wearing a high heel, the sole must not be that thick sole but a thin one that I can run or stand comfortably in for long hours.

Question 7

Yes, affordability does affect cause I can't be going for a R2000.00 sneaker I can always go for an affordable one. Cause you can't wear an expensive sneaker and you're hungry you can't wear an expensive sneaker and you don't have money for transport so affordability does affect me choosing a sneaker.

Question 8

Because of the person that I am the only type of shoe that you will find is sneakers, sneakers is my lifestyle I wear sneakers every day, Sneakers make my life easier. I identify with Nike as my lifestyle, I'm always on the move.

Question 9

They do if I see somebody that I look up to maybe it's a musician, an actor, an artist wearing a Nike or an Adidas I'll go for that sneaker because I saw them wearing it. It does affect me choosing them.

Question 10

I think they do associate themselves with local culture but they need much involvement, cause what we as the youth do is we take it from outside the country and bring it back to South Africa so I think they must be there in our Kasi life advertising more. Now we look up to an American singer wearing a Nike shoe not a South African singer wearing a Nike shoe that's what we do.

The big multinationals like Nike might lose hold of people like me if the local brands cause sometimes we do want to identify with what is more of us, sometimes we want the identity to be more rooted in what is more of us than what is outside. If they do advertise them more, we might let go of the Nikes and want to identify with what is more of us than what is outside cause sometimes the identification should be rooted in what you are than what someone else is telling you. They might have a run for their money the Nikes and the Adidas over time.

Question 11

It wouldn't make a difference, and it would at sometimes cause when I am looking at these sneakers I am looking a longevity if the sneaker won't last for much I might go for other brands. When I go for Nike or Adidas I am looking at the sneaker to last me for years, so if they change the production of the sneaker to take into consideration the environment and this won't make the sneaker last, I won't go for it.

If I know that they treat workers in the factory badly, it will affect my buying the brand sneaker, if I don't know the production process it won't. I wouldn't want to associate myself with a brand or people that treat others badly.

Respondent 6 – Interview date – 7 December 2022

Question 1

I'm quite a sports fanatic and use an expensive brand of shoes when I workout.

Question 2

I have two brands which I use and the biggest influence are my group of friends especially at the gym. I sort of get the most information from them, although I can read articles about the shoes, I find that if I can speak to somebody and talk to them about their experience it just helps me make my decisions. I'm looking for cliques for my spinning and Sharon has been spinning for years and years and she's had different brands and tried different things so I just find that her opinion for me is almost more valuable than an article that I'll read or an advert that I'll see. Because I think on adverts everything looks amazing but then having people say why they like it or why they don't like a certain brand really affects my decision in the end. So my favourite brand has always been Nike and recently I was gifted a pair of Asics and now their my absolute favourite, their "my precious" I wear my Nikes for my everyday things and I use my Asics when I'm seriously running. I think the Nike I have always been a fan of because its quiet a sporty shoe, so there I was influenced by advertising. Since my first pair of Nikes I've always been happy and they last well and their comfortable and those are the things I look for in a shoe.

Question 3

I find that they're so expensive, I think that for a fashion shoe that would last for a season I would most probably experiment more and try a different brands and things if it's not a very expensive shoe, but because Nike is quiet expensive, I don't want to spend a lot of money and find that I'm not happy with the shoe in the end. That is why I think once I like something I sort of stick with it, so unless there's something with Nike that I buy and find that I'm not happy with it for some reason I would then consider other brands. So because it's a good brand, it lasts long and its comfortable those are my tick boxes that's why I just remain loyal I must say I hardly even pay attention to their advertising these days cause I know their good, cause when I look for a shoe, I look for them. But now that I've tried the Asics, I think they might just offer a bit of competition when I buy my next pair.

Question 4

The Nike I find is quite easily available and most of the stores have a couple of different options and colours and things like that so I find that I normally find variety of choice even though its within one brand. The Asics was gifted to me

and since I've always been a Nike girl I've always gone shopping for it so I'm not sure what sort of range is like.

