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The Influence of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty of South African smartphone users

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

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ABSTRACT

Less is known on the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty, more so within the context of South Africa's smartphone industry. What is evident, however, is the decrease in brand loyalty among South African consumers due to the overwhelming number of choices and technology available. Consumers who are very satisfied with their phones are less likely to transform this satisfaction into loyalty. The complexity of the relationship between consumers and brands has resulted in a decline in customer experience and brand commitment.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty among South African smartphone users. This study was conducted using convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Data was collected from 398 respondents through a structured online questionnaire. The study focused on two popular smartphone brands, referred to as Brand A and Brand B for purposes of this study. Data was analysed using factor analysis and structural equation modelling using AMOS 28 software, measuring the relationship between brand experience dimensions (sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual) and brand loyalty dimensions (attitudinal and behavioural loyalty).

The results showed that affective experience and intellectual experience are significant predictors of brand loyalty among SA smartphone users. In contrast, sensory experience and behavioural experience did not show a significant relationship with brand loyalty. Notably, Brand A smartphone users were found to be more loyal to their brand than Brand B smartphone users, evident in their ratings of affective and intellectual experiences, which were significantly higher than Brand B users.

Keywords: brand experience, sensory experience, intellectual experience, behavioural experience, affective experience, brand loyalty, experiential marketing, attitudinal loyalty, behavioural loyalty

DECLARATION

I, Rabia Metedad, 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 Management in Strategic Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

R. Metedad

_____

Signed at Johannesburg, South Africa

on the 26th day of February 2024.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master's degree to my late mother, Sylvia Nokuthula Zwezwe. May your soul perpetually rest in peace, Mama. I know that you would be so proud.

“Ukuzala ukuzelula amathambo!” - an isiZulu expression relating one’s gratitude to God for having blessed them with a child they are proud of. An expression that I have so often heard you proclaim toward me. Thank you for all you’ve contributed toward shaping the person I am today. I’ve never taken this for granted.

You are sorely missed Ma. Uyohlala usenhliziyweni yami.

I love you always.

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- To my late sister Rooweedah Metedad – life hasn't been the same without you, but I have been intentional about continuing on the path that will make you proud. Thank you for your shared wisdom, unconditional love, and guidance. Your contribution toward the confident and bright young woman I am today has not gone unappreciated. I love and miss you, Big Sis'. You would be so proud!
- Thank you to my supervisor, Dr Yvonne Saini, who supported and guided me through this process. Thank you for having faith in me and seeing me through to the end.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT **2**
DECLARATION **3**
DEDICATION **4**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **5**
1. CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION **11**
1.1. Context of Study 11
1.1.1. Global Overview of Smartphones 11
1.1.2. Overview of Smartphones in Africa 13
1.2. Background of Study 15
1.3. Problem Statement 17
1.3.1. Main problem 17
1.4. Research Questions 19
1.5. Research Objectives 20
1.6. Significance of the study 21
1.7. Limitations of the Study 22
1.8. Assumptions 22
1.9. Definition of key terminology 22
1.10. Report Structure/Outline 24
2. CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW **26**
2.1. Introduction 26
2.2. Theoretical Grounding of the Study 26
2.2.1. The Theory of Consumer-Decision-Making 27
2.2.2. Theory of Buyer Behaviour 31
2.2.2.1. Types of Buyer Behaviour 33
2.3. An Overview: Marketing Theory 34
2.3.1. Traditional Marketing versus Experiential Marketing 35
2.4. Brands and Branding 37
2.4.1. Historical Evolution of Branding 37
2.4.2. Definition 37
2.4.3. Brand Elements 38
2.4.4. Customer-Based Brand Equity 41
2.4.5. Branding Strategies 42
2.5. Brand Experience 44
2.5.1. Dimensions of Brand Experience 45
2.6. Consumer Perceptions 47

