

Brand personality and consumer product choice

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ABSTRACT

A brand is an important, but intangible asset of a company. The relationship between the brand and the consumer is one of the key dimensions of customer-based brand equity, and brand personality provides substance to that relationship.

A problem is how best to position the personality of the brand in order to leverage consumer relationships with the brand. Although a substantial amount of research has examined the constructs of brand personality, there is limited research that examines how the broad spectrum of brand personality traits impact consumer relationships with the brand. This research examined the impact of brand personality on consumer relationships by studying four brands that brought a broad spectrum of personality traits. The author aimed to determine the relationship between brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment to the brand and intent to purchase.

The questionnaire was developed using construct scales from previous researchers, and the constructs were validated for reliability and validity. Data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire from 198 respondents who stated that they owned one of the laptop brands Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard and IBM/Lenovo. This research brings new findings in addition to confirming existing research.

Major findings of this research are that the competence trait is important for building trust in a brand. A new finding is that excitement and sophistication play an important role in building brand attachment and affective brand commitment.

Another key finding is that building trust in the brand, while important, is not enough to achieve purchase intent. The key message from this research is that customer-based brand equity can be increased by positioning the brand as competent and exciting.

DECLARATION

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

Liziwe Laura Mda

Signed at

On the day of 2013

DEDICATION

To my family, thank you for the support. I would like to extend my appreciation to my father Sastri Mda, my brothers Sonwabo, Siyazi and Slingsby Mda, and to my daughter Ncumisa Mda.

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Thank you to my supervisor, Yvonne Saini for her guidance in this research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to describe the effect of brand personality on consumer purchase choices. The approach used is to describe the relationship between brand personality and consumer relationships with the brand, such as trust, attachment and commitment. In so doing we look at the self-expressive properties of brand personality and how it can serve as a conduit for consumer relationship with a brand.

This research is partially based on the research of Bouhlef *et al.* (2009a) who studied the impact of brand personality on intent to purchase a fashion brand in North Africa.

The limitation of Bouhlef *et al.*'s (2009) research is that it studied one brand whose responsive personality traits were sincerity and competence. Therefore out of the five brand personality traits only the effect of sincerity and competence was studied. Brand personality dimensions may vary in the degree to which they affect trust, attachment and commitment to a brand.

This research overcomes the limitation of Bouhlef *et al.*'s (2009) research by investigating four brands, including brands that have been described as exciting, sophisticated and competent, in order to include a broad spectrum of brand personality traits in the study.

Furthermore, this research is inspired by Keller and Lehmann (2006) who pointed out that the influence of brand personality on consumer choice is an important research area that needs further exploration.

The product category chosen for this research is the laptop computer. The reason for the choice is that it is a high involvement product category (Punyatoya, 2011) and therefore lends itself to examining consumer relationships with the brand.

Furthermore the laptop industry is highly competitive, technologically intensive and therefore fast-changing due to innovation, research and development breakthrough (Keller *et al.*, 2008). In dealing with competition Porter (1998) argues that product features do not provide a sustainable competitive advantage as they can easily be copied by the competition.

Branding implications of the short product lifecycle of technological products are that it is important to establish brand awareness and a rich brand image. It is also important to use brand personality to gain a competitive advantage by distinguishing the brand from competition, and to build lasting relationships with the consumer (Keller *et al.*, 2008). It is also important to build strong credibility associations with the brand as consumer's perceptions of credibility and trustworthiness are important in a high-tech context (Keller *et al.*, 2008).

Brand personality is one of the means that a company can use to build active relationships with the consumer in order to achieve favourable consumer responses to the brand and increase customer based brand equity (Keller, 2001). Furthermore, it can be used as a basis for marketing and communication strategy. Keller and Richey (2006) highlight the importance of corporate brand personality traits in achieving a successful business.

This research was carried out in the South African cultural context. Brand personality is sensitive to the cultural context (Aaker and Benet-Martinez, 2001). Fearon (2003) discusses cultural diversity, and cultural differences motivate a study in the South African context.

1.2 Structure of the research report

The structure of this research report is as follows: Chapter 1 discusses the relevant background of the laptop industry. Then we discuss the relevance of brand personality, and the reason for the four laptop brands that were used in this research. Then we conduct a Porter's 5 force analysis of the laptop industry. We then discuss the research problem and the significance of this study.

The next chapter is the literature review where discuss consumer behaviour. After that we discuss brand personality and how it forms a basis for consumer relationships with the brand and enables positioning of the brand and establishing a competitive advantage. We explore the relationship between brand personality, attachment, trust, commitment and draw propositions for this research. The following chapter then discusses the research method that was used to analyse the research data.

In Chapter 3 we discuss the research method and the construct scales used in this research. The results are presented in Chapter 4. This is followed by a discussion of the results and how they compare with previous research in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 provides the conclusions and the recommendations of this research.

1.3 Context of the study

1.3.1 Background

The anthropomorphism of a brand allows marketers and consumers to impute human characteristics to a brand, which are then used as a basis to form consumer relationships with the brand (Aaker, 1997). Furthermore Aaker posits that these consumer-brand relationships can be similar to the way that people form relationships with others. The relationship between consumers and the brand is a key driver of the financial value of the brand to the firm, the brand equity (Keller, 2001).

Brand personality is an appropriate metaphor for laptop brands as indicated in published research. Maehle *et al.* (2011) state that technical brands with 'cool' designs such as Apple are perceived by consumers as exciting. Phau and Lau (2000) state that Hewlett-Packard evokes competence. The laptop brands that were used in this study are Hewlett Packard, Dell, IBM/Lenovo and Apple. These brands were selected based on market share and the personality that has been ascribed to each of these brands.

1.3.2 Laptop market in South Africa

According to Computers in South Africa (2011) the value of the computer market in South Africa is expected to be worth more than R36-billion in 2013, and growing faster than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), at a rate of 10% per annum. Furthermore market penetration is less than 10% of the South African population due to disposable income constraints.

The vast majority, approximately 94% of laptops on the market, are manufactured by Original Design Manufacturers (ODM) which are mostly Taiwanese multinational companies with manufacturing facilities in China. ODMs sell the laptops in business-to-business supply contracts to companies like Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard, Toshiba, IBM, et cetera who in turn sell the laptops to retail consumers. The market share for laptops, notebooks and computers, excluding netbooks, is given in Table 1.3.2.1

Table 1.3.2.1: Market share for computers and laptops sourced from Gartner Newsroom (2011)

<u>Brand</u>	<u>Market share (%)</u>
Hewlett-Packard	17.5
Acer	12.0
Dell	12.5
Lenovo /IBM	8.7
Toshiba	5.2
Apple	<9

Sourced from Garter Newsroom (2011)

1.3.3 Porter 5 force analysis of the laptop industry

Rivalry – High

The laptop industry is characterised by a few major brands and niche brands. Barriers to entry are high technological costs for research and development and intellectual property rights. Economies of scale favour large scale firms to minimise per unit costs. Rivalry is high in this high-tech industry. Companies compete by innovation and the strength of the brand, distinguishing the brand from competition, and price. The personality of the brand is used to position the brand in order to elicit favourable responses from consumers.

Bargaining power of suppliers – Low

The bargaining power of suppliers is low due to competition and availability of alternative suppliers. Suppliers typically provide raw materials, manufacturing labour. Suppliers also provide processors and software. Strategic alliances are formed with software providers. Firms make use of arbitrage opportunities by manufacturing in low labour cost countries.

Bargaining power of buyers – Low

The bargaining power of customers is low as ordinary consumers are not organised. However the bargaining power of high volume buyers is medium as they can leverage economies of scale.

Price elasticity is evident and the firm has to consider market share trade-offs in developing pricing strategy. Switching costs are low as technology products become obsolete which gives an opportunity for the consumer to update the product.

The identity of the brand is critical as the consumer has limited time and cognitive ability to evaluate the information, and therefore uses brand identity to make purchase decisions. Therefore marketing managers have to position the identity of the brand favourably and effectively communicate the benefits associated with the brand.

Threat of substitution – Medium

The threat of substitution of laptops is from other mobile applications like netbooks, tablets (example iPad) and mobile phones.

Threat of new entrants - High

The threat of new entrants is present in the form of companies seeking brand extension into a different product category.

The conclusion from the Porter 5 force analysis of the laptop market is that brands have to develop effective marketing strategies to position the brand favourably in the mind of the consumer.

1.4 Problem statement

1.4.1 *Main problem*

The main problem is to describe the relationship between brand personality and consumer choices. This is done by describing the relationship between brand personality, brand trust, attachment to the brand, the consumer's commitment to the brand and the intent to purchase.

Relevant key words are brand identity, brand personality, consumer behaviour, brand equity, brand trust, brand attachment, brand commitment and buying intent.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study fills a gap in that it examines a broad spectrum of brand personality traits and how these traits impact consumer relationships with the brand and consumer purchase decisions.

The study is intended to be of value to marketing managers as it sheds light on how they can position the brand personality in order to elicit a favourable response from consumers. The study is therefore intended to be used as a basis for developing appropriate marketing and communication strategies.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The scope of the study is within the cultural context of South Africa, and the product category is laptop brands.

As brand personality is sensitive to a cultural context (Aaker, 2001) this study is intended to be applicable in the South African context.

1.7 Definition of terms

1.7.1 *Definition of a brand*

Keller (2008:3) defines a brand as “something that has actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, and prominence in the market place”. And in terms of Keller’s definition, what distinguishes a brand and gives it equity is the sum of consumer’s perceptions and feelings about the product attributes, the performance, the company associated with the brand name and what it stands for. Some brands create a competitive advantage with product performance and others via non-product related means, by understanding consumer motivation and aspirations and creating the relevant images around their brand.

Definition of brand personality

Aaker and Fournier (1995) define brand personality as a personification of a brand. Attributing personality to a brand requires the brand to act with intention.

Furthermore consumers can make inferences about the brand’s personality and character based on observed behaviours.

Definition of a laptop computer

This study includes laptop computers and notebooks. It excludes netbooks. In this research a laptop and a notebook mean a portable computer, but the subtle difference is size. The common size for a laptop ranges from 13 to 17 inches in length, and a notebook sizes ranges from 15.4 to 19 inches.

Netbooks are designed as portable computers for web surfing and email on the go and therefore their Intel Atom processor has less power than the one used in laptops and notebooks. The size of a netbook is between 7 and 10 inches in length. This

study excludes netbooks as the market share structure is different from that of laptops and notebooks.

1.8 Assumptions

The assumption is that buyers of laptop computers for business, educational, and recreational purpose have sufficient knowledge about their reason for the brand choice. The scope of the research excludes bulk business-to- business buyers.

It is also assumed that people who have purchased a particular laptop brand have been exposed to other brands during the search process and hence can comment on its brand personality in the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review provides a theoretical background for this research, as well as the definitions, framework, concepts and models. There are a number of publications in the field of brand personality and consumer behaviour. This literature review discusses and analyses what has been discovered so far on this research topic.

The structure of this literature review is as follows: we first review work on consumer behaviour. After that we review publications on the impact of brand personality on consumer behaviour. We then discuss the theoretical framework of the relationship between brand personality, brand attachment, brand trust and consumers' commitment to the brand. Finally the literature review is used to develop propositions for the research.

2.2. Theoretical framework for the research

2.2.1. *Consumer behaviour*

According to Kotler (2010) consumer's choice is impacted by the environment and emotion as well as a decision process. The stimulus model of buyer behaviour noted by Kotler *et al.* (2010) is that marketing and other stimuli enter the 'black box' of the consumer to produce buyer responses. The stimuli can be marketing cues like product, price, placement, promotion, or environmental stimuli like economic, political, technological, sociological and cultural cues. The consumer's black box is determined by the buyer's characteristics and decision process. The buyer's response to these stimuli can be product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, timing of purchase and purchase amount.

Peter and Olson (2005) treat the buyer decision process as a goal-directed, problem-solving process. In terms of Peter and Olson's model the consumer's problem-solving process is a continuous stream of interaction between environmental factors, cognitive and affective processes and behavioural actions. The generic model of consumer problem-solving consists of problem recognition, information search, evaluating alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase evaluation, and is illustrated in Figure 2.2.1.

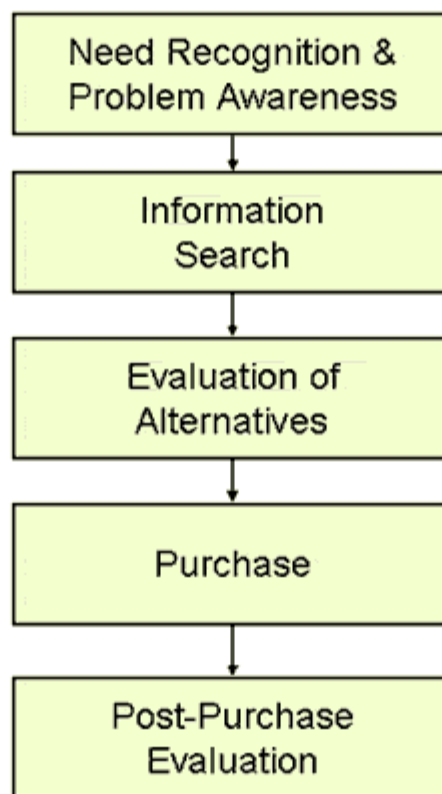


Figure 2.2.1 Generic model of consumer problem solving

Peter and Olson (2005) highlight the limitation of the generic model of consumer decision process in that it assumes a linear sequence which is seldom representative of the actual problem-solving process by the consumer. Furthermore it does not recognise that consumer problem-solving involves multiple problems and multiple decisions. Paul and Olson propose instead a model that allows for a continuous flow of interaction between behaviour, environment, cognition and multiple decision processes.