Question 5

I think it's that I like that it's been like a long standing brand, they have a good reputation and I think it helps that they have been endorsed by all these sports people but in the long run I think it's been my own personal experience just that it's been a good quality shoe and its comfortable and that's what works for me.

Question 6

It definitely does appeal to me Nike keeps bringing those shoes with the air pockets and different soles and I think the more I get into running the more I realise how important some of those things can be if you really start running. I think each sport is different that is why I think I use the Asics for running whereas the Nike I'm using for cycling although now I think I might be looking for cliques for the cycling.

Question 7

It does I must say and that is why I stick to the brands that I know, cause when I invest in it I know its *gonna* last me a bit longer even although I have to spend a bit more I know it's like a longer term sort of investment. I think that sometimes you can go for cheaper products but you will have to buy them more often because they don't last as long.

Question 8

That's a little bit of a tricky one, I think it's because the Nike has been sort of my friend for a long time, I think I've built up a little bit of a trust relationship with the Nike cause I think for me it's like that with a lot of things that I have. Once I have a brand and I know that I can trust it and I know its delivering in what it says, then I stick with it and that's sort of why I've got this personal relationship with Nike. I think with the Asics from the time I sort of ran with it, it's been the most comfortable run that I've ever had so I just think for me that's sort of the personal things that I enjoy. Definitely with the Nike it's a trust thing, I think that I trust that if I buy a Nike it's going to be a good shoe it's *gonna* last me long and it's *gonna* perform. With the Asics I just think it was never on my radar since I got it I realised this is such a lovely shoe and I think it's really targeted for runners, they obviously do their research to get it right for runners and that sort of appeals to me from that point of view.

Question 9

You know what I think it does I think it creates awareness so it sort of plants that little seed and you know that people are wearing it and that its been talked about so I think that's where celebrities sort of put it on the radar and make you aware of the product, but I don't think they would influence my final decision. I think that I won't necessarily, cause a certain athlete is wearing a certain shoe I won't go out and buy it cause I like a certain athlete I would still fall back on my group of friends who use a different range of things and just get their opinion first so I think without the celebrities advertising it or whatever you call it, I might not be aware of it. I think it is important, but it won't influence my final.

Question 10

Not good, I think it really feels like an overseas product I don't feel I'm buying a local and it isn't a local product it doesn't have a South African vibe in it. It feels like I'm buying an overseas shoe and that's also you know where your whole project got me thinking, I think there's so many things that you know you could source locally but because we're so conditioned or set in our ways we do not open ourselves to local brands the way we should. I haven't seen any local brands, I actually went and googled and feel a bit embarrassed as a South African for not knowing more South African brands. What the local brands can do is associate themselves with people who actually use sneakers and try to get input in terms of their needs, they could go to local running clubs and gym's instead of getting endorsements or collaborations from celebrities and sports icons cause this can be quite expensive. There's many things to consider and until you speak to somebody who's been running and who can say, this is a beautiful shoe but you know what the toes are too narrow but if you're *gonna* hit the road with this it's *gonna* cause problems with how you stride and things like that and its things like that when you look at the shoe point of view you don't really see and you really need the input and celebrities like Somizi is not going to give that to you. You know what I think, people like Somizi and Anele put it on the radar so then people hear oh this is the shoe, its South African I've never heard of it , let me go have a look and then from there it will grow and you can do the research and see.

Question 11

Yes it does, I must say though I feel a bit guilty why are we buying these overseas products when I mean when you just consider it being made in another country, ship it here it doesn't make environmental sense. So I buy my brand cause I'm used to it, but with lockdown it sort of made us change, maybe we should continue that change even though we're out of lockdown and make us look at how we do things cause what we're doing right now is not working for

our environment. So buy local and support local I sort of feel guilty cause I keep on buying the same shoe just because it’s always what I’ve always done. I must get myself out of that and open myself up to option that could be better for the environment and for our country and maybe even for my running.