2.6.1. The Perceptual Process - information processing for Decision-making 49
2.7. Customer Engagement Marketing 50
2.8. Brand Loyalty 51
2.9. Levels of Brand Loyalty 52
2.9.1. Brand recognition 52
2.9.2. Brand preference 53
2.9.3. Brand insistence 53
2.10. Dimensions of Brand Loyalty 54
2.10.1. Attitudinal and Behavioural Loyalty 54
2.11. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development 55
2.11.1. Sensory Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty 56
2.11.2. Sensory Experience and Behavioural Loyalty 58
2.11.3. Affective Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty 59
2.11.4. Affective Experience and Behavioural Loyalty 60
2.11.5. Behavioural Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty 61
2.11.6. Behavioural Experience and Behavioural Loyalty 62
2.11.7. Intellectual Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty 63
2.11.8. Intellectual Experience and Behavioural Loyalty 64
2.12. Chapter Summary / Conclusion: 65
3. CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 66
3.1. Research Philosophy 66
3.2. Research Paradigm 67
3.2.1. Pragmatism 67
3.3. Research Design 68
3.4. Sampling Techniques 69
3.4.1. Sampling Method 69
3.4.2. Sample Size 70
3.5. Data Collection Instruments 71
3.6. Data Analysis 72
3.7. Pilot Study 76
3.7.1. Pilot Study Procedure for Data Collection 76
3.7.2. Demographic Profile of the Pilot 77
3.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation 82
3.9. Measurement Scale of the Study 82
3.10. Reliability Outcomes 84
3.11. Hypothesis Testing Results Summary 85
3.12. Limitations of the Pilot Study 87

3.13. Ethical Considerations 87
4. CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS 89
4.1. Introduction 89
4.2. Data Screening 89
4.3. Descriptive Profile of the Respondents 89
4.3.1. Age Profile 89
4.3.2. Gender Profile 90
4.3.3. Education Profile 91
4.3.4. Employment Profile 91
4.3.5. Income Profile 91
4.4. Smartphone Usage 92
4.4.1. Smartphone Brand Currently Owned 92
4.4.2. Smartphone Model Owned 92
4.4.3. Customer Type 94
4.4.4. Upgrade Frequency 94
4.4.5. Recent Changes 95
4.4.6. Brand Ownership Period 95
4.5. Descriptive Statistics for Constructs 96
4.5.1. Sensory Experience (SENS) 96
4.5.2. Affective Experience (AFF) 97
4.5.3. Behavioural Experience (BEX) 97
4.5.4. Intellectual Experience (INT) 98
4.5.5. Attitudinal Loyalty (ATT) 98
4.5.6. Behavioural Loyalty (BEL) 99
4.6. Testing Validity and Reliability 100
4.6.1. Hypothesized CFA Model 100
4.6.2. Hypothesis Results 101
4.6.3. Correlation Analysis 101
4.6.4. Revised CFA Model 103
4.7. Results - Revised Model 104
4.8. Interpretation of Table 17 Results 107
4.8.1. Sensory Experience (SENS) 107
4.8.2. Affective Experience (AFF) 107
4.8.3. Behavioural Experience (BEX) 107
4.8.4. Intellectual Experience (INT) 107
4.8.5. Brand Loyalty (BLOY) 108
4.9. Model Fit 108

4.10. Hypothesis Testing using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) 109
4.10.1. Results on Hypothesis 1 (H1): 111
4.10.2. Results on Hypothesis 2 (H2): 111
4.10.3. Results on Hypothesis 3 (H3): 112
4.10.4. Results on Hypothesis 4 (H4): 112
4.11. Brand Experience Dimensions and Brand Loyalty by Smartphone Brand. 113
4.12. Conclusion 115
5. CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS 116
5.1. Introduction 116
5.2. Demographics Summary Discussion 116
5.3. Hypothesis Discussion 117
5.3.1. Sensory Experience and Brand Loyalty 117
5.3.2. Affective Experience and Brand Loyalty 119
5.3.3. Behavioural Experience and Brand Loyalty 120
5.3.4. Intellectual and Brand Loyalty 122
5.4. Chapter Summary / Conclusion 123
6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 125
6.1. Conclusion of the Study 125
6.2. Managerial Implications and Recommendations 127
6.3. Limitations of the study 128
6.4. Suggestions for further research 128
LIST OF REFERENCES 130
APPENDIX A – Research Cover Letter 136
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire for Pilot Study 137
APPENDIX C: Research Instrument - Questionnaire for Main Study 142

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Dimensions of Brand Experience - Different Perspectives 47
Table 2: Measures used in the Pilot Study. 73
Table 3: Measures used in the Main Study. 74
Table 4: Summary Description of Respondents - Pilot Study 81
Table 5: Reliability Outcomes of the Pilot Study 84
Table 6: Reversed Scales 85
Table:7: Hypothesis Testing - Results 86
Table 8: Sensory Experience - Descriptive Statistics 96
Table 9: Affective Experience - Descriptive Statistics 97
Table 10: Behavioural Experience – Descriptive statistics 98
Table 11: Intellectual Experience – Descriptive statistics 98
Table 12: Attitudinal Loyalty - Descriptive Statistics 99
Table 13: Behavioural Loyalty – Descriptive statistics 99
Table 14: Criterion Values – Hypothesized model 101
Table 15: Correlation Matrix for all items 102