The consumer's choice alternatives are different product classes, product forms, models and brands. The consumer may also consider the retailer and method of payment. Discriminant consequences can be used as choice criteria like product performance, psychological consequences (e.g. admiration), and value consequences like sense of achievement. As consumers have limited time, energy and cognitive capacity, they do not usually consider all the possible combinations of alternatives but rather a subset thereof, called the consideration set.

Furthermore, during problem-solving consumers can construct a consideration set of brand choice alternatives which includes 'evoked set' of brands (activated from memory in the consumer's mind), unrecalled brands and unknown brands. Choice alternatives generate purchase options to be evaluated in the decision process. Marketing strategies must therefore increase the likelihood that the brand will be activated in the consumer's minds and included in the 'evoked set' of choice alternatives. Furthermore, a higher market share gives the brand an advantage of evoked category due to high consumer exposure to the brand.

A brand's presence in the consumer's mind can also be influenced by the company's distribution strategy as exposure increases awareness. Packaging design can also influence consideration set and choice.

According to Keller *et al.* (2008) consumer behaviour is determined by outcomes of brand equity, price elasticity and brand choice preference. Furthermore, Keller posits that customer based brand equity results in the creation of a strong brand and this is

achieved when brand awareness and image are at high level in the consumer's memory.

According to Sriram *et al.* (2010), for technology products a consideration is that their price decreases over time while the quality improves over time, therefore the behaviour of the consumer is forward looking. Consumers take into account the durability of the product and seek a trade-off between time of purchase, price at the time of purchase and the stream of utilities derived from the technology product. In addition consumers may be willing to trade-off price and quality. Furthermore Farzana (2012) notes that product features like battery life can be a factor in laptop choice, and consumers' perception for choosing laptop brands relies on sources of information like newspapers and websites.

Kotler *et al.* (2010) posit that products vary in the degree of buyer involvement required to make a purchase decision. There is high consumer involvement where the product is expensive; not bought frequently and where there is a high risk of making the wrong choice.

In this case, the consumer exhibits complex buying behaviour where the buyer tries to find out more technical information about the product category. The buyer processes this information through a learning process and develops beliefs about the product, and then makes a decision. Due to fast change in products, consumers may not have the cognitive ability to evaluate the strength of the product features, and therefore rely more on the reputation of the brand. Dissonance reducing buying behaviour occurs when there is a high degree of buyer involvement but the buyer sees very little difference between the brands and therefore engages in complex buying behaviour like comparing features, price and brands. In order to reduce post-purchase dissonance, marketers must provide after-sales communication to reassure consumers that they made the right choice.

2.2.2. Consumer personality, self-concept and buying behaviour

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) posits that factors determining consumer behaviour and marketing strategies are motivation, personality and emotion. Motivations are classified into cognitive, affective, focus on preserving status quo and growth. Cognitive consistency motives reflect the need to achieve consistency between one's attitude, behaviours and self-image. Hawkins *et al.* (1995) posit that motives drive the goals of a consumer while the personality directs the consumer's behaviour in accomplishing those goals. Schiffman (2009) highlight the importance of understanding the motives of the target market in order to develop appropriate marketing strategies.

Mowen (1995) defines the self-concept as the individual's thoughts and feelings about himself. Furthermore the self-concept forms part of an individual's personality due to the need to behave consistently with the self-concept. Dimensions of self-concept are actual-self, ideal-self, social-self, expected-self and the extended-self (Mowen, 1995). Furthermore, the actual self-concept relates to how a person perceives himself or herself; the ideal self-concept is how the person would like to perceive himself or herself. The expected self is how a person is expected to behave. The extended self is where people define themselves by their possessions (Mowen, 1995).

Consumers sometimes choose products that are congruent with the personality of their actual self-concept, and other times consumers may choose products that are congruent with their ideal self, for example to bolster an area that they feel is weak (Mothersbaugh and David, 2010). Mowen (1995) notes that consumers may use products as symbols to communicate their self-concept to their reference group in order to achieve a desired perception.

Mothersbaugh and David (2010) argue that behaviour is influenced by the individual's personality traits and circumstances. The five-factor model of personality

is based on Digman (1990) and consists of extroversion, instability, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientious.

Brand personality is one of the images of a brand that the consumer uses to form an impression of the brand. Brand personality can create expectation about a brand. Aaker (1997) argues that it is used as a basis to form relationships with the brand. Relationship between brand image and consumer self-concept influences buying behaviour to seek products that maintain or improve the consumer's self-concept.

2.2.3. Customer based brand equity

The customer based brand equity model of Keller (2001) is built on the premise that “the power of a brand resides in the minds of customers” (Keller, 2001:3). Building strong brands, with high customer-based brand equity has benefits of increased customer loyalty. It also reduces vulnerability to competitors' marketing campaigns, achieves a favourable response to price increases, helps the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and enables brand extension.

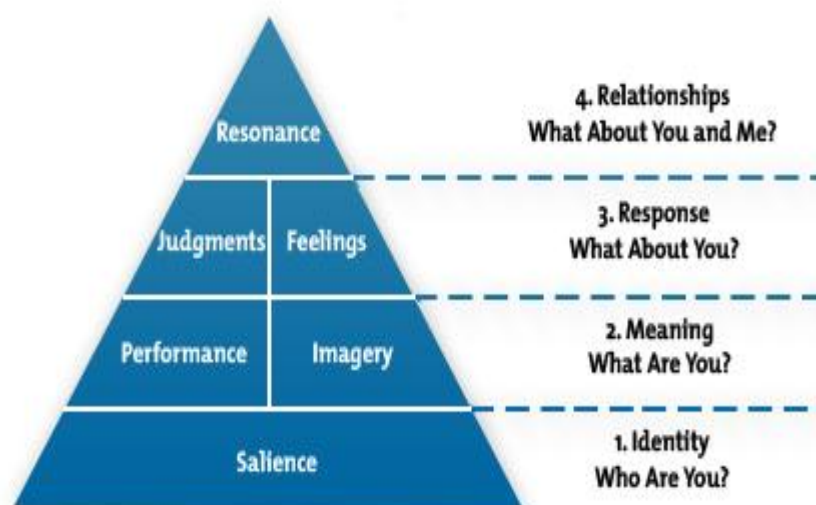


Figure 2.2.2.1 Customer based brand equity model of Keller (2001)

Keller's customer based brand equity model identifies four pillars to building strong brands. These are: building a brand identity so that customers identify the brand with that product category, establishing brand meaning by identifying intangible benefits associated with the brand, eliciting favourable customer responses to the brand identity and meaning, and building active loyal relationships between the customer and the brand.

Keller argues that achieving significant brand equity involves reaching the pinnacle of the customer-based brand equity model indicated in figure 2.2.2.1. At the pinnacle is where the brand resonates with consumers and achieves strong consumer-brand relationships that exhibit community engagement, attachment and loyalty to the brand.

In terms of Aaker's brand identity planning model in figure 2.2.2.2, brand personality provides self-expressive benefits, emotional benefits, credibility and forms a basis for consumer-brand relationships. Therefore brand personality can increase customer-based brand equity by providing a means of forming customer-brand relationships.

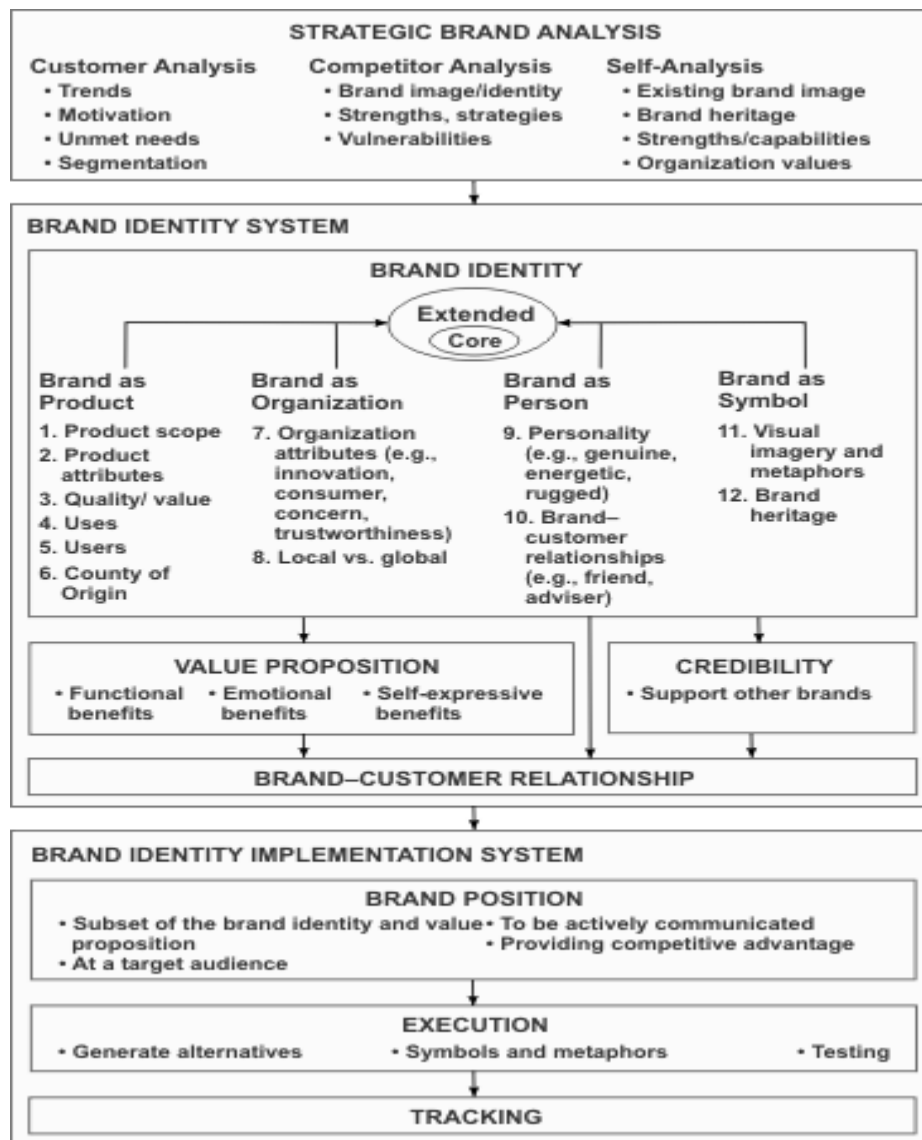


Figure 2.2.2.2 Aaker's (1996) brand identity planning model

Aaker argues that a brand identity should be broad. This is because when companies build their brands around product attributes, it is easy for the competition to imitate them. Furthermore, in most contexts customers do not have time to process objective information about the brands in the category, and may not care as much about functionality as they do about style, status and reassurance. In addition, an identity based on product attributes can limit brand extension, and limit brand flexibility to responding to changing markets. For this reason Aaker

argues that a key to developing a strong brand identity is to broaden its identity. This creates a good frame of reference to be used by customers when they evaluate the brand and its competitors.

This research focuses on the personality aspect of brand identity, which we call the personification or the anthropomorphism of the brand. Aaker argues that the anthropomorphism of a brand creates stronger brands in the following three ways: first, it provides a vehicle for customers to express their own personality. Second, it can be a basis for people to form a relationship with the brand. And finally, brand personality may help communicate product attributes and thus contribute to the functional benefits, as illustrated in the brand identity model. This enables brand positioning, establishing a competitive advantage and a communication strategy for the brand.

2.3. Brand personality and consumer-brand relationships

This section examines the theory on how brand personality can be used to build consumer relationships with the brand in order to achieve the pinnacle of customer based brand equity.

2.3.1. Brand personality

As stated, the five factor brand personality scale of Digman (1990) is based on psychology theory, and applies to people and brands. It consists of the following five factors: extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and neuroticism. The brand personality scale of Aaker (1997) comprises five dimensions and 42 constructs. The dimensions are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Aaker's brand personality scale is illustrated in figure 2.3.1.1.