Respondent 7 – Interview date – 7 December 2022

Question 1

I use these brands and I don't mind using the local brands at all. I am into fitness and I would use these local brands as well. I don't really have a personal brand for me it's about quality cause you don't want to use something where you could injure yourself cause you've just bought yourself a cheap pair of takkies or something.

Question 2

I have to say personally I don't go into social media to go and look at what brands to buy, so I have adult children and they would kind of inform me of what trending or stuff like that or I would see somebody at the shop or at the gym or something nice and I would question that person where did you buy or I like it or questions like that. Social media for me is not a big thing where I have to go and follow so I can have a Nike or Adidas.

Question 3

If it is a specific brand it would be value for money, quality is definitely a big thing so if I like a specific thing and I feel like it's giving me my value I would continue using it and that's for me the only reason I'd be loyal

Question 4

I quiet think these days everything is easy to order on the app, online cause there's centre stores all over you don't have to get into your car and go driving all over. Cause online shopping is just in our faces, it's there all of the time and a lot of these brands have their own apps you just go into their own apps and just browse, I think it's quite accessible in this day and age.

Question 5

I quite like Adidas, but you know it's not a must, but I do quite like it cause I've used it previously. I feel like the reason it appeals to me I've used it's before and I like the quality the comfortability.

Question 6

Probably the colour, cause I feel a lot of these new designs that come out are too brightly coloured for me but I do think if it's a normal black shoe for me which is like easy to use whether you using it for casual or gym. So if the design is quite plain and simple for me, the plainer the better to be honest.

Question 7

Definitely the price would be cause I feel like some of these takkies and sneakers are terribly expensive. My daughter just recently bought her boyfriend a Nike for R5 500.00 for Christmas and I was like no I can't spend that kind of money on shoes. I just feel that because of the fact that fashion changes so quickly you know, comes in goes out and you've spent all that money on shoes so for me price does make an influence so I would rather go to the sales and buy my things on sale and get R1000 discount, for example. So price definitely does influence me, I'd rather go for another brand if that is the case then spend that. I also feel that these days when you buy a shoe, they don't last as long as their supposed to last you know. It's like if you're going to wear the same shoe for everyday of the week, it's not going to last and I just feel like I've spent so much money on a shoe and then maybe in six months' time I'm *gonna* have to replace it any way.

Question 8

I feel like I like to be like modern cause I have adult children and I have a daughter who has just come out of fashion school so I feel like sometimes you want to look nice and feel nice. If I am wearing a nice shoe call it Adidas shoe it makes me feel nice cause I am a part of what is happening keeping up with trend and that type of thing, I like to feel nice, fashionable and if it's the shoe that's going to do it then you know.

Question 9

It kind of does, I feel bad saying it if you do kind of see something cause I like reality shows and I sort of see something so and so is wearing this kind of shoe you know and I see that it kind of looks nice because we are influenced by other people so I definitely would be influenced but it would depend on the price cause you know these fashion people and these celebrities and whatever, but you know I just feel like I would be influenced by kind of spoiling myself.

Question 10

I think it does but I think in all cultures in our countries, sneakers are the thing. I see a lot of sneaker shops which shows there is an interest in sneakers in all cultures and I just think everyone just loves sneakers and loves takkies whether it's a sporty person or a non-sporty person it doesn't matter at what age you are I mean I do believe that it's what everyone loves wearing, comfortable I feel like it's a lot of what people feel comfortable in, stability I mean the elderly it doesn't matter what culture, I mean I feel like high heels have gone out and sneakers have come in you can wear it with your casual, fancy whatever. I mean I see

with matric dances boys are wearing sneakers and it actually looked quite nice I must say and it seems to be a trend for everyone.