Table 16 Criterion Values - Revised model 105
Table 17: Final construct composition, Cronbach's Alpha, CR and AVE 106
Table 18: Model Fit Indices 108
Table 19: SEM Regression weights 110
Table 20: Hypotheses Summary 113
Table 21: Independent samples t-test of all constructs by brand owned. 113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mobile Vendor Market Share SA (StatCounter, 2022) 15
Figure 2: The Traditional Funnel (Stankevich, 2017) 30
Figure 3: Consumer Decision-Making Process (Albrecht et al., 2023) 31
Figure 4: Model of Buyer Behaviour (Howard & Sheth, 1969) 32
Figure 5: Types of Buyer Behaviour 33
Figure 6: Keller's CBBE Pyramid 42
Figure 7: The Perceptual Process 49
Figure 8: Conceptual Framework 56
Figure 9: Gender Distribution – Pilot 77
Figure 10: Age Distribution - Pilot 78
Figure 11: Education Level - Pilot 78
Figure 12: Employment Level - Pilot 79
Figure 13: Annual Income Distribution - Pilot 79
Figure 14: Provincial Breakdown - Pilot 80
Figure 15: Smartphone Brand Ownership – Split -Pilot 80
Figure 16: Ownership Period - Pilot 81
Figure 17: Respondent Age 90
Figure 18: Respondent Gender 90
Figure 19: Level of Education 91
Figure 20: Employment Status 91
Figure 21: Income Profile 92
Figure 22: Brand Currently Owned. 92
Figure 23: Smartphone model owned. 93
Figure 24: Customer Type 94
Figure 25: Upgrade frequency 95
Figure 26: Recent Changes 95
Figure 27: Ownership Period 96
Figure 28: Hypothesized CFA Model 100
Figure 29: Revised Model 104
Figure 30: Revised Conceptual Framework 109

1. CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context of Study

Smartphones are mobile phones that operate on a mobile operating system and offer more advanced computing capabilities and connectivity than standard phones (Sheikh et al., 2013). They are innovative mobile phones with additional features which differentiate them from standard mobile phones Appiah et al. (2017)(Appiah et al., 2017), and they provide a range of features, such as built-in operating systems, special software applications, high-quality cameras and video features, internet connectivity, and attractive product design (Appiah et al., 2017).

In today's connected world, businesses must prioritise building and maintaining profitable long-term customer relationships by delivering value (Shah et al., 2006). This is especially important considering the rapid advancements in digital and technological areas. With an abundance of information at their fingertips, consumers have the power to influence their own behaviour. Smartphone companies have the unique opportunity to use this information to positively influence their customers to their benefit.

1.1.1. Global Overview of Smartphones

It would be appropriate to begin the conversation of the smartphone market analysis through the lens of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Mobile phones have come a long way since their inception, with significant advancements in their technical features, design, and technology central to driving consumer demand. Many would argue that this would qualify the mobile phone as having evolved through innovation over the years (Murungu, 2011). When the mobile phone evolved and advanced to have in-built operating systems and high-quality camera and video features, it was a first of its kind, which many would describe as an innovation. Some consumers are more welcoming of the advancements and adopt them faster than others.

If an idea, practice or object is perceived as new by an individual, it can be defined as diffusion of innovations (Wani & Ali, 2015) as cited from (Roger, 1963). According to Cecere (2015), the development of the Symbian joint venture among Nokia, Psion,

Motorola and Ericsson, which aimed at creating an operating system (OS) for mobile phones, was an essential milestone in the evolution of the smartphone. We have seen other leading operating systems emerge following this, e.g., Android and iOS.

The smartphone market is an ever-evolving and innovative industry (Cecere et al., 2015). Manufacturers are constantly innovating to stay ahead by introducing new devices with improved hardware and software. This has led to the availability of various devices, ranging from budget to flagship models (Intelligence, 2023).

Key companies in the global smartphone market include Sony Corp., ZTE Corp., Samsung Electronics, Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd., Samsung Inc., Vivo Communication Technology Co. Ltd., Xiaomi Corporation, Guangdong OPPO Mobile Telecommunications Corp., Ltd., Nokia Corporation, and AsusTek Computer Inc (Intelligence, 2023). These companies produce well-known smartphone brands that fiercely compete for consumer attention and market share, namely Samsung, Huawei, Apple, Sony, Motorola, LG, and Xiaomi (Intelligence, 2023). The smartphone industry is characterised by intense competition fuelled by comparative marketing activities related to brand features and benefits. Samsung's entry into the smartphone market in 2009, directly competing with Apple, sparked a competitive war that continues to this day (Intelligence, 2023). Smartphone manufacturers have the opportunity to deliver memorable brand experiences that offer functional benefits and resonate with consumers' personalities, values, and lifestyles to impact brand loyalty and stand out positively from the competition.