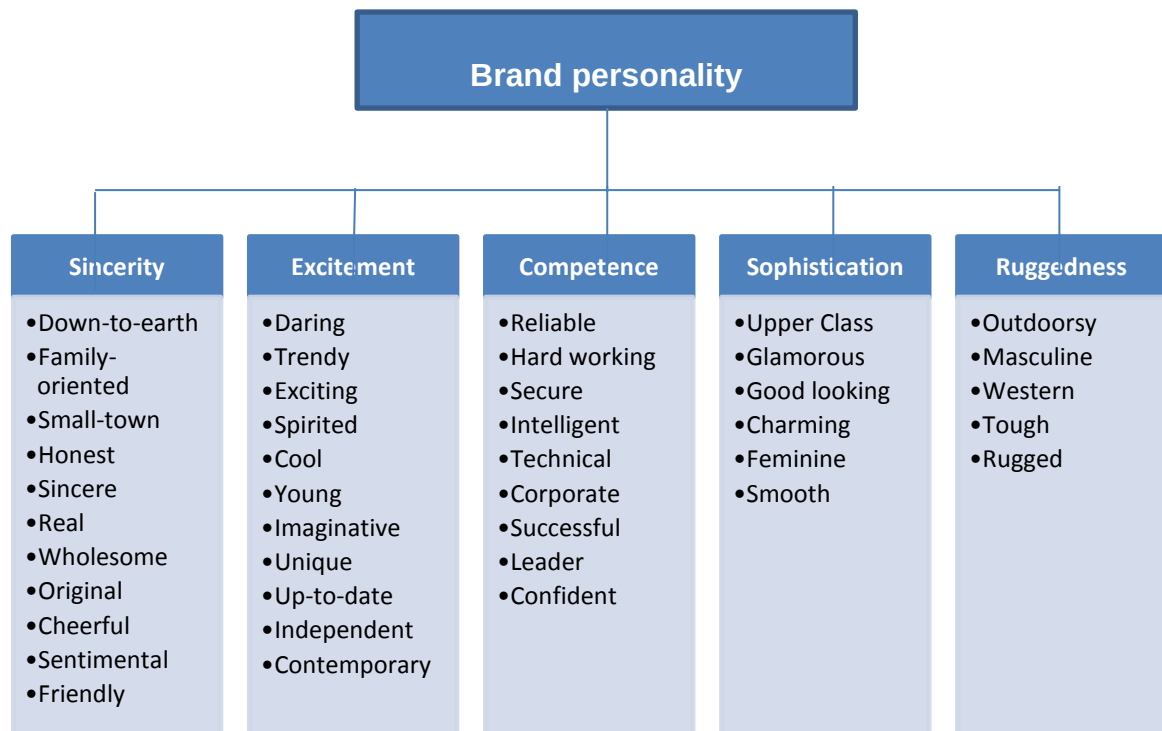


Figure 2.3.1.1 Aaker (1997) brand personality scale

Aaker (1997) argues that the personification of a brand enables the consumer to express his or her self-concept. Furthermore it is one of the key drivers of consumer preferences.

In terms of the Aaker's (1996) brand identity planning model, brand personality plays a strategic role. It is a means of communicating the value proposition of a brand by communicating self-expressive benefits, emotional benefits and functional benefits associated with the brand.

2.3.2. *Brand personality and brand trust*

Trust is defined as “the confidence that one will find what is desired from another, rather than what is feared” (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005:188). Furthermore, Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán argue that it is based on the consumer’s belief that the brand has specific qualities that make it consistent, competent, honest and responsible. The dimensions of trust are therefore integrity, capability and benevolence (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005). In line with this, Louis and Lombart (2010) affirm that the dimensions of brand trust are credibility and integrity.

Louis and Lombart (2010) cite notes that there is a relationship between brand personality and consumers’ trust in a brand. Furthermore, the brand personality’s impact on either credibility or integrity, or in some cases both, depends on the consumers’ level of involvement in that product category. Furthermore, Sung and Kim (2010) argue that some brand personality traits influence consumers’ trust in the brand more strongly than others.

This different influence of brand personality trait on trust is corroborated by the stereotype model of Cuddy *et al.* (2008) whose research found that individuals assess others through the lens of a stereotype to answer two primacy survival questions on competition and status, to determine whether the ‘other’ has good or bad intent and whether the ‘other’ is capable of enacting those intentions. The personality traits of **warmth** and **competence** act as dimensions of social cognition to promote survival by providing answers to these questions (Cuddy *et al.*, 2008).

Cuddy *et al.* (2008) plot perceptions of warmth versus competence on two-dimensional spatial quadrants. The location on the quadrant elicits specific responses that are based on perceived threat over competition for resources. These responses were confirmed with neural activation studies (Harris and Fiske, 2006), (Cikara *et al.*, 2011). Cuddy *et al.* found that groups that are rated high on warmth and low on competence evoke pity, while groups rated low on both warmth and competence evoke contempt. Groups rated low on warmth (and therefore perceived

as untrustworthy) but high on competence evoke envy, and groups rated high on both warmth and competence evoke admiration.

Kervyn *et al.* (2012) found that the fundamental survival questions transfer from the interpersonal to the way consumers assess brands. From this, Kervyn *et al.* build on the 'stereotype content model' of Cuddy *et al.* (2008) to formulate the 'brands as intent agents' framework. In this framework Kervyn *et al.* defines agency as actions that enable people to perform tasks, solve problems and accomplish their goals. Kervyn *et al.* (2012) highlight similarities between the warmth dimension and Aaker's sincerity personality trait. Furthermore, Kervyn *et al.* (2012) showed that the responses to brand perception are consistent with the 'stereotype content model'.

Brands that are perceived as low on warmth and competence evoke a response of being seen as troubled brands. Brands that are perceived as low on competence but high on warmth are pitied brands. Brands that are perceived as low on warmth but high on competence are seen as envied brands, and brands that are perceived as high on both warmth and competence evoke admiration.

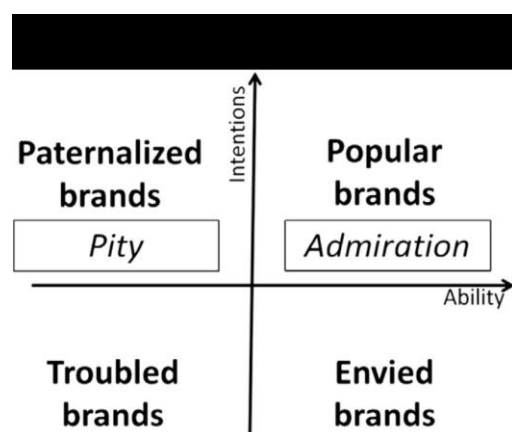


Figure 2.3.2.1 Brands as intent agents framework clusters and emotions, sourced from Kervyn *et al.* (2012)

Fournier and Alvarez (2011) critiqued the 'brands as intent agents' framework of Kervyn *et al.* (2012) on the grounds that a recommendation to brand managers to focus on just warmth and competence to achieve admiration is limiting to the brand. Furthermore, it ignores the power of an exciting brand personality trait. Fournier argued that the 'brand as intent agent model' is a measure of trust as it reflects intent and capability which are consistent with the dimensions of trust.

From the theoretical framework discussed in this section, we draw the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Brand personality has a positive effect on consumers' trust in the brand.

2.3.3. Brand personality and attachment to the brand

Brand attachment framework is built on the attachment theory of Bowlby (1977) and Ainsworth (1989) who studied infant to parent attachment. The attachment figure is a secure base from which the infant explores the world. Ainsworth (1989) showed that the attachment style with the parent figure forms a basis for the systematic patterns that governs attachment relationships later in life. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) classifies four types of attachment styles based on the perception of self (self-esteem) and the perception of others (avoidance). These attachment styles are formed by the sensitivity of the attachment figure in satisfying the needs of the infant. The four attachment styles are:

1. Secure – low anxiety/ low avoidance
2. Dismissing – low anxiety/ high avoidance
3. Preoccupied – high anxiety/low avoidance
4. Fearful – high anxiety/ high avoidance

Thomson *et al.* (2005) advocates that attachment between consumer and the brand is analogous to attachment to people and is governed by these attachment styles.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) posits that brand attachments form when brands satisfy key aspects of the self: pleasing and comforting the self, enriching the self, and enabling the self. A consumer attaches the brand to the self when the brand pleases the self by providing psychological comfort, relief and security to the self (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2005). The brand enriches the self by enabling the consumer to express the actual self or the desired self (Malär *et al.*, 2011).

Campbell and Marshall (2011) showed that anxious attachment types tend to use external help to enhance their self-worth and manage relational factors. Brand personality provides the consumer with a means of self-expression and a meaning to construct and sustain their social self (Aaker, 1997). Furthermore it adds depth and feelings to the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Brand personality therefore provides a means for the consumer to form attachment with the brand.

(Grohmann, 2009) found that a congruence between brand personality and the self-concept of the consumer results in a favourable preference towards the brand over competing brands. It also results in trust and brand loyalty, which includes attachment. Malär *et al.* (2011) applied cognitive-consistency theories in their research, where they found that consumers prefer, purchase, and use brands with a matching brand personality that reinforce their self-concept. This is consistent with Chaplin and John (2005) who argue that self-congruence with the brand that is a fit between the consumer's self and the personality of the brand, plays a key role in forming an emotional attachment with the brand.

Malär *et al.* (2011) posit that a brand that has a high degree of congruence with the consumer's actual self has a stronger emotional attachment than a brand that has a high congruence with the consumer's ideal self. Furthermore a high level of product involvement strengthens the relationship between actual self-congruence and emotional attachment to the brand.

From this theoretical framework, we draw the following proposition:

Proposition 2: Brand personality has a positive impact on consumers' attachment to the brand.

2.3.4. Trust and consumer's attachment to the brand

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) posits that trust is one of the cornerstones of any relationship.

Proposition 3: Trust in the brand has a positive impact on consumers' attachment to the brand.

2.3.5. Brand personality and consumer's commitment to the brand

The dimensions of the construct commitment to the brand are willingness to continue a relationship with the brand and the will to resist changing brands. Amine (1998) argues that there are direct and indirect motives for consumers' commitment to a brand. Indirect motives influence commitment to the brand via mediating variables like consumer involvement and satisfaction. Direct antecedents to brand commitment are spurious factors like lack of viable alternatives, as well as attachment to the brand.

Bansal *et al.* (2004) differentiate between affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. They posit that affective commitment is based on shared values, while continuance commitment is based on the lack of viable alternatives for the consumer and high switching costs outweighing the benefits. Normative commitment is an attachment based on obligation. Bansal *et al.* (2004) argue that affective commitment is the core of the relationship between a consumer and a brand.

They argue that increasing both affective and normative commitments in service contexts results in positive customer behaviour toward the service provider beyond repurchase decisions. Amine (1998) argues that consumers' commitment to a brand reduces price sensitivity and makes the brand more robust against price cuts by

competition. This results in asymmetric substitution in favour of brands that enjoy high consumer commitment levels.

Louis and Lombart (2010) in their study based in France on the Coca-Cola brand, found that brand personality influenced trust, attachment, and both affective and continuance commitment.

From the aforementioned theory we draw the following propositions:

Proposition 4: Brand personality has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Proposition 5: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Proposition 6: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

2.3.6. Trust in the brand and intent to purchase

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2005) highlight the important role of trust in generating consumer's choice of a brand and intent to purchase. A trusted brand lowers perceived risk that the product will not meet customer's need and the likelihood of purchase and margin as the seller does not have to pay risk premium. However, Deli Gray *et al.* (2012) showed that trust is a predictor of intent to purchase in certain cultures while it is not in others. From this we proposition that:

Proposition 7: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.

2.3.7. Attachment to the brand and intent to purchase

In terms of the customer based brand equity model of Keller (2001) attachment to the brand is one of the key drivers of brand equity. Attachment to the brand elicits favourable customer response to the brand including accepting price increase and intent to purchase (Thomson *et al.*, 2012). Stahl *et al.* (2012) argue that brands can provide utility by providing functional, experiential or symbolic benefits, and fulfil core customer needs and are therefore likely to be considered for purchase. We therefore proposition that:

Proposition 8: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.

2.3.8. Commitment to the brand and intent to purchase

The dimensions of the construct of commitment to the brand indicate willingness to continue with a relationship, resisting substitution by other brands and willingness to purchase the brand despite a price increase. From this we draw the following proposition:

Proposition 9: Commitment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intention.

2.4. Conceptual map

A conceptual map of the relationship between brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment to the brand and intent to purchase is given in figure 2.4.1.

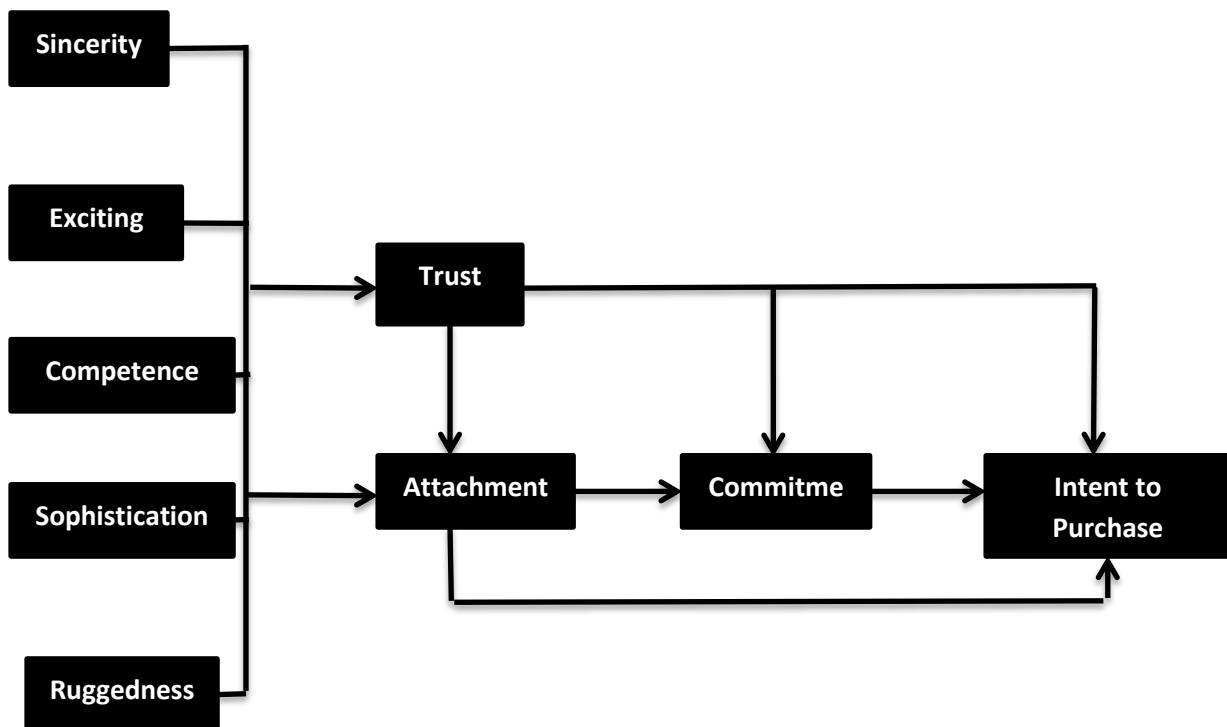


Figure 2.4.1 Conceptual map of the relationship between brand personality, trust brand attachment, brand commitment and laptop choice

2.5. Conclusion of Literature Review

In the literature review we have discussed the theory on the relationship between brand personality, brand attachment, brand trust, commitment to the brand, and consumers' choice. This forms the framework for this research.