Question 11

That will definitely influence my decision if that is the case I wouldn't support any brand any company same as a lot of brands that use animals I would definitely not support that brand at all irrespective. Environment is everything, so definitely not. If the brand is environmentally conscious I would definitely support the company, I mean nowadays it's important that these are labelled nicely or when the advert is on tv or in the shops there is some kind of information I like to read what things are about if there's a notice I like to read it and make sure that it is or their on the right path so it's important that they look at those things and explain what the process is yes, I would support it if its environmentally friendly and so on.

Respondent 8 – Interview date – 9 December 2022

Question 1

I'm a personal trainer, I've been in the fitness industry for 12 years I've seen a lot of people come and go through it, made a lot of people fitter and stronger through exercise.

Question 2

I would say with shoes in particular I suppose advertising gets a lot of people with regards to buying shoes but I found that a lot of shoes don't support your foot how they should. Your foot should be allowed to move and it should be contoured to a certain form. A lot of shoes I found I used to get shin splints when I wore certain shoes, especially shoes with a heel. So I found shoes from New Balance and they were nice shoes they were the only shoes that actually helped me get over my shin splint issues.

Question 3

It's just worked for me I haven't found any other shoe yet that's worked as well and helped me as much as New Balance shoes It is a tried and tested brand of shoe, you do get your Nike shoes which is a popular shoe as well, but I find they don't last as long either. I mean you pay absorbent price for them and they fall apart in a matter of few months. The New Balance seemed to have worked for me, I mean I had a pair for 5 years until they started giving in, at least it was value for money.

Question 4

I know there is a shop that's opened down the road at Fairlands walk it's a New Balance shop, I haven't been yet but I'd like to see what they have this December and maybe spoil myself with a nice pair. They do have variety, different heels, different shapes.

Question 5

I just like they've got nice style and the colours that they use on the shoes are also nice, they pop you know and it shapes nicely to the shape of my foot as well.

Question 6

Well the first thing I always look for is the shape of the shoe like I say, a lot of shoes that come out now are with that huge heel, which they also say separates you from the ground, as they say as a human you're supposed to be connected to the earth so shoes that have a higher platform and rubber between them I

don’t like that much as you don’t feel connected to the earth as you would with a flatter more less of a sole shoe. I never really go for the new brands if they bring out new stuff, I always wait until the price drops a little bit you know when they have a special but they’re a great shoe. Innovation which is new I would definitely be interested if its contoured to the shape of the foot.

Question 7

I’d say if you want a good shoe, you’re *gonna* have to pay for it if you want a comfortability of a good shoe, you’re going to have to pay for it so with regards to pricing I wouldn’t mind to spend a little bit more to get a good shoe.

Question 8

I feel great wearing New Balance, I think it’s a bit of a statement as well if you’ve got a bright pair of shoes you know everyone always looks at your shoes first before they see you. So it is a bit of a statement with regards to that but I always feel good wearing New Balance shoes, they are a lot lighter so I can perform, you are a little bit quicker on the feet there’s a lot more grip and ankle support so they definitely help you perform a bit better.

Question 9

I’m not one to follow the crowd, I like to follow my own route I mean if the shoe was nice enough I’d think about getting the shoe but a celebrity wearing it wouldn’t push me further in buying the shoe if it wasn’t nice.

Question 10

I don’t see a lot of people wearing New Balance that often but there are a few people that do so I think it does associate a lot with runners especially your walk run group. A lot of people in that community wear it and I mean it does affect the local community I would say. I think it’s a growing brand, people didn’t know about it before the more people wear it the people are interested in it and will buy it for themselves as well. I think if the brand found out what appeals to people in local culture the brand would be more known. There was a local brand I saw the other day it’s like a very comfortable shoe like your crocs it didn’t look like crocs but it’s like a boot. I’m all for supporting local brands cause it helps the community, I’m always on the lookout for local brands, but it’s not easy to find cause I think the advertising isn’t as good as your higher brands and international brands. If the local brands were more present, then the more people would know about these. I wouldn’t have known about Drip shoes if I hadn’t seen an advert or a billboard about them it’s sad that advertising is the only way that you can find out about something.