According to Dhapte (2023), the global smartphone market is expected to grow from USD 520.3 billion in 2022 to USD 978.2 billion in 2030. The industry's growth is attributed to the increasing use of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and the entry of new players such as Apple and Samsung. This growth is driven by the development of advanced technological hardware and software components, as highlighted by (Cecere, 2015). There has been a significant increase in smartphones worldwide in recent years, with 40% of the global population owning a smartphone as of 2021 (Intelligence, 2023).

A recent survey in the United States revealed that 91.9% of smartphone users plan to stick with their brand when upgrading, while only 8.1% of respondents expressed an intention to switch to a different brand (Mahipal, 2021). The survey involved 5000 U.S smartphone users and showed that Samsung users' loyalty decreased by 11.7%, from 85.7% in 2019 to 74% in 2021. 26% of Samsung users wanted to switch to a different brand (Mahipal, 2021). Whether these trends apply to South African smartphone users, particularly those who use Apple and Samsung smartphone brands, is uncertain.

The smartphone industry is driven by various factors, including the adoption of premium smartphone designs, high disposable income, and increased internet use (Dhapte, 2023). The growth of the Asian market can be attributed to the development of telecom infrastructure, an increase in disposable income, the emergence of budget smartphones, and the expansion in new product launches (Intelligence, 2023). However, the global smartphone industry faced a decline in growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the balance between the supply and demand of smartphones. The nationwide lockdown severely affected China, the global hub for smartphone manufacturing, leading to delays in developing next-generation products (Intelligence, 2023). Despite this, smartphones played a crucial role during the pandemic as people relied on them for communication. With physical contact restricted, individuals used smartphones to engage in activities that contributed positively to their mental health and well-being, such as edutainment or exercise, facilitated through smartphone applications. Android is the most widely used mobile operating system globally, with a market share of nearly 70%, while iOS accounts for approximately 25% of the market (StatCounter, 2022).

1.1.2. Overview of Smartphones in Africa

Africa's smartphone market has experienced a decline of 3.4% quarter on quarter, with 17 million units shipped. This is the lowest level of shipments since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in quarter 1 of 2020, according to the latest figures released by the International Data Corporation (IDC) (Manek, 2023). The decline is due to the rise in inflation and the depreciation of the local currency against the United States (US) dollar, negatively impacting the demand for smartphones across the continent

(Manek, 2023). Leading brand devices in the smartphone market have become less affordable due to their excessive pricing. For instance, the current Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra is priced at $1,199 (Cherlynn Low & Rutherford, 2023).
The average selling price of smartphones has grown due to high import costs, and the 5G-equipped flagship devices have increased prices to the premium segment (Manek, 2023).

According to the IDC report by Manek (2023), South Africa (SA), Egypt, and Nigeria are the three biggest markets in the smartphone industry. South Africa and Egypt enjoyed strong performance in quarter 2 of 2023, with growth in shipments year on year. South Africa attributes its growth to increased entry-level devices from Samsung and other local brands. These devices cater to cash-strapped consumers with constrained budgets (Manek, 2023). On the other hand, Nigeria's market is declining due to its sluggish economy, poor exchange rates, and high inflation rates (Manek, 2023).

According to Nkume (2017), South Africans are now among the top users of smartphones globally and are skilled at using them to access various applications and services. Many competing smartphone brands In South Africa strive to introduce technology-forward devices with improved designs and features to deliver a satisfying brand experience. Consumers have a wide range of brands to choose from, making fostering brand loyalty challenging. Marketing professionals must deliver innovative, value-driven solutions to stand out from the competition and create authentic and memorable brand interactions. Network providers such as Vodacom, MTN, Telkom, and Cell C try to make it easier by offering value-driven packages aligned with the consumer's needs.