In summary, the propositions for this research are the following:

Proposition 1: Brand personality has a positive effect on consumer's trust in the brand.

Proposition 2: Brand personality has a positive impact on consumer's attachment to the brand.

Proposition 3: Trust in the brand has a positive impact on consumers' attachment to the brand.

Proposition 4: Brand personality has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Proposition 5: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Proposition 6: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Proposition 7: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.

Proposition 8: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.

Proposition 9: Commitment has a positive effect on purchase intent.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The structure of the research methodology section is as follows: We first give the research method and the population demographics for this research. Next is the discussion on the construct scales that were used in this research. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection method that was used, and the statistical method that was used to analyse the research data.

We then discuss the limitations of this study. After that, we discuss the internal and external validity tests for this research, as well as the reliability tests that will be carried out for integrity of the data. The research instrument is given in appendix A and a consistency matrix is given in appendix B of this report.

3.1 Research methodology

Quantitative research was carried out to test the research Proposition in order to determine the relationship between brand personality, brand trust, attachment to the brand, commitment to the brand, and purchase choice.

3.2 Research Design

The methodological approach that was used in this research is a self-administered questionnaire. A survey was appropriate for this study as there are standard questions published in peer reviewed literature for the construct scales that were used.

The advantage of a self-administered questionnaire is that it requires less time from the respondent than interviews. Therefore this enables collection of a larger sample size than would be possible with an interview approach.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

The population for the research comprised people who own a laptop of any of the four brands in this study. A convenience sample was drawn from respondents in the Johannesburg metropolitan area. Respondents were drawn from students at business schools and universities, as well as professionals and entrepreneurs.

The sampling method is based on stratified random sampling, in order to improve the external validity of the research within the South African context. The sample was stratified by race and gender to be representative of the South African population. The author was concerned that due to disposable income limitations as discussed in Chapter 2, the actual demographics of the respondents could be closer to that of Living Standards Measure 8 (LSM8) who are the main group of computer owners in South Africa.

Table 3.3.1: Target demographic profile of respondents, based on the demographic profile of the South African population from Statistics South Africa (2011)

		Percent Respondents	Number of Respondents
Age	20-29	Report	Report
	30-39		
	40-49		
	50-59		
	60+		
Gender	Male	49.5%	98
	Female	50.5%	102
Race (in alphabetical order)	Black	79%	158
	Black Female	(LSM8 52%)	80
	Black Male		78
	Coloured	8.9%	18
	Coloured Female	(LSM815.9%)	9
	Coloured Male		9
	Indian	2.5%	5
	Indian Female	(LSM8 5.7%)	3
	Indian Male		2
	White	9.6%	19
	White Female	(LSM826.4%)	10
	White Male		9
Income bracket	<R200 000	Report	Report
	R201 000 to R400 000		
	R401 000 to R600 000		

	R601 000+		
Education	Matriculation Undergraduate diploma Graduate degree Post graduate degree	Report	Report

3.4 The research instrument

The instrument was an open questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure the key constructs of brand personality, brand trust, brand attachment, brand commitment, intent to purchase, and the profile of the respondent.

The measurement scales that were used in this research are generalizable and published in peer reviewed literature. They have also been used in published research of Bouhlef *et al.* (2009).

The brand personality scale of Aaker (1997) comprises 42 constructs that are grouped into five dimensions which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Aaker found that consumers perceive that brands in the United States of America have five personality characteristics comprising sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Aaker (2001) argues that personality traits attributed to brands are sensitive to the cultural context.

Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) challenge Aaker's brand personality scale. They contend that Aaker's scale can cause confusion, because in psychology, personality should not include attributes related to gender, intellect and social class. Furthermore they argue that Aaker merges a number of dimensions of a brand identity which need to be kept separate both on theoretical grounds and for practical use. Instead, they recommend a strict definition of brand personality that is applicable to both human personality and brand personality.

While Yoon *et al.* (2006) did not comment on this debate, they established that brand personality judgements are not processed in the same way human personality judgements are. Muniz and Marchetti (2012) cite a study by Pontes and Parente (2008) that draws comparisons and applies the brand personality scale of Aaker (1997) and the scale recommended by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) and found that both approaches yield similar results. On this basis the brand personality scale of Aaker (1997) was used on the grounds that it yields similar results and is a more established scale for market research.

Brand trust was measured using the scale of Gurviez and Korchia (2003a). The brand trust scale of Gurviez and Korchia (2003b) is similar to that of Delgado-Ballester *et al.* (2003), it comprises dimensions of credibility, integrity, and benevolence.

Cristau's commitment construct scale has commonalities with Beatty and Kahle's (1998) brand commitment scale, but adds more dimensions. Shuv-Ami's (2009) brand commitment scale combines loyalty, satisfaction, involvement and performance to represent attachment and commitment. This combination presents a risk of duplication in variables. Furthermore, Shuv-Ami's scale is published in literature that is not peer reviewed. For this reason we decided to stick to Cristau's commitment construct scale.

These scales were also used in the research of Bouhlel *et al.* (2009b). The attachment and the commitment scales were translated from French peer-reviewed journals by a bilingual student, and have been confirmed to be in line with the English publication of Bouhlel *et al.* (2009) which used these scales. Purchase intent was measured by intent to purchase the same brand when the respondent next buys the product

The advantages of using these scales are that they have been statistically tested, are generalizable and are published in peer reviewed journals. A summary of the scales of measurement that were be used in this research, measured on a seven

point likert scale, is given in table 3.4.1. The questionnaire that will be used as a research instrument is given in appendix B.

Table 3.4.1: Description of scales of construct measurement

Construct	Scale of Measurement
Brand personality	Aaker (1997): 42 items
Brand trust	Gurviez and Korchia (2002)
Brand attachement	Lacœuilhe (2000)
Brand commitment	Cristau (2001)

3.5 Procedure for data collection

Data gathering was carried out using the self-administered questionnaire in business schools and universities. The questionnaires were handed out via face-to-face interactions. For efficiency questionnaires were handed out where people were present in groups, for example at the end of a lecture. Respondents were advised that participation is voluntary. For professionals and entrepreneurs questionnaires were handed out in face-to-face interaction to facilitate a high response rate however they could also scan and email the completed questionnaire to the author.

The data was collected from a convenience sample of 200 respondents who own one of the laptop brands in this study.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Analysis of variance was used to compare means of brand personality traits between brands. Linear regression was used to test the Proposition in order to determine the relationship between brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment to the brand

and intent to purchase. These methods are appropriate for this study as indicated in Hair *et al.* (2010).

3.7 Limitations of the study

The study is limited to the South African context, and the product category of laptop brands. Stratified random sampling, by race and gender was used in order to enable generalisability of this research within in the context of South Africa.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 External validity

External validity or generalizability of this research within the South African context was maximised by using stratified random sampling. The Stratified random sample target was to be close to the demographics of the South African population.

3.8.2 Internal validity

Internal validity of the research was maximised by ensuring that the questionnaire is clear. The researcher avoided bias by applying statistical methods to analyse the data. Furthermore the construct scales that are used in this research have been tested in published research.

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability tests were carried out to ensure that the scales in the questionnaire give consistent results for the variables. The internal reliability constructs in the responses were assessed using the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients. This threshold is a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.65 minimum.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The goal of this research was to determine the impact of brand personality on consumer choices. A total of 198 questionnaires were received which were deemed to be relevant and useable for this research. The questionnaire was based on a 7 point likert scale: “Strongly Agree” = 7; “Moderately Agree” = 6; “Agree Slightly” = 5; “Neutral” = 4; “Disagree Slightly” = 3; “Moderately Disagree” = 2; “Strongly Disagree” = 1. Data was captured on an excel spread sheet and exported to SAS.

The results will be presented in the following structure: First is the presentation of the brand personality trait ratings by users and non-users of each brand. Next are the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results comparing the difference in means between the four brands for brand personality and brand-consumer relationship. After that is a presentation of the Proposition tests that were conducted using linear regression analyses. The chapter ends with a conclusion from the research propositions.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The research sample size comprises 198 respondents evaluating 4 brands. A response rate of 74% was achieved. The approach of distributing the questionnaire by hand and waiting for completion assisted the response rate however a low response rate occurred in cases where people opted to take the questionnaire away to return at a later date.

The target demographic profile of the respondents was a stratified sample of the South African population by race and gender. A comparison of the actual profile of

the respondents versus the target by race is given in table 4.2.1, and a gender profile versus the target is given in figure 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.1 Profile of the respondents versus the demographic profile of the South African population by race

Race	Number	Actual Percent	Target Percent
Black	142	71.72	79.0
Coloured	8	4.04	8.9
Indian	25	12.63	2.5
White	17	8.59	9.6
Not stated	6	3.03	
Total	198	100.00	100

Table 4.2.2 Gender profile of respondents versus target

	Frequency	Actual percent	Target percent
Female	82	41.4	50.5
Male	110	55.6	49.5
Total	198	100	100

The demographic profile of the respondent closely matched the demographic profile of the South African population by race, except that it was lower than target for coloured respondents and higher than target for Indian respondents. Furthermore, 3.03% of respondents did not state the race in the questionnaire. The gender profile was close to the target although slightly higher in male representation.

Table 4.2.3 Education profile of the respondents

Education	Number	Percent
Matriculation	25	12.63
Undergraduate diploma	18	9.09
Graduate degree	69	34.85
Post Graduate degree	80	40.40
Not stated	6	3.03
Total	198	100

Table 4.2.4 Age profile of the respondents

Age	Number	Percent
20-29	132	66.67
30-39	53	26.77
40-49	5	2.53
Not stated	8	4.04
Total	198	100.00

4.3 Reliability of the scales

The reliability of the scales used in this research was shown by Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.94, as presented in table 4.3.2.1.

Table 4.3.2.1 Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for brand personality, trust, attachment and commitment scales

	Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients
Sincerity	0.81
Exciting	0.94
Competence	0.91
Sophistication	0.88
Ruggedness	0.78
Trust	0.93
Attachment	0.93
Commitment	0.92

The reliability coefficients are greater than 0.65 which confirms that the scales produce consistent results for the variable.

4.4 Brand personality trait ratings by users and non-users

A breakdown of the number of users per brand is given in table 4.4.1.

Table 4.4.1 Number of respondents per brand

	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Apple	38	19.19
Dell	54	27.27
Hewlett-Packard	83	41.92
IBM/Lenovo	23	11.62
Total	198	100.00

Brand personality trait ratings for Apple brand by users and non-users, is given in figure 4.4.1.

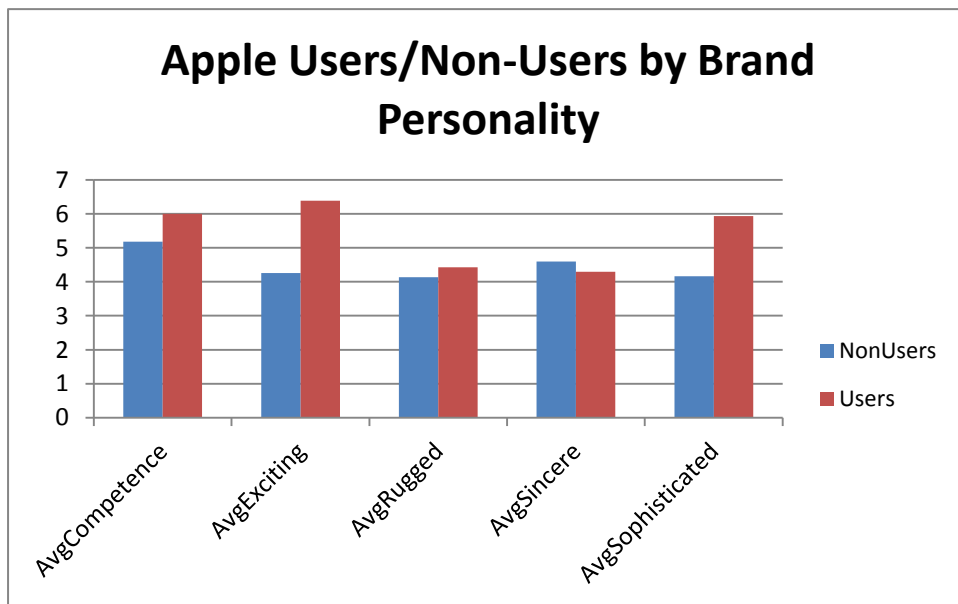


Figure 4.4.1 Brand personality trait rating for Apple by users and non-users

As indicated in from figure 4.4.1 that Apple users rated this brand high on exciting, competence and sophistication. The non-users however rated the brand high on competence.