Question 11

Yes it would definitely push me towards buying the product, I mean we've got to look after our planet, we only got one you know so I'd definitely go with it with regards to that. In terms of how the brand treats its labourers during the production process, it would definitely affect my buying of the brand. I mean a lot of the time we don't know where the product is coming from and what its gone through so that would definitely affect my buying.

Respondent 9 – Interview date – 9 December 2022

Question 1

I work at a gym, I am a youth of 24 years. I've worked in a gym for 4 years have seen a lot of sneakers come and in and out have seen which ones are worn the most. I have my favourites here and there.

Question 2

I used to like wearing Adidas because it makes my foot look smaller cause I have big feet, so Adidas has a weird shape and it sort of makes the feet look smaller. It sort of makes a size 7/8 look like a size 6. But recently I've been really into Puma, so Puma is really cool right now, I don't know what it is, they have a lot flat shoes, I don't like flat shoes but it's pretty cool.

Question 3

Adidas has a lot of comfortable shoes and it makes my foot look small. Puma looks really nice with formal/casual clothing, It's very effortless.

Question 4

It is accessible, I save a bit, I try to buy a pair of sneakers every month. I try my best and am a sneaker collector.

Question 5

I choose Adidas over Nike, I don't like the tick it feels lazy. With Adidas it is so effortless, you could put it with anything and it just looks so nice as a label, like you could just put it anywhere and it works. I don't want to have a shoe with funny labels on it, like if I buy a bag and it has this huge print label on it, it doesn't make sense.

Question 6

It would have to be the shape and the colours, the way they intertwine the colours with the fabric. Fabric is very important, I don't like there's this fabric called pleather it wears off quickly, and if it's a white shoe it has to be leather if its fabric there's no point in buying it cause its *gonna* get dirty you are *gonna* go out and it will get dirty. Even if you do clean it, material is just bad.

Question 7

Yes it does, which is why I don't like to wear shoes that have a huge label on them cause it shows off a lifestyle that you don't actually have so as much as I may buy Adidas shoes I don't actually afford Adidas shoes randomly during the

week, I have to plan ahead for it, so they are a bit pricey, it's just nice to spoil yourself now and then.

It depends on the brand, so if I'm going for and Adidas or Puma. Puma naturally is not as expensive as Adidas or Nike. Nike I just don't bother, it has that tick I don't like that tick I don't understand you spend more money for me personally I think Nike is more expensive than Adidas then you spend more money and it has this huge tick which makes you look as if you have money it attracts the wrong kind of things, I don't like attention like that. Adidas may be pricey, but it is subtle Adidas you know what's going in your life.

Question 8

It is a very humble label from what I've seen, I like to being able to not flash what I have or not have. Nobody needs to know like sometimes you can wear an Adidas shoe or pants and people will not even know what brand it is. So like one day I was wearing this shoe and my friend says "I didn't know you were into Nike and I said "I'm not and she looked at it, like she had to like pay attention" until she saw its an Adidas shoe, so with the brand it's like you never know what's going on and even if you don't see the label you can tell it's a pretty good shoe. It is a classic shoe, although Nike also has some shoes which are classic, but with me it's that tick that I don't like.

There is another label that we wear at the gym it's called Underarmour, it's very subtle I like it a lot but it's a bit more expensive but it is very subtle, one day I would like to buy it. I didn't realise it was an expensive brand until this year when we were buying uniform for staff at the gym. One day when I am rich I will buy this brand.

As I am in the fitness industry I'd go for an Adidas shoe as I feel they are more comfortable, Nike is more fashion than it is for sports, they do obviously cater sports side but for comfort I'd go for Adidas. Puma I wouldn't go for it as a fitness shoe, I've never seen a nice one personally but otherwise they're not bad. Adidas has a foam in it they put in shoes now, it's very thick and very comfortable, different exercises for different shoes and my personal preference.