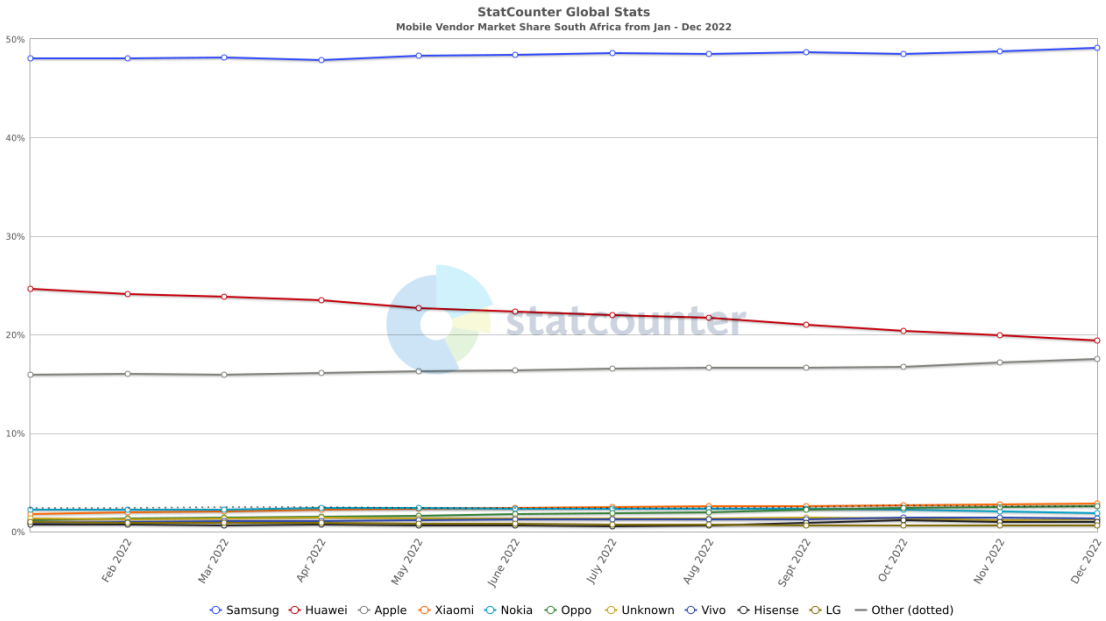


Figure 1: Mobile Vendor Market Share SA (StatCounter, 2022)

Figure 1 illustrates the market share of mobile vendors in South Africa. Samsung is the top player, with a market share of 49.36%, followed by Apple and Huawei, with 17.35% and 16.56%, respectively (StatCounter, 2022).

1.2. Background of Study

Little is known about how each type of brand experience influences a customer's brand loyalty (Ong et al., 2018). Maintaining loyal customers is a major challenge for many organisations in today's competitive marketplace (Mathew & Thomas, 2018). Even though mobile phones often meet or exceed our expectations, customers who are highly satisfied with their phones are less likely to become loyal to the brand (Ghimire & Karki, 2022). As the mobile devices market continues to grow rapidly, brands are facing increased competition in their efforts to build customer loyalty through positive brand experiences (Lima-Pires et al., 2019). The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty within the context of the South African smartphone market.

There has been an interesting dynamic among competing brands, resulting in a more evolved marketing approach to consumers following a critical realisation that intangible consumption benefits, such as providing symbolic unique value through experience,

far outweigh the tangible (Ong et al., 2018). Brand experience has attracted significant attention in marketing practice, which has pushed marketing professionals to acknowledge the importance of understanding how consumers experience brands to enable the development of marketing strategies for their goods and services (Cuong, 2020). As the market becomes more competitive with substitutes for products and services, the study of brand loyalty and customer loyalty becomes more crucial (Ishak & Abd Ghani, 2013). Therefore, differentiation from rivals is vital and can be achieved by creating exciting brand experiences that attract customers to continually purchase and remain loyal to the brand (Cuong, 2020).

According to Kahn & Rahman (2015), customers have varying tastes and preferences across both developed and developing nations. Moreover, the authors highlight how consumers' brand experiences differ based on geographical location. In the competitive and innovation-driven smartphone industry, consumers have a plethora of options to choose from, which makes decision-making challenging. DeBeer (2019) suggests that the fluidity with which consumers move between physical and digital worlds has made them accustomed to switching between these two realities, resulting in an increased tendency to switch between brands. Thus, can a consumer brand experience influence a consumer's decision to select a brand that offers desired satisfaction and, in turn, fosters loyalty?

The research limitations of the Cuong (2020) study, which focused on the impact of brand experience dimensions on the attitudinal and behavioural loyalty of motorcycle brands, suggests that the results may not be generalised to all industries, encouraging future research on this topic, however, concentrating on different sectors. The same applies to a study conducted by Madeline & Sihombing (2019), who investigated the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty, among other constructs. The authors focused on Samsung in the Indonesian market, thus encouraging researchers to address their limitations by choosing samples from different countries and other smartphone brands.