The brand personality trait ratings for Dell as rated by users and non-users, is given in figure 4.4.2.

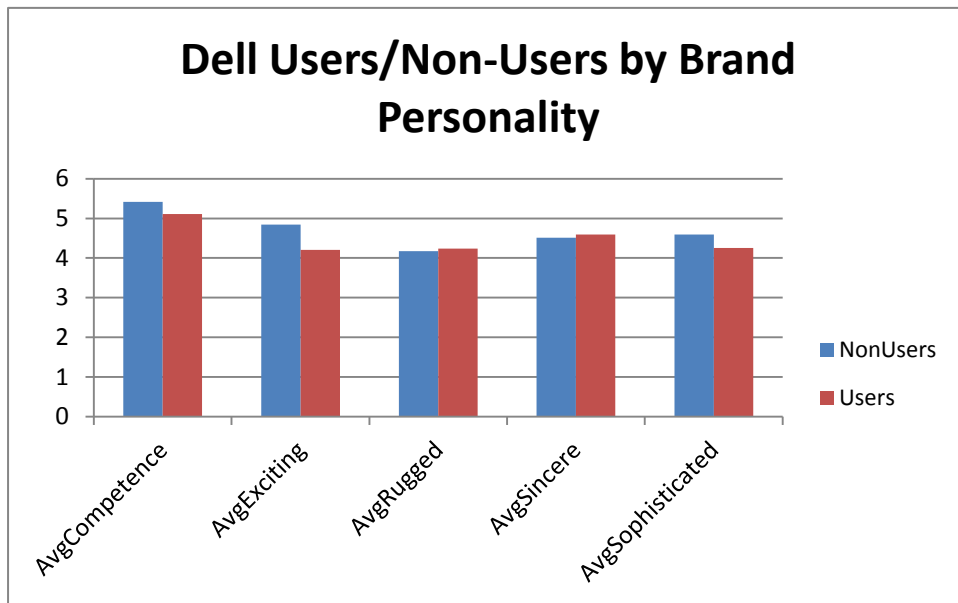


Figure 4.4.2 Brand personality trait rating for Dell by users and non-users

Both Dell users and non-users rated the brand high on competence.

Users and non-users rating of the Hewlett-Packard brand personality trait is given in figure 4.4.3.

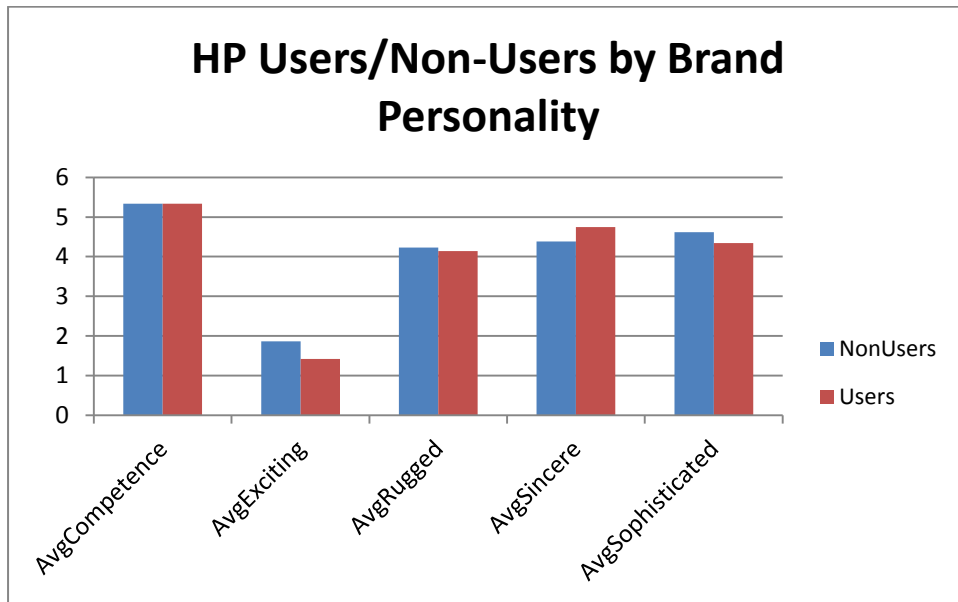


Figure 4.4.3 Brand personality trait rating for Hewlett-Packard by users and non-users

As indicated in Figure 4.4.3 both the users and non-users of Hewlett-Packard rated Hewlett-Packard's brand personality high on competence.

Users and non-users ratings of the brand personality traits of IBM are given in figure 4.4.4.

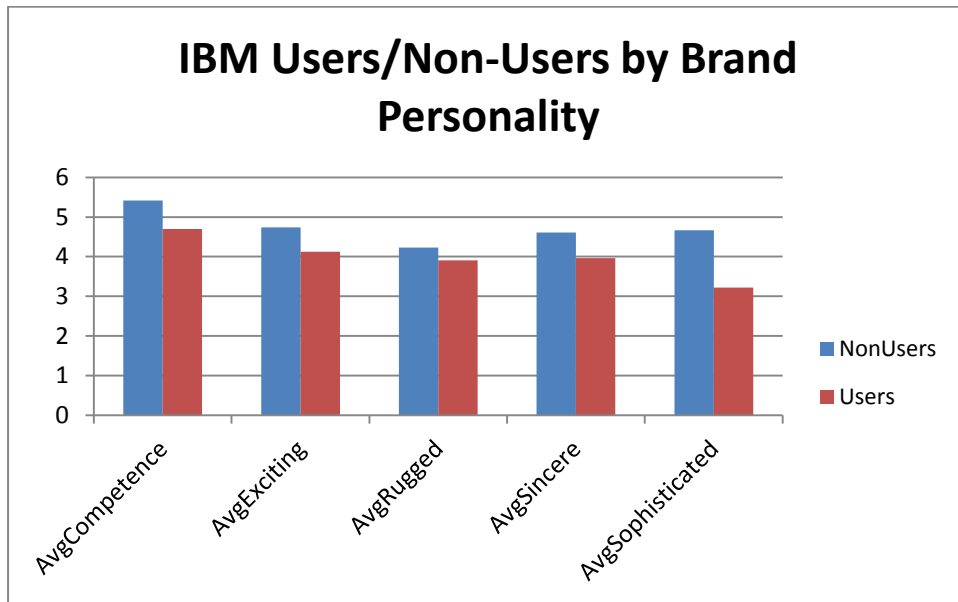


Figure 4.4.4 Brand personality trait rating for IBM by users and non-users

4.5 Results pertaining to Analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparing brand personality trait means and relationship means between the brands

The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparing the difference in means of brand personality traits between the four brands are presented in table 4.5.1 to 4.5.5. A graphical presentation the means of each brand as rated by users, is given in figure 4.5.1.

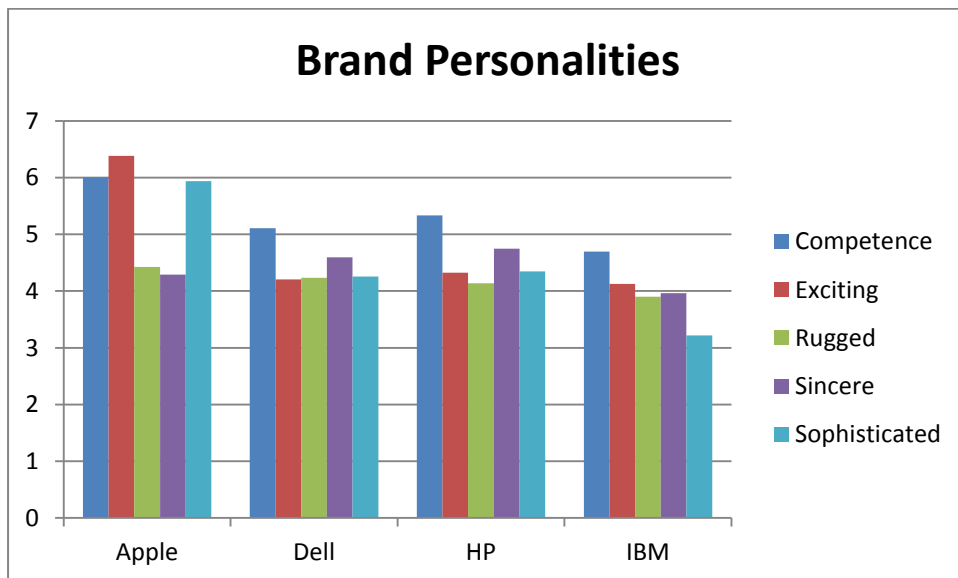


Figure 4.5.1 Users brand personality rating mean for each brand

Table 4.5.1 Analysis of variance comparing sincerity means between brands

Sincerity				
Means				
Brand	Difference	p	Confidence interval	
HP-Apple	0.35	0.381	-0.22	0.93
HP-Dell	0.22	0.71	-0.31	0.75
HP- IBM	0.66	0.1	-0.08	1.39
Df model	3			
F model	2.16	0.09		

Note. * = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.2 Analysis of variance comparing excitement means between brands

Exciting				
Means				
Brand	Difference	p	Confidence interval	
HP-Apple	-1.76*	0	-2.45	-1.07
HP-Dell	0.12	0.96	-0.51	0.76
HP- IBM	0.2	0.93	-0.68	1.09
Df model	3			
F model	18.83*	0.00		

Note. * = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.3 Analysis of variance comparing competence means between brands

	Competence			
	Means Difference	p	Confidence interval	
HP-Apple	-0.5	0.2	-1.15	0.15
HP-Dell	0.24	0.72	-0.36	0.85
HP- IBM	0.72	0.12	-0.12	1.55
Df model	3			
F model	4.61*	0.00		

Note. * = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.4 Analysis of variance comparing sophistication means between brands

Sophistication				
	Means Difference	p	Confidence interval	
HP-Apple	-1.11*	0.00	-1.74	-0.48
HP-Dell	0.05	1.00	-0.53	0.63
HP- IBM	1.03*	0.01	0.22	1.83
Df model	3			
F model	14.62***	0		

Note. $P < 0.05$

Table 4.5.5 Analysis of variance comparing ruggedness means between brands

	Ruggedness			
	Means Difference	p	Confidence interval	
HP-Apple	-0.33	0.63	-1.04	0.38
HP-Dell	-0.18	0.89	-0.84	0.48
HP- IBM	0.21	0.93	-0.7	1.12
Df model	3			
F model	0.87	0.46		

*Note. ** = $p < 0.05$*

Analysis of variance for the **exciting** trait shows a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Apple. The excitement mean of Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Dell for excitement trait. There is a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and IBM; IBM mean is significantly lower than Hewlett-Packard's mean for excitement trait.

Comparing the difference in means for **competence** trait ratings shows that there is no significant difference in means between the brands.

Analysis of variance for **sophistication** trait shows that there is a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Apple. The sophistication mean of Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Dell. There is a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and IBM; IBM means for sophistication is significantly lower than that of Hewlett-Packard.

The analysis of variance for **sincerity** trait is not statistically significant hence a conclusion could not be reached on the difference in means for the sincerity trait. Even at 90% level the differences in means are not significant.

The analyses of variance for **ruggedness** trait is not statistically significant hence a conclusion could not be reached on the difference in means for the ruggedness traits.

The brand-consumer relationship means showing means for brand trust, brand attachment and brand commitment are given in figure 4.5.5.1. The analysis of variance comparing the difference in means between brands is given in tables 5.5.6 to 4.5.8.

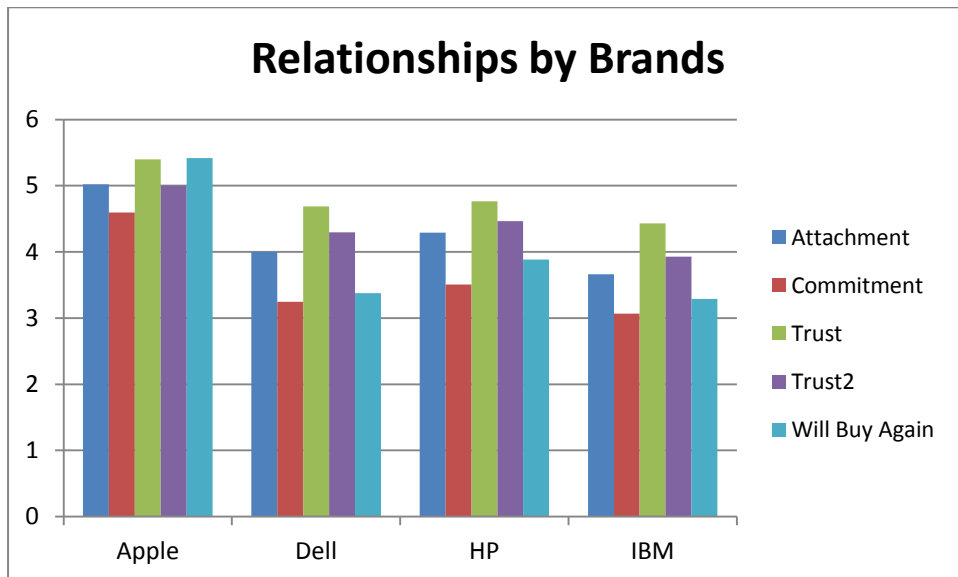


Figure 4.5.5.1 Brand relationship scores

Table 4.5.6 Analysis of variance comparing trust means between brands

Brand	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval	
HP - Apple	-0.76*	-1.26	-0.25
HP - Dell	0.16	-0.29	0.61
HP - IBM	0.66*	0.04	1.28

* = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.7 Analysis of variance comparing attachment means between brands

Brand	Mean Difference	Confidence interval	
HP - Apple	-1.20*	-1.78	-0.61
HP - Dell	0.31	-0.21	0.84
HP - IBM	0.81*	0.09	1.53

* = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.8 Analysis of variance comparing commitment means between brands

Brand	Mean differences	Confidence interval	
HP - Apple	-1.31*	-1.97	-0.65
HP - Dell	0.28	-0.31	0.87
HP - IBM	0.71	-0.1	1.51

* = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.5.9 Analysis of variance comparing intent to purchase means between brands

	Mean differences	95% Confidence interval	
HP - Apple	-1.63*	-2.51	-0.77
HP - Dell	0.52	-0.2673	1.31
HP - IBM	0.81	-0.2616	1.89

* = $p < 0.05$

Analysis of variance for brand **trust** shows a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Apple. The trust mean for Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in trust means between Hewlett-Packard and Dell. The IBM trust mean is significantly lower than that of Hewlett-Packard.