Question 9

No, I would think that looks nice but I wouldn't just buy it because of an icon or celebrity. There are shoes that would be advertised but until you go into the shop and see it and try it on. So if I was drawn to it because of someone I idolised than ok but I wouldn't buy it until I saw it on myself first.

Question 10

This is the first I hear about the local brands, so I will go research about them see them, I hope it's nice and I can try them out. It would be nice if there were a lot of local brands, we don't have a lot of local brands. At some stage I thought Converse was a local brand only to find that it isn't, so that kind of sucks.

No, I don't think Puma and Adidas are in touch with the local culture. Puma has a little touch and go here, there has been a lot of overseas actors trying to come into Africa. I don't think they're trying, they might use a lot of our resources cause I know we send a lot of resources over there to just have them send back to us and we buy it for more, no I don't think they're trying. If they would be more involved into local culture may draw me more to them, they're idea of pulling Africa to them like bright colours and petty shapes, there's more to Africa then bright colours and petty shapes and I'm not really a fan of bright colours that's what I'm saying but I'm African so if they could find a way to make the shoe subtle, pleasant and nice and African. Like Nike with the tick, if they could find a way to incorporate Africa, that would be great I would probably buy the shoe. There's no point of buying something you don't connect with.

Question 11

I feel very bad for saying that but my perspective on the environment will not change very much. I'm very to myself so as much as I can say, its bad to use like leather shoes to kill animals, but there's meat in the butcher which means animals are dying. Now putting all that stuff to waste at least make a shoe you got to use up everything cause it's just a waste. I see people would be don't kill the animals, but these animals are still being killed.

In terms of treating employees the wrong way, that I'm not a fan of but also China is very far there is nothing I can do about it at least if it was closer to home then maybe I could do something about it. If I stock buying a Adidas shoe or a Nike shoe that's just one portion out of a million it doesn't really change anything, whereas I can buy the shoe and look nice as long as I'm not in that company there's not much I can do about it.

Respondent 10 – Interview date – 10 December 2022

Question 1

I normally tell everyone about my love for sneakers and expensive sneakers and I do collect sneakers, it's an expensive process and not a cheap process but also a fun process. That's the love of sneakers that I have.

Question 2

Preferably, I do select Nike but there is different types of brands that I would buy like your Vans, Adidas, Puma but preferably Nike and Jordans as well specifically because the limited sneakers that you get are quite pricey and the resale on them basically doubles what you bought them for hence I appreciate the specific brands. It is an investment, sneakers have become and investment, there is a pop up event that's called sneaker exchange let's say I couldn't get my hands on a specific sneaker but I do have another limited edition sneaker that I am getting tired of , you get to a sneaker exchange they change if your box is in good condition and they obviously give you what the value of what you have and you can exchange it for something else you have seen. It's like a give and a take, but look you have worn the sneaker maybe once or twice but obviously it's still in good condition if I couldn't get the sneaker at the time and am at the sneaker exchange and have something I would like to let go and you get that sneaker so yes there is places like that, it is like a culture.

Question 3

The reason I am loyal to Jordan and Nike is because their release on leisure wear is far nicer than that of Puma and Adidas. The reason why I'm saying that is their more sports focussed and Nike and Jordan have become more leisure focussed you look nice wearing it and it's not so sporty. So you look nice wearing a shorts with a Nike, with the Adidas with the basketball sneakers they look more sporty than they do leisure. I do select the Jordans, Nike Airforces.

Question 4

As a collector its very accessible, it's just that when you're looking for the limited kind of sneaker you actually have to take your time out to do your research like it sometimes take up to 4 months to get the type of sneaker you're actually looking for, but you do get the ones that are everyday wear, the easier accessible from the Nike factories, your Woodmead centres your malls, there's shops that do sell your everyday kind of wear but the limited edition you really have to do your homework and search and try and see which will give you the best price for it. So instance your archive, your court order to buy my sneakers your tetoller and all of those you can look online.