Against the backdrop of a decline in brand loyalty among South African consumers DeBeer (2019), this study aims to investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty among Brand A and Brand B smartphone users. It seeks

to understand the experience factors contributing to user loyalty to Brand A and Brand B smartphone brands. Therefore, various smartphone characteristics that impact brand experience must be considered. This can include factors such as quality, aesthetics, functionality, user-friendliness, user experience related to the smartphone's operating system, customer service, social and lifestyle aspects, and price.

This study contributes to the academic body of knowledge by providing relevant insights into product development and marketing strategies for smartphone companies in South Africa, which can be beneficial to marketing professionals.

1.3. Problem Statement

1.3.1. Main problem

Less is unknown on the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty (Ong et al., 2018) more so within the context of South Africa's smartphone industry. What is evident, however, is the decrease in brand loyalty among South African consumers due to the overwhelming number of choices and technology available (deBeer, 2019). Ghimire & Karki (2022) posit that even consumers who are very satisfied with their phones are less likely to transform this satisfaction into loyalty. The complexity of the relationship between consumers and brands has resulted in a decline in customer experience and brand commitment (deBeer, 2019).

Various new smartphone brands have entered the South African market, leading to fierce competition for market share among manufacturers. Although still ahead of the competition, popular brands such as Apple and Samsung are losing market share to Huawei, Xiaomi and Oppo, among other smartphone brands, according to Stat Counter's data from 2022 (StatCounter, 2022). In the past, Nokia and Blackberry were market leaders, but in more recent times, Apple and Samsung have taken over the market. However, if they become complacent and do not explore non-traditional marketing methods, they may lose their market position, just like the previous market leaders.

The SA smartphone market is filled with numerous competing brands who are continuously improving their devices and pushing the boundaries of technology to stay ahead and relevant in a constantly evolving industry (Appiah et al., 2017). This has made it difficult for consumers to decide on and stick to a brand of choice. A report on Statista reiterates this, citing that SA smartphone consumers being spoilt for choice has made it harder but crucial for companies to establish some form of loyalty among them, especially given the short life cycle of most handsets these days (Armstrong, 2022). Therefore, the study aims to investigate whether the different dimensions of brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual) play a role in building brand loyalty among South African smartphone users.

A research article published by Zhang and Adipat (2005) suggested that mobile device users face several obstacles, including connectivity issues, small screens, different display resolutions, and limited processing capability and power. These factors can negatively impact the user experience, leading to customer dissatisfaction and reduced brand loyalty towards smartphone brands. Common manufacturing defects, such as, short battery life, overheating, freezing screens and applications can lead to smartphone malfunction (Kumar, 2022). A 2020 report confirmed that these issues are widespread among customers and, if left unaddressed, can significantly affect brand loyalty (ICT, 2020). To prevent this, brands must continuously track customer satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement. Brands should understand how these problems affect the overall brand experience and loyalty and take the necessary steps to address them.

According to Cherlynn, Low and Rutherford (2023), the Apple iPhone 15 Pro is currently considered the best iOS smartphone available, while the Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra model is the best Android smartphone. However, despite being the best smartphones in the market, both have their issues. The Apple iPhone 15 Pro reportedly faces technical issues such as overheating, according to research conducted by (Rolfe, 2023). Apple has received numerous complaints from users whose smartphones are overheating quickly (Rolfe, 2023). This is a matter of concern, particularly for brand-loyal customers who upgrade to the latest version of the smartphone with the hope of an improved brand experience. Such customers may feel disappointed and let down, resulting in them switching to another brand.

Consumers often switch brands in the smartphone industry for various reasons. A study conducted by Msaed et al. (2017) indicates that factors contributing to this behaviour include the fast pace of technological advancements that require extensive research to understand customer preferences. The authors also note that new product versions with additional features are frequently introduced, leading to intense competition. Differences in technology among significant players and unique product features may also drive brand-switching behaviour. The fierce competition between major players such as Apple and Samsung has increased brand-switching (Msaed et al., 2017). As a result, it is crucial to understand brand-switching behaviour and its impact on buyer behaviour in the purchase decision-making process. This information can be valuable to marketing professionals in the smartphone industry so that they may take the necessary action to foster brand loyalty behaviour.

There has been a lot of discussion and comparison between smartphones operating on Android and iOS. The reliability and failure rates of these devices are among the most debated topics. It was reported that the worldwide failure rates of Android devices have increased by 25%, while iOS devices have decreased to only 12% (Rofman, 2014). These figures indicate that many phones purchased by consumers do not function as intended, resulting in inconvenient returns for consumers and costly losses for retailers (Rofman, 2014). This may lead to a negative brand experience, which could damage the potential for brand loyalty.