Analysis of variance for brand **attachment** shows that the attachment mean for Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Dell. The attachment mean for IBM is significantly lower than that of Hewlett-Packard.

Analysis of variance for brand for **commitment** to the brand showed that the brand commitment mean of Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in brand commitment means between Hewlett-Packard, Dell and IBM.

Analysis of variance for **intent to purchase** shows a significant difference in means between Hewlett-Packard and Apple. The intent to purchase mean for Hewlett-Packard is significantly lower than that of Apple. There is no significant difference in intent to purchase means between Hewlett-Packard, Dell and IBM.

Factor analysis was carried out for brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment and intent to purchase. The scree plot of eigenvalues gave 8 factors to be extracted, with each item loaded onto its corresponding factors. The items of brand personality are grouped in 4 factors: exciting, sophisticated, competence and sincerity which hold 67.76% of the initial information. The rotated component matrix and the scree plot of eigenvalues are presented in appendix B.

The four brands selected in this research give a broad spectrum of personality traits including exciting and sophisticated traits in addition to sincerity and competence. The relationship between the brand personality traits and consumer relationships

with the brand were studied using linear regression to give the following Proposition test results. This overcomes the weakness of Bouhlel *et al.* (2009) who only studied the effect of sincerity and competence on consumer relationships with the brand.

4.5.10 Model structure: Test for compliance with linear regression assumptions

The model structure was analysed for **multicollinearity** using VIF and Condition Indices. The test for non-linearity by inspecting the partial residual plots showed that these assumptions were not violated. Furthermore correlations between independent variables were between 0.11 and 0.66 for brand personality traits which suggests no strong possibility of **endogeneity** effects. Correlations between trust, attachment, commitment and purchase intent ranged between 0.70 and 0.77. The correlation matrix is presented in table 4.6.1. There were no influential **outliers**. The residual plots were **normal** and indicated no **heteroskedasticity**. The Durbin- Watson statistics are in the region of 2.01 which is in the range of 2 to 4 and no autocorrelation.

Overall structure of the models was sound for all the proposition test. The regressions were statistically significant as shown by the F statistics in the regression tables that are presented in the following sections.

Table 4.5.10.1 Correlation matrix for the independent variables

Pearson Correlation Coefficients									
	Sincere	Exciting	Competence	Sophisticated	Ruggedness	Trust	Attachment	Commitment	Purchase Intent
Sincere	1.00								
Exciting	0.39	1.00							
Competence	0.43	0.57	1.00						
Sophisticated	0.38	0.66	0.57	1.00					
Rugged	0.35	0.26	0.35	0.40	1.00				
Trust	0.36	0.46	0.57	0.43	0.25	1.00			
Attachment	0.25	0.52	0.46	0.49	0.17	0.74	1.00		
Commitment	0.22	0.43	0.38	0.44	0.18	0.73	0.70	1.00	
Purchase Intent	0.13	0.37	0.39	0.35	0.11	0.66	0.64	0.77	1.00

Notes. All correlations are statistically significant at 0.00 level

4.6 Results pertaining to Proposition 1: Brand personality has a positive effect on consumer's trust in the brand.

The results of a linear regression with brand personality traits as the independent variables and trust in the brand as dependent variables are given in table 4.6.1.

Table 4.6.1 Regression results of brand personality and trust in the brand

	B	Beta	t	p
Intercept	2.41***		5.42	0.00
Sincere	0.08	0.12	1.82	0.07
Exciting	0.04	0.04	0.50	0.62
Competence	0.43***	0.43***	5.50	0.00
Sophisticated	0.01	0.01	0.09	0.93
Ruggedness	0.03	0.03	0.48	0.63
Brand	-0.26	-0.18	-2.73	0.01
R ²	0.35***			
Adjusted R ²	0.33***			
F	17.04			0.00

Note. B = unstandardized effect, β = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$,

** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$

The results highlight a significant positive influence of competence on trust in the brand. Sincerity is not significantly associated with trust at 95% confidence level; however at 93% confidence level sincerity shows a positive association with trust.

The conclusion is that proposition 1 is supported. The brand personality trait of competence is significantly associated with a positive effect on trust. The brand

personality trait of sincerity is positively associated with trust at 93% confidence level.

4.7 Results pertaining to Proposition 2: Brand personality has a positive impact on consumer's attachment to the brand.

The regression results for proposition 2 with brand personality traits as independent variables and attachment as the dependent variable are given in table 4.7.1.

Table 4.7.1 Regression analysis results of the effect of brand personality on attachment to the brand

	B	Beta	t	p
Intercept	1.91***		4.07	0.00
Sincere	-0.06	-0.05	-0.69	0.49
Exciting	0.25***	0.27***	3.08	0.00
Competence	0.20*	0.19*	2.25	0.03
Sophisticated	0.19*	0.18*	2.01	0.05
Rugged	-0.04	-0.04	-0.59	0.56
R ²	0.29***			
Adjusted R ²	0.27***			
F	12.89***			0.00

*Note. B = unstandardised effect, β = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$*

The conclusion is that proposition 2 is supported as the results show that brand personality traits of **excitement**, **competence** and **sophistication** have a significant positive influence on attachment to the brand.

4.8 Results pertaining to Proposition 3: Trust in the brand has a positive impact on consumer's attachment to the brand

The results of a regression analysis with trust as the independent variable and attachment to the brand as the dependent variable are presented in table 4.8.1.

Table 4.8.1 Regression results of the effect of trust on attachment to the brand

	B	Beta	t	p
Intercept	0.68***		2.32	0.02
Trust	0.77***	0.72***	14.31	0.00
R ²	0.51***			
Adjusted R ²	0.51***			
F	204.78***			0.00

*Note. B = unstandardised effect, β = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$*

The results highlight a significant positive influence of trust on attachment to the brand. Therefore proposition 3 is supported.

4.9 Results pertaining to Proposition 4: Brand personality has a positive effect on commitment to the brand

The regression analysis results of brand personality as an independent variable and commitment to the brand as the dependent variable are given in table 4.9.1.

Table 4.9.1 Regression results of the effect of brand personality on commitment to the brand

	B	Beta	t	p
Intercept	1.30**		2.79	0.01
Sincere	-0.01	-0.01	-0.15	0.88
Exciting	0.17*	0.18*	1.92	0.05
Competence	0.14	0.13	1.47	0.14
Sophisticated	0.25*	0.23*	2.45	0.02
Rugged	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	0.95
R ²	0.21***			
Adjusted R ²	0.19***			
F	9.91***			0.00

*Note. B = unstandardised effect, = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$,*

*** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$*

The results show a significant positive influence of exciting and sophistication traits on commitment to the brand. The conclusion is that proposition 4 is supported.

4.10 Results pertaining to Proposition 5 and 6:

P5: Brand trust has a positive impact on commitment.

P6: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.

Regression analysis with trust and attachment as independent variables, and commitment to the brand as the dependent variable yields results presented in figure 4.10.1.

Table 4.10.1 Regression results showing the effect of trust on commitment to the brand

	B	β	t	p-value
Intercept	-0.19		-0.62	0.53
Trust	0.48***	0.43***	6.12	0.00
Attachment	0.38***	0.36***	5.23	0.00
R ²	0.54***			
Adjusted R ²	0.53***			
F	113.03***			0.00

*Note: N=198, B = unstandardised effect, β = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$*

The results highlight a significant positive influence of trust and attachment on commitment to the brand. Trust and attachment explain 54% of the variance in commitment to the brand. Furthermore, the results show that trust is a stronger determinant of commitment than attachment. The conclusion is that propositions 5 and 6 were supported.

4.11 Results pertaining to Proposition 7, 8 and 9: Regression of Trust, Attachment and Commitment with purchase intent

Proposition 7, 8 and 9 were tested by a multiple regression of trust, attachment and commitment as independent variables with intent to repurchase as the dependent variable. The results are presented in table 4.11.1.

Table 4.11.1 Effect of trust, attachment and commitment on intent to purchase

	B	β	t	P-value
Intercept	-0.5		-1.35	0.18
Trust	0.14	0.10	1.36	0.17
Attachment	0.24**	0.18**	2.57	0.01
Commitment	0.74***	0.56***	8.34	0.00
R ²	0.59***			
Adjusted R ²	0.59***			
F	94.03***			0.00

*Note. N=198, B = unstandardised effect, β = standardised effect, *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$*

The results do not show a significant relationship between trust and intent to purchase. However, the results show a significant positive association between attachment and commitment to the brand. Furthermore, the results show a significant positive association between commitment and intent to purchase.

The conclusion is that proposition 7 is not supported as trust is not showing a significant association with intent to purchase. Propositions 8 and 9 are supported.

4.12 Summary of the results

Table 4.12.1 Summary of propositions results

Proposition	Supported/Not supported
P1: Brand personality has a positive effect on consumer's trust in the brand.	Supported
P2: Brand personality has a positive impact on consumer's attachment to the brand	Supported
P3: Trust in the brand has a positive impact on consumers' attachment to the brand.	Supported
P4: Brand personality has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.	Supported
P5: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.	Supported
P6: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand.	Supported
P7: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.	Not supported
P8: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.	Supported
P9: Commitment has a positive effect on purchase intent.	Supported

A summary of the research findings is as follows:

The brand personality trait of competence shows a significant positive effect on trust in the brand ($p = 0.00$). Sincerity shows a positive effect on trust in the brand at 93% confidence level.

Excitement, competence and sophistication traits each show a significant positive effect on attachment to the brand ($p = 0.00$, $p = 0.03$, $p = 0.05$, respectively). Furthermore, excitement and sophistication traits have a

significant positive association with commitment to the brand ($p = 0.05$, $p = 0.02$, respectively).

Trust in the brand is significantly associated with a positive effect on attachment to the brand ($p = 0.00$). Trust and attachment have a significant positive association with commitment to the brand ($p = 0.00$, $p = 0.00$, respectively).

Trust is not significantly associated with a positive effect on intent to purchase. Attachment and commitment to the brand to the brand are significantly associated with positive effects on purchase intention ($p = 0.01$, $p = 0.00$, respectively).

A model for the propositions that are supported in this research is given in figure 4.12.1. These findings have a bearing on the marketing strategy regarding positioning of the brand personality traits in order to build consumer relationship with a brand.

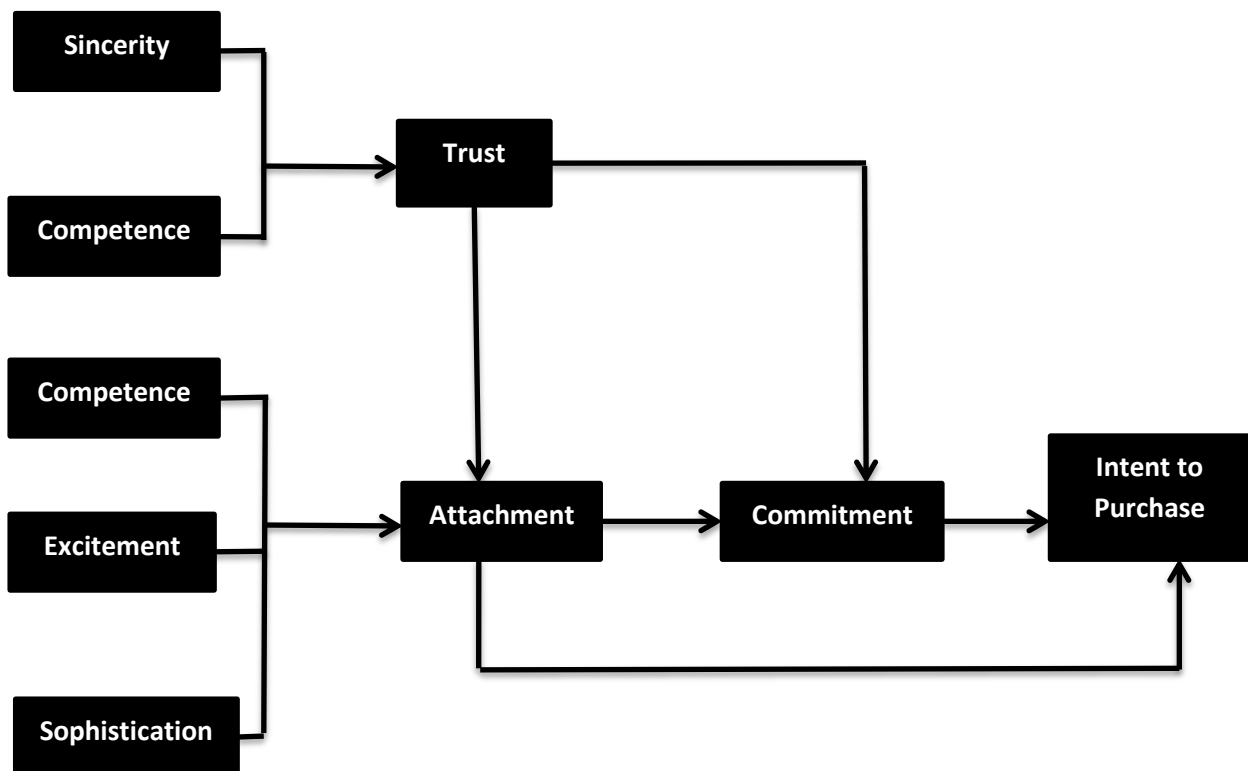


Figure 4.12.1 Relationship map for the confirmed propositions

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an analysis of the research findings. The analysis is based on literature review of recent research in this field. The structure is as follows: first is an analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents compared to the target. Next is an analysis of the emerging brand personalities for the four brands in this research. This is followed by an analysis of the research findings pertaining to each Proposition. Where it is logical to group propositions, it has been done.