Question 5

What appeals to me about the brand is basically the comfort and the longevity of it so it's not something that you'll wear for a few months and disintegrates no, the quality that they're made from the longevity obviously that's what caught me from the word go, the longevity, the quality and the comfort, The soles are comfortable.

Question 6

So for me what I look out for is when you release a sneaker, it needs to be eye catching and it needs to be better than something that has been there before. So look you have your Airforce One they all look the same but they add to them. Your Jordan ones they all look the same but this side there may be a colour where, laces differentiation, sole maybe has something different on it or the tags that they come with are made different. With the Airforce ones you get the platinum tags, the colourful tags, the plastic tags, it all represents the different styles of airforces, like golden tags you know its limited edition, the silver tags it certain like you get the NBA editions, there's lots of editions but what stands out for me its colour wear the lace differentiation and if they've gone out of their way to be eye catching, it needs to be eye catching and innovation as well.

Question 7

So somebody asked me a similar question yesterday and they said "how do I afford these kind of sneakers" at the average pay for me personally obviously you're constantly looking, constantly searching so you know when the drop will be so obviously you have your side hustle's and you as an individual will know what you do to have money. So for me I don't just harshly decide I'm *gonna* buy a sneaker today I obviously save towards it put money away towards it cause it's not the cheapest of cultures to be in so obviously preparation is important.

Me personally I save months on end to get a specific sneaker at a time, like 2 years ago I bought a Jordan four redro at the time it was going for R7 500.00 now its priced at R15 000.00 you understand so it's not something that you can take out of your pocket and say hey I have R15000. 00 for a sneaker. Right now I'm in the process of preparing for a Jordan four redro oreo so it's not easy, that's another R11500.00 you can't just take out of your pocket obviously put money away. So price obviously means the higher the price the more I can resell for.

When I was in school, I never understood why people would get upset if you stepped on their sneakers at that time I wasn't a sneaker head. Now I understand the money you put into it and you get out of it, it brings you to a point where you would be angered, so yes it has brought me to a point where

you meet certain people, also remember people take notice of your shoes before looking at the clothes you're wearing so automatically you get into a night club, for example, and people take notice of you and their under the impression, it gives you a status and they see he's monied some time of respect. Especially if you have on a really limited edition sneaker if you walk into a food lovers market down the road, for example, and people who understand sneakers they look at you like bro they understand, so it gives you a level of respect and status it does make you meet certain people it does make you meet different cultures. It also influences the person you become so like I said I was never a sneaker head, now I know how to look after instead of buying and wearing as I please.

There's products that help you with maintaining the sneakers, but it's also expensive but you're also not going to waste it. But the lesser you wear the sneaker, the longer you keep it but there are products to keep the sneakers in good condition. Sneakers are a starter of many conversations.

Question 8

The way I dress is not the same way my brother would dress, so the reason I prefer Airforce ones is they go well with shorts and skinny jeans that's me. Whereas my brother prefers a pant that sags so he would rather prefer a high top that goes with that obviously Nike does give you that Jordans does give you that, Adidas unfortunately doesn't give you that Puma also doesn't give you that. They do have nice casuals but that's for your formal where you would wear chino, v neck or a polo t-shirt that's if you would want to be semi formal.

Nike would give you that too, but with more Airforce, so I would wear a skinny suit on a night out with the Airforce One I can't do that with the air derose it doesn't make sense. Personally the way I identify with the brand is according to the occasion, a sneaker would be for that occasion.