1.4. Research Questions

Further examination is required to fully understand the correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty among South African smartphone users. The main research question, therefore, is: “Does brand experience influence brand loyalty of South African smartphone users? To ascertain a more detailed determination, a comprehensive analysis must be conducted to investigate the relationship between the various dimensions of brand experience- sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual–as defined by Brakus et.al (2009) and the dimensions of brand loyalty – namely, attitudinal and behavioural loyalty Cuong (2020).

Based on the sub-problems above, other research questions for this study are:

- *1a: Does sensory experience influence attitudinal loyalty?*
- *1b: Does sensory experience influence behavioural loyalty?*
- *2a: Does affective experience influence attitudinal loyalty?*
- *2b: Does affective experience influence behavioural loyalty?*
- *3a: Does behavioural experience influence attitudinal loyalty?*
- *3b: Does behavioural experience influence behavioural loyalty?*
- *4a: Does intellectual experience influence attitudinal loyalty?*
- *4b: Does intellectual experience influence behavioural loyalty?*

1.5. Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following empirical research objectives:

- *1a:* To investigate whether sensory experience influences attitudinal loyalty.
- *1b:* To investigate whether sensory experience influences behavioural loyalty.
- *2a:* To investigate whether affective experience influences attitudinal loyalty.
- *2b:* To investigate whether affective experience influences behavioural loyalty.
- *3a:* To determine whether behavioural experience influences attitudinal loyalty.
- *3b:* To determine whether behavioural experience influences behavioural loyalty.
- *4a:* To determine whether intellectual experience influences attitudinal loyalty.
- *4b:* To determine whether intellectual experience influences behavioural loyalty.

1.6. Significance of the study

Ong, Lee and Ramayah (2018) theorise that it is essential to learn and understand the type of experience that matters to dimensions of loyalty to understand consumption behaviour. Competition has shifted from offering functional value through delivering quality services or competitive pricing to providing symbolic value, such as unique experiences (Ong et al., 2018). Thus, this study is significant for smartphone manufacturers as it aims to provide valuable insights for strategic decision-making in ensuring their brands stand out meaningfully against competition. This study also contributes to existing knowledge by enabling brand experiences that may result in brand loyalty. Furthermore, Same & Larimo (2012a) suggest that additional research is needed to comprehend brand experience and its impact on customers fully.

The era of using mobile phones solely to make calls has long gone. With remarkable advancements in digital technology, consumer behaviour related to the purchase and use of mobile phones, now commonly known as smartphones, has evolved significantly. In South Africa, mobile phones have come a long way from an experiential perspective. From the basic but *then* 'cool' flip factor that Motorola boasted, or the colourful mobile phone 'face' change options offered by Nokia, to now have the likes of Brand A and Brand B offering more captivating experiences that capture the consumer's imagination. In recent times, smartphones have been delivering more personalised and targeted experiences, with Brand A and Brand B taking pride in their personalised operating systems (iOS and Android, respectively) that deliver a more tailored and differentiated brand experience.

In today's digital era, a surplus of information is available to consumers. Therefore, marketing professionals and smartphone companies must create captivating and personalised brand experiences that can effectively attract their intended audience.
The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted how customers consume information. Experiential marketing, which relies on offline engagements like in-store activations and events to engage and influence customer behaviour physically, has suffered during this period. Brands that were used to promoting themselves in-store or at events and relied on physical visuals and contact were forced to reconsider how

they would engage with customers in the context of COVID-19 or any similar pandemic. This is a crucial aspect for brands that strive to capture and retain customer attention through brand experience.

Since the pandemic, digital and online platforms have experienced an upswing in engagement. (Sheth, 2020) suggested that video games and virtual sports illustrate of how the virtual world is becoming more interesting than the physical world. During the pandemic's stricter regulations, there was a surge in virtual engagements and interactions, which remained relevant even long after COVID-19.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

- The study is conducted with a focus on the South African smartphone market.
- The study will focus on brand experience and brand loyalty in the South African smartphone industry.
- The study will focus on consumers who own a Brand A or Brand B smartphone.

1.8. Assumptions

- The targeted respondents will be truthful in their responses to the research instrument used for data collection.
- The respondent currently owns either Brand A or Brand B smartphone.
- The respondents will have a good understanding of the English language, enough to understand and respond to the contents of the survey.

1.9. Definition of key terminology

Brand Experience: “Brand Experiences seek to activate your audience’s senses and emotions while connecting with their values, creating long-term memory and behavioural patterns” (Gilad, 2019). This study adopts Brakus et.al (2009) definition of a brand experience, which is suggested as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensation, feelings, and cognitions, and behavioural responses), evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.”