5.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The sample population was close to the target stratified sample of the South African population according to data from Statistics South Africa (2011), with the exception that the percentage of Indian respondents was higher than target and that of coloured respondents lower than target. This can be attributed to a constraint in laptop ownership as respondents were asked if they owned a laptop prior to being handed the questionnaire. Furthermore, 3.03% of respondents did not state the race. The gender distribution was close to the target, with a slightly higher representation of males due to laptop ownership constraints. Overall this research achieved close to a stratified sample of the South African population.

5.3 Brand personalities rating by users

The rating of Apple brand personality as exciting, competent and sophisticated is consistent with Maehle *et al.* (2011) who posits that users perceive the brand personality of Apple as exciting. The consumer's perception of Hewlett-Packard as competent is consistent with Phau and Lau (2000).

If we assess the personality ratings of these brands on the dimensions of sincerity and competence according to the 'brands as intents agent framework' of Kervyn *et al.* (2012) we find that the brands in this research scored higher on competence than on sincerity. However it is important to note that the brand means for sincerity as indicated in figure 4.5.1 are neutral. Therefore while the brands in this research were perceived higher on competence than warmth they are not necessarily perceived as cold brands. The higher mean for competence is consistent with Aaker *et al.* (2011) who found that for-profit brands tend to be perceived as competent while not-for-profit brands are usually perceived as warm.

Factor analysis showed that the choice of the four brands enabled inclusion of exciting and sophisticated brand personality traits in addition to sincerity and competence, which was studied by Bouhlel *et al.* (2009). Brands of symbolic products are seen as more sophisticated and exciting than those of utilitarian products (Ang and Lim, 2006). While the product category of laptops is utilitarian, Ang and Lim (2006) showed that brands that are advertised using metaphors are likely to be perceived as exciting and sophisticated. Ang and Lim (2006) showed that symbolism and communication of metaphors in advertising can give a brand exciting and sophisticated traits.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 1: Brand personality has a positive effect on trust in the brand

The research finding that competence is significantly associated with a positive effect on trust and that sincerity is associated with a positive effect on trust at 93% confidence level is consistent with the definition and the dimensions of trust. Trust is about credibility, integrity and benevolence (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Sincerity dimensions indicate the extent to which the brand is perceived to intend to act with integrity in line with ethical codes and with benevolence (Aaker, 1997). Competence dimensions indicate the perceived ability of the brand, that is, the brand's knowledge, skills and competence (Aaker *et al.*, 2011).

The finding is consistent with Bouhlel *et al.* (2009), however recent research shows that the causes are deeper than stated in Bouhlel *et al.* The 'brand as intent agents' framework of Kervyn *et al.* (2012) showed that people assess brands through the lens of a stereotype that is analogous to how individuals assess others based on warmth and competence. Fournier and Alvarez (2011) argued that the 'brand as intent agents' framework is a reflection of trust, which supports this research finding.

Furthermore, as discussed in the literature review, the 'brands as intent agents model' shows that the judgement of brands as warm or competent elicits specific responses from consumers (Kervyn *et al.*, 2012). Brands that are rated low on warmth/sincerity and competence evoke contempt and are seen as troubled brands. Brands that are rated low on competence but high on warmth are pitied brands. Brands that are rated low on warmth but high on competence are envied brands. Brands that are rated high on warmth and competence are admired brands (Kervyn *et al.*, 2012; (Aaker *et al.*, 2011).

5.5 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 2: Brand personality has a positive impact on attachment to the brand

The research found that **excitement**, **sophistication** and **competence** personality traits were found to be associated with **attachment** to the brand. This finding differs from Bouhlej *et al.* (2009a) and Bouhlej *et al.* (2011) who found sincerity and competence to be associated with attachment to the brand. As stated, the limitation in Bouhlej *et al.*'s research is that only sincerity and competence personality traits were tested in response to these consumer-brand relationships as the study was based on one brand whose most responsive personality traits were sincerity and competence. The choice of the four brands in this research brought in a broad spectrum of responsive personality traits whose effect was studied using regression analysis.

The finding that a **competence** trait is positively associated with **attachment** to the brand is consistent with Bouhlej *et al.* (2009a). Furthermore, competence is a reflection of the capability of the brand to provide functional benefits that enable the self. People are likely to form attachment to figures that enable the self (Park *et al.*, 2006).

The finding that the **exciting** brand personality trait is associated with **attachment** to the brand is consistent with Ismail and Spinelli (2012) who found that that an exciting trait and brand image account for 55% of the variance in brand love. Brand love and attachment to the brand are the same (Vlachos *et al.*, 2010).

A consumer becomes attached to a brand that can be relied on to gratify the self, enable the self or enrich the self (Park *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore **exciting** and **sophisticated** brands can gratify the self by providing aesthetic or hedonic, and symbolic aspects and hence cultivate consumer attachment to the brand.

Furthermore, this finding is also supported by the recent research of Swaminathan *et al.* (2009) who posit that an **exciting** brand personality

conveys vitality, uniqueness and independence, therefore depending on the attachment style of the consumer (ideal-self versus actual self), consumers who value self-assertion and independence are likely to have preference for brands with an exciting personality trait (Aaker *et al.*, 2001).

To elucidate this, as discussed in detail in the literature review, attachment to the brand is analogous to infant to parent attachment, which forms a basis for the systematic attachment style of an individual in adult life and governs people's interaction with each other (Ainsworth, 1989). A possible reason for the difference between Bouhlel *et al.*'s finding and this research could be linked to attachment styles. Vlachos *et al.* (2010) found that high anxiety/high avoidance attachment style individuals are likely to exhibit preference for exciting brands as a means of managing others' impressions, while high anxiety/low avoidant individuals are likely to have a preference for brands that express a sincere trait, as it is likely to be consistent with their ideal self-concept. While attachment styles are outside the scope of this research this provides a possible explanation for the difference between the findings of Bouhlel *et al.* (2009) and this research.

Further support for the positive association between an exciting trait and attachment to the brand is evident when we explore the cumulative evolution of consumer attachment to the brand for sincere versus exciting brands. Aaker *et al.* (2004) found that while sincerity has a longer term association with attachment to a brand, in the presence of a transgression sincere brands experience deterioration in attachment to the brand. However in exciting brands the presence of a transgression invigorates a deeper level of attachment with the consumer. The exciting trait has the power to withstand mistakes and invigorate a deeper level of attachment

5.6 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 3: Trust in the brand has a positive impact on attachment to the brand

The research finding that trust is positively associated with the brand is consistent with Bouhlei *et al.* (2009a). Trust plays an important role in forming and strengthening an affective bond. As trust is about integrity, capability and benevolence, a person who trusts a brand is likely to feel less vulnerable towards that brand and hence likely to form an attachment to it (Belaid and Behi, 2011). If consumers trust the brand then they are likely to have confidence in the brand's capacity to satisfy their needs. Consumers are likely to be attached to a figure that satisfies basic needs by providing security and confidence (Vlachos, 2008), which are consistent with trust dimensions.

Hess and Story (2005) give a caveat that the trust attachment relationship does not always form; for product categories where the risk of product failure is high it may take many positive interactions before the trust attachment bond forms.

5.7 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 4: Brand personality has a positive effect on commitment to the brand

The finding that **excitement** and **sophistication** traits are significant are significantly associated with commitment to the brand is consistent with Ramaseshan and Tsao (2007) who argue that the cue of the brand personality that the consumer uses to infer perceived quality is derived from the consumer's perception of the brand concept as functional/utilitarian, symbolic and/or experiential. Ramaseshan and Tsao (2007) found that **exciting** and **sophisticated** personality traits are determinant factors of perceived quality in brands with symbolic and experiential brand concepts, respectively. A product can be both functional and symbolic, for example functional features and emotional pleasure the consumer derives from using the brand is symbolic.

A caveat regarding sophistication traits is that Stahl *et al.* (2012) note that it can be a means of differentiation, however it is a double edged sword in that while it is associated with attachment and commitment to the brand, the downside highlighted by Stahl *et al.* (2012) is that it can also be associated with lower acquisition rates due to appeal to a target market.

5.8 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 5: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand

The finding that brand trust is associated with a positive effect on commitment to the brand is consistent with Bouhlel *et al.* (2009a). Moreover, the finding is consistent with Khadraoui and Gharbi (2012) who showed a positive association between trust and commitment

Trust impacts commitment as follows: for a high involvement product category like a laptop, consumers can form a relationship with the brand to minimise risk and to reduce search costs (Hess and Story, 2005). In the presence of trust the

consumer does not have to put time-consuming monitoring and safeguarding systems in place and these benefits can contribute to commitment to the brand (Hess and Story, 2005). Furthermore, the benevolence aspect of trust implies that the consumer expects the brand to act with good intent. Hess and Story (2005) posit that under the right conditions the accrued benefits of trust and satisfaction can lead to committed to the brand.

5.9 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 6: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on commitment to the brand

The finding that attachment is associated with a positive effect on commitment to the brand is consistent with Belaid and Behi (2011) who posit that attachment is an important foundation for commitment. Furthermore, Belaid and Behi (2011) argue that attachment is an affective component of commitment, and therefore it reinforces the consumer's compulsion to the brand and minimises the chances of switching to another brand.

5.10 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 7: Trust in the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent

The finding that trust is not significantly associated with intent to purchase ($p > .05$) when compared to the effect of attachment and commitment differs from Bouhlel *et al.* (2009a). However it is consistent with Rutherford (2007) who found that trust in the selling firm did not predict continuance. The finding is further supported by Deli Gray *et al.* (2012) who showed that the association between trust and intent to purchase depends on the cultural context. Some cultures showed a relationship between trust and purchase intent while others did not.

Moreover, this research finding is consistent with Ambler (1997) who demonstrated that trust does not have a linear symmetric relationship with sales due to the dynamic in nature of trust. Ambler argues that the initial sales response to trust is slow and hinges on meeting customer satisfaction conditions, which is further slowed by the lag in perceived quality relative to actual quality. Therefore it takes a long time to build trust. However, Ambler showed that a breach of trust has a negative consequence on sales.

5.11 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 8: Attachment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent

This research confirmed that attachment has a significant positive association with intent to purchase. This is consistent with Bouhlel *et al.* (2009a) and Vlachos *et al.* (2010). The finding is consistent with Park *et al.* (2010) and Batra *et al.* (2008) who showed that consumers who are attached to brands are likely to actively invest their own resources as part of maintaining a relationship with the brand in the process of self-expansion. Furthermore, Batra *et al.* showed that consumers who are attached to brands are likely to invest a greater share of their own resources to the brand rather than to competing brands in the same product category.

This finding is consistent with Keller (2001) who showed that a big payoff in sales is achieved when the highest level of emotional attachment is achieved. Furthermore Thomson *et al.* (2005) advocates the importance of attachment in that it impacts behaviours that increase brand profitability and customer lifetime value. Keller (2001) argues that achieving significant brand equity involves reaching the pinnacle of the customer-based brand equity model by developing high levels of emotional attachment.

5.12 Discussion pertaining to Proposition 9: Commitment to the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent

The finding that commitment to the brand is significantly associated with a positive effect on purchase intention is consistent with (Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009a). Furthermore, it is consistent with Rutherford (2007) and Rutherford *et al.* (2008) who found that commitment to a selling firm has a direct impact on the buyer's willingness to continue to purchase from that firm.

The finding is supported by the definition of the construct of commitment. One of the measures of commitment is that the consumer is willing to continue the buyer-seller relationship despite a price increase, and resisting substitution by another brand without promotion (Lacœuilhe, 2000).

5.17 Conclusion

This research described how brand personality influences consumer relationships with the brand and drives purchase choices. The aforementioned analysis shows that the findings of this research are consistent with theory.