Question 9

So for me to have bought something it would have had to have value, so why I would be influenced by a collab to have bought a particular sneaker, I'll give you Michael Jordan, for example, Jordan one was his first ambassadorship or endorsement with that said he started out at the Chicago Bulls and then moved to LA Lakers so there's a Jordan one that's called the Chicago PLA it's worth a lot, there's two renditions of it, the first one is where the one sneaker is the red and black of the Chicago Bulls and the yellow and purple of the LA Lakers and at the back it has the bull and the palm trees for LA. So those sneakers come in two different colours, its one right may be red and black and left may be yellow and purple and for that specific sneaker it's a particular amount and when I say

particular amount its easily over R50 to R60 k. So that influences value and the resale amount of that in South Africa can easily be R120k so you making your profit double, so that influences a lot of buys but then again the sneaker is only made a certain amount of so it's like a fight back and forth.

Jordan Dior collab same thing, Black Coffee has one there was a meme on social media about it where in South Africa it would be about R359k where he said he's wearing a Polo VW 8 so there was a whole big thing about it. So to me a collab is dependant of the value, people fight for the collab because of the value they can get out of it. Hence I would look at the value first before I can make a buy. If its *gonna* cost me R15k it should be giving me R25k in the end. There is value in sneakers.

Question 10

The brand speaks for itself, no matter where you go whether it's a tavern, a park, a club, a picnic you'll always find someone with an Airforce One, Jordan one, a puma, an Adidas so everyone is influenced by the name more than how the sneaker looks and it's your preference. If you're a Nike guy, you will buy a Nike an Adidas you will buy Adidas that's just how I see it but locally, celebrities will have an answer to that. If I see a Cassper wearing that and I am a fan I will be influenced to buy it if I see AKA wearing an Adidas I'm *gonna* chase Adidas, If I'm a Yeezy fan I will buy Yeezy. For me it's more than what the celebrity wears, influences itself with the labels.

I do know a few local brands like the Drip from Cassper I know Bathu it's very nice its doing very well right now, like how you influence the local people and get the celeb to endorse. Drip has already been under a celebrity Cassper, Bathu I see Khanyi Mbau is a big ambassador the brands weren't really known until those people you see that is why I say local influence is coming from the celebrity you put behind them and that makes the difference cause obviously. Khanyi, Somizi, Cassper have a status they are wearing this so it must be nice maybe it would give me the same time of feel for that moment and that's what people chase and that's how exactly it is in the sneaker culture. For example, I have a pair of Louise Airforce ones and if I walk into a place I will walk with my head up high cause I spent R500k for the shoe no one's *gonna* tell me. It just gives you a certain feeling for the moment.

I would give Drip and Bathu shoes a try as a "sneaker head" but it needs to be a style that has say, for example, the selection that I would make would be depending for an occasion that I would be attending. Bathu has a thin sole and it has a sort of embroidery look so for me personally I have a lot of friends who are into their cultural activities, so me wearing Bathu shoes with a suit in one of

their weddings or a cultural event it makes sense to me so that is how I would plan my outfit towards that.

With Drip which is sporty if I know I'm going away we're going camping, for the hike I would spend money on the local brands obviously according to the occasion.

Question 11

For me personally I don't believe in child labour and all of that but what Nike does in terms of using factories in China which don't consider labour laws and how it treats it workers it doesn't influence my buying the product because if I like the sneaker I'm going to buy the sneaker for me it's about the purchase and not about who made it, but if I like the sneaker and I have the money to buy it then why not. I understand that Nike is a company and they have their own rules and regulations and how they work. They've had fights with so and so and the sneaker was still produced, like with vegans if they want to be vegans and I need meat to sustain my protein, I work in a gym environment I'm not going to stop eating meat cause somebody else doesn't that's just how I am not saying it heartlessly or like they have their view and I have mine and that's just how I stand by it so I can't fight you for what you believe in and I can't fight you for what you believe in and environmentally I'm not an environmentalist I do understand that it's nice to save our ozone layer. I know that the Nike and Puma they do have their recycling products like your Yeezys, Airforce ones have a cockscrew addition they recycle plastic and paper where the soles are actually very light. So they have done their work to give back. So I wouldn't say I hold that against them, it's the same like woman like their fur other people don't like the fact that you're killing an animal for the fur. So for me it doesn't influence my buying at all.