The research findings are similar to Bouhlel *et al.* (2009) regarding the effect of traits of competence and sincerity on trust. The research findings however differed from Bouhlel *et al.* regarding brand personality traits that drive attachment. Whereas Bouhlel *et al.* (2009) found sincerity and competence to be associated with attachment; this research found excitement, sophistication and competence traits to be significantly associated with a positive effect on attachment. This research finding regarding the role of excitement and sophistication traits is supported by literature as discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The structure followed in this chapter is to first draw conclusions from the findings of this research. The limitations of this research are discussed. After that recommendations and managerial implications are offered. The chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

In this research we hoped to illuminate how the brand personality traits impact on consumer relationships with brands and how that determines consumer purchase decisions. This was approached by determining the relationship between brand personality, trust, attachment, commitment to the brand and purchase intent. The research results show that brand personality plays an important role in consumer relationships with brands. Furthermore the results show that this concept of personification of a brand is applicable in the laptop industry.

The research found that some brand personality traits are influential on trust while others are influential on attachment to the brand. This highlights the importance of focusing on specific brand personality traits rather than only on the overall personality of a brand.

The research findings confirm the importance of competence in building trust in a brand. Furthermore, the research findings demonstrate the power of an exciting brand personality trait in cultivating attachment to the brand. So too did the research show the importance of a sophisticated trait in building attachment to the brand. However the exciting trait was found to be the stronger determinant of brand attachment. The research also found brand personality

traits of excitement and sophistication to be significantly associated with positive effect on commitment to the brand.

The research found that building trust in a brand may not be enough to achieve purchase intent, as the findings show that trust is not significantly associated with a positive effect on intent to purchase. Previous research attributes this to the dynamic nature of trust. The importance of cultivating attachment and commitment to the brand was demonstrated by the significant positive association with intent to purchase.

The implication of this is that marketing programmes must be aligned with the intended personality trait that will increase the likelihood of bringing about the desired consumer relationships.

A further implication of this research is that in addition to positioning the brand as competent, marketing strategies should include the use of exciting and sophisticated traits in positioning the brand in order to increase consumer attachment to the brand.

6.3 Limitations

A limitation of this research is that the scope did not include selection of laptop brands in business-to-business transactions. Therefore the study was aimed at consumers buying from retailers rather than bulk business-to-business transactions.

6.4 Recommendations

This research found that brand personality traits differ in the way they influence consumer relationship with the brands. This research has shown that some brand personality traits are more influential than others on consumer's attachment to the brand. Therefore marketing managers must focus on specific brand personality traits rather than the overall personality of the brand.

Marketing managers must therefore align marketing programmes with the intended specific brand personality trait that will bring about the desired consumer-brand relationship.

Marketing managers must cultivate consumer trust in the brand by positioning the brand as competent and sincere brand. However, in the case of for-profit brands, if both traits are not achieved concomitantly it is advisable to start by moving into the competence quadrant as a trust building strategy. It is not advisable for a for-profit organisation to only be seen as sincere, as that could limit the brand to be perceived as a pitied brand. The recommendation to marketing managers of for-profit brands is to position the brand as competent, with a touch of sincerity.

The competence trait can be cultivated as follows:

Competence can be built via reliable and consistent product quality systems. Therefore policy makers must adopt quality management systems. Furthermore, training managers must conduct training of personnel on quality management systems and customer focus.

The chief executive officer and the board must include quality leading indicators in the balanced score card performance metrics in order to disseminating these strategic objectives throughout the organisation.

Marketing managers must establish an effective system for handling and tracking customer complaints as part of the marketing strategy. The balanced scorecard must include customer satisfaction indices.

The communication strategy must include communicating the competence traits of the brand. This is essential in a fast changing high-tech industry like laptops as consumers may lack the ability to distinguish the quality of the high tech products and therefore may use the brand's reputation or trust to minimise risk.

Communication managers must use secondary associations in the form of endorsements from industry experts and leading magazines to communicate the quality and competence aspects of the brand. These endorsements must be backed up by demonstrable superior product performance.

In order to increase consumer attachment to the brand marketing managers must position the brand as exciting. The sophistication trait can also be used however noting the caveat of Stahl (2012) that the downside of overusing the sophistication trait is that it can also be associated with lower acquisition rates due to appeal to a target market, the recommendation is to use the sophisticated trait in a balanced way that appeals to the target market. It is recommended for marketing managers to use the power of an exciting trait to grow consumer attachment to the brand.

The following actions are recommended to position the brand as exciting:

Research and development managers must invest in designing innovative product features in order to position the brand as exciting. The brand must be associated with innovation and stylish technological design.

Strategic alliances must be formed in order gain access to intellectual property and software applications that will enhance the exciting appeal of a brand. This will enable the brand to achieve demonstrable superior differences in product performance.

The chief executive officer must build a culture of innovation and be an advocate of the brand's technology.

Marketing managers must articulate the exciting benefits of the brand in a marketing campaign so that the consumers perceive the brand as exciting. This can be done by using metaphors and symbols that increase the exciting personality of the brand. Sung and Kim (2010) advocate the use of metaphors in the communication strategy to enhance the consumer's perception of the brand as exciting and sophisticated.

The logo represents important imagery for the brand. For a high-tech market like laptops the logo must be simple and yet futuristic as a symbol of a future promise of being at the cutting edge of innovation

Monitoring and measuring of the brand's reputation is crucial to ensure that the marketing strategy is effective in delivering the desired consumer relationships and behaviour towards the brand. The board and the executive committee must monitor the brand's reputation using recognised indicators of customer based brand equity.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

An area for further exploration is the impact of consumers' attachment styles on personality trait preferences.

A comparison of the consumers' perception of the brand personality with the brand's communication strategy would be an interesting area of exploration.

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APPENDIX A Research Instrument Questionnaire

Date/...../.....

Please note that your participation in this survey is optional.

Section A: Personality of Laptop brands

The following adjectives are mostly used to describe characteristics of people in daily life. However, some of them can be used to describe products and services. This may sound unusual, but we would like you to assume a laptop computer brand to be a person. Think of the set of human characteristics associated to each brand. We are interested in finding out which personality traits or human characteristics come to your mind when you think of each Laptop Computer Brand in this table.

Indicate the extent to which the personality describes the brand indicated in this table. Indicate your rating for each of the given brands.

Rating: “Strongly Agree” = 7; “Moderately Agree” = 6; “Agree Slightly” = 5; “Neutral” = 4; “Disagree Slightly” = 3; “Moderately Disagree” = 2; “Strongly Disagree” = 1.				
Sincerity Traits				
Personality	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard (HP)	IBM/Lenovo
Down-to-earth				
Family-oriented				
Small-town				
Honest				
Sincere				

	APPLE	DELL	HP	IBM/Lenovo
Real				
Wholesome				
Original				
Cheerful				
Sentimental				
Friendly				
Excitement Traits				
	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo
Daring				
Trendy				
Exciting				
Spirited				
Cool				
Young				
Imaginative				
Unique				
Up-to-date				
Independent				
Contemporary				
Competence traits				
	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo
Reliable				
Hard working				
Secure				

	APPLE	DELL	HP	IBM/Lenovo
Intelligent				
Technical				
Corporate				
Successful				
Leader				
Confident				
Sophistication traits				
	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo
Upper Class				
Glamorous				
Good looking				
Charming				
Feminine				
Smooth				
Ruggedness traits				
	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo
Outdoorsy				
Masculine				
Western				
Tough				
Rugged				

Section B:

Please indicate which laptop brand you purchased.

Please indicate which laptop brand you purchased	APPLE	DELL	HP	IBM	OtherpleaseName
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For the laptop brand that you purchased:

I chose this brand because: please select one in each of the following rows for the laptop brand that you bought.

Attachment

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I have great affection for the brand.							
2. I am very attached to this brand.							
3. This brand has a sentimental value to me.							
4. I am very attracted to the brand.							
5. The brand makes me happy.							
6. Buying this brand gives me a lot of joy and pleasure.							
7. I find some comfort in buying or owning this brand							
8. I would be desperate if this brand was withdrawn from the market							

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I enjoy to using this brand.							
Trust							
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.The products of this brand give me security.							
11.I have confidence in the quality of products of this brand.							
12. Buying products from this brand is a guarantee.							
13. This brand is sincere towards its consumers.							
14. This brand is honest towards its customers.							
15. This brand shows interest to its customers.							

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. I think this brand renews its products to reflect research progress.							
17. I think this brand continually strives to improve its responses to consumer needs.							

Trust2

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. This brand gives me what I look for in a laptop.							
19. The laptop meets my expectations							
20. I feel confident in this brand							
21. This brand never disappoints me							
22. The brand is <u>not</u> constant in satisfying my needs							

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
23. The brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.							
24. The brand would make any effort to satisfy me.							
25. I could rely on this brand name to solve a problem with my laptop.							
26. The brand would be interested in my satisfaction.							
27. The brand would compensate me in some way for the problem with my laptop.							
28. The company associated with the brand would <u>not</u> be willing to solve any problem I could have with the laptop.							

Commitment							
	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
29. I would stay with this brand even if the price were to increase by 10% to 15%.							
30. If the price of the brand was increased somewhat, I will continue to buy it anyway.							
31. I am willing to pay a bit more for this brand.							
32. If this brand is no longer available, I would ideally not have any urgent need for the product and will wait a little while							
33. I'm not particularly interested in trying other brands than this one.							
34. I generally buy this particular brand even if other brands are on promotion.							
35. I consider myself to be loyal to the brand.							
36. I recommend this brand							

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
37. Next time I buy a laptop I will buy this brand.							

Section C

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Agree Slightly	Neutral	Disagree Slightly	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
38. I bought this brand because there were limited choices.							
39. I bought this brand because others were too pricy.							
40. Switching costs: it would be costly to switch to another brand. e.g. Standardisation							

41. When will the next new laptop be purchased by someone in your household?	12 months or less	13-24 months	25-36 months	Over 36 months	Never
42. If in the market for a new laptop today, what brand would you buy?	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo	Other please Name
43. and what brand would be replaced?	APPLE	DELL	Hewlett Packard	IBM/Lenovo	Other please Name

Section D: Demographics (Please select one in each row)

Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Race	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	
Education	Matriculation	Undergraduate diploma	Graduate degree	Post graduate degree	
Income bracket	<R200 000	R201 000 to R400 000	R401 000 to R600 000	R601 000+	
Gender	Male	Female			

Thank you for participating in this survey.

APPENDIX B Factor analysis

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
AttachAverage	.24	.18	.22	.02	.77	.02	.13	.06
TrustAverage	.15	.37	.12	.15	.74	.10	.11	.09
CommitmentAverage	.16	.10	.24	.06	.84	.07	.07	-.05
WillBuyAgain	.11	.19	.14	.04	.83	.02	.02	-.10
DowntoEarth	-.13	.08	.05	.27	-.16	-.02	-.01	.62
FamilyOr	-.17	.09	.24	.28	.08	.02	.15	.61
SmallTown	.05	-.10	-.29	.10	.02	.06	.00	.60
Honest	.07	.25	.02	.71	.02	.09	.07	.09
Sincere	.14	.18	.01	.70	.08	.04	.09	.27
Real	.16	.13	.09	.69	-.02	.24	.06	.28
Wholesome	.11	.02	.19	.67	.14	.16	.01	.29
Original	.39	.24	.30	.33	.17	.04	.34	-.02
Cheerful	.26	.09	.19	.15	.13	.18	.87	.09
Sentimental	.26	.09	.19	.15	.13	.18	.87	.09
Friendly	.26	.21	.17	.29	.01	.29	.09	.53
Daring	.58	.19	.39	.08	.16	.09	.07	-.01
Trendy	.59	.16	.53	.14	.08	-.04	.09	-.03
Exciting	.63	.18	.55	.09	.09	.02	.12	.04
Spirited	.56	.21	.47	.13	.13	.15	.22	.06
Cool	.64	.20	.50	.07	.13	-.05	.19	-.01
Young	.61	.15	.53	.01	.12	.01	.14	.05
Imaginative	.62	.19	.44	.00	.15	.00	.29	-.03
Unique	.79	.21	.16	.05	.17	.05	.06	.01
Uptodate	.68	.45	.13	.23	.12	.10	.11	-.05
Independent	.71	.32	.05	.23	.10	.19	.03	-.02
Contemporary	.79	.27	.13	.14	.11	.11	.09	-.04
Reliable	.28	.60	.18	.37	.11	-.02	.20	.00
Hardworking	.25	.51	.15	.42	.04	.11	.23	-.05
Secure	.28	.52	.19	.35	.16	-.03	.20	-.01
Intelligent	.30	.68	.24	.17	.12	.00	-.01	-.03
Technical	.24	.76	.09	.04	.14	.12	.11	.02
Corporate	.06	.74	-.08	.09	.13	.26	-.20	.15

Successful	.16	.76	.17	.09	.12	.08	.19	.06
Leader	.27	.74	.21	.10	.19	.07	.04	.08
Confident	.19	.74	.26	.10	.11	.16	-.04	.01
UpperClass	.26	.42	.57	.22	.17	.12	.05	-.11
Glamorous	.31	.25	.70	.10	.15	.09	.13	-.13
Goodlooking	.31	.36	.71	.15	.13	.03	.10	-.06
Charming	.24	.24	.71	.03	.24	.03	.06	-.07
Feminine	.10	-.14	.63	-.01	.10	.15	.07	.18
Smooth	.20	.20	.66	.15	.14	.09	.06	.09
Outdoorsy	.27	.12	.33	.02	-.05	.54	.07	.21
Masculine	-.05	.14	.07	.30	.05	.73	.13	-.14
Western	.22	.17	.16	.37	.01	.47	.20	-.18
Tough	.05	.16	.08	.17	.07	.77	.08	.01
Rugged	.04	.03	-.06	-.08	.09	.73	.01	.35