Experience: Experience occurs “when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event” (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Sensory Experience: an experience that relates to the stimulation of the customer’s human senses Brakus et.al (2009,

Intellectual Experience: an experience that appeals to the customer’s intellect with the objective of creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively Brakus et.al (2009).

Behavioural Experience: an experience that impacts the intentions and physical actions of the customer, and integrates behavioural reactions triggered by brand-related stimuli Brakus et.al (2009).

Affective Experience: an experience that stimulates the customer’s emotions, mood, and feeling toward the brand Brakus et.al (2009).

Attitudinal Loyalty: A customer’s identification with a particular service provider and preference for a product/service over alternatives (Cuong, 2020). It includes a degree of dispositional commitment regarding some unique value associated with the brand (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002).

Behavioural Loyalty: repeat purchase behaviour, which is characterized by the continuous purchase of a brand and repeated intention to purchase it in the future, as defined by (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Experiential marketing: Marketing practice that seeks to emotionally connect and engage with the customer in a meaningful and memorable way within an experiential context through engaging/tantalising the consumer’s sense, feel, think, act, and relate experiential forms (Schmitt, 2009). Smilansky (2018) defines Experiential Marketing as “the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and add value to the target audience”.

Brand Loyalty: A deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Oliver, 1999).

Customer Satisfaction: An accumulated and experience-based attitude which is the outcome of customers' evaluated experience of a product or service based on what was expected against its actual performance (Wu & Tseng, 2015).

1.10. Report Structure/Outline

The report is sectioned into 6 chapters (1-6); The structure is outlined below:

Chapter 1 (Introduction) gives an overview of the study, highlighting key themes that are included in the report. These are (1.1), the background of the study (1.2), the context of the study (1.3), the problem statement (1.4), research questions (1.5), research objectives (1.6), significance of the study (1.7), limitations of the study (1.8), Assumption (1.9), definition of key terminology (1.10) and concludes with the report structure/outline.

Chapter 2 (Literature review) is a scholarly review of the findings that have emerged from prior research efforts on the topic under study. The conceptualisation of the research model and hypothesized relationships is also included in this chapter. The chapter is summarised in the conclusion.

Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) outlines the procedure that the research will undertake in terms of research methods and strategy of the research (3.1), research philosophy (3.2), research paradigm of the study (3.3), research design (3.4), data collection and sample (3.5) data collection instruments (3.6), data analysis (3.7), measuring instrument, (3.8), pilot study (3.9), ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 (presentation of the results) reports the overall research results. The chapter gives a descriptive overview of the respondents in terms of demographics and their consumption behaviour related to the use of smartphones. It also addresses the

reliability and validity of the scale items, followed by a correlation analysis and a thorough presentation of the results relating to the hypotheses made in Chapter 1. This chapter also presents the comparative results on sensory experience, affective experience, behavioural experience, intellectual experience and brand loyalty by smartphone brand.

Chapter 5 (discussion of the results) discusses the research results outlined in Chapter 4. It discusses the outcomes of the study's research hypotheses and relates it to the literature review in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 (conclusion and recommendations) provides a summary of the chapter, the research study's conclusion, followed by future research limitations, managerial implications and recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

2. CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Marketing has evolved significantly over time. It is no longer sufficient for marketing practitioners to only offer functional benefits. Instead, they must focus on creating brand experiences that engage customers.

There has been much discussion among academics and marketing professionals about the topics of brand experience and brand loyalty. This is reflected in the many academic studies that are available for review on these topics. This chapter aims to review theories that theoretically ground these topics, as well as other academic studies that have added to the body of work. The goal is to summarize the key findings and claims that have emerged from prior research on these subjects (Knopf, 2006).

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of brand experience on brand loyalty among smartphone users in South Africa. Both brand experience and brand loyalty are complex concepts that cover various dimensions that customers encounter when interacting with products, brands, and services (Cuong, 2020) (Brakus et al., 2009).

2.2. Theoretical Grounding of the Study

The review of literature relevant to this study has revealed a glaring number of popular and trusted authors on the topic of brand experience and brand loyalty. The authors that emerge commonly and consistently in most literature reviews related to the constructs of this study have evidently made their mark on these topics, solidifying their status as authorities on these subjects. These include academics such as Holbrook and Hirshman (1982), Bernd Schmitt (1999, 2003, 2010), Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009), and Pine and Gilmore (2002). These authors, some considered pioneers in the field, have made invaluable contributions in the field of brand experience and have inspired researchers to make further contributions to further enrich existing literature. However, there is always room for other researchers to contribute to the body of work. This study thus aims to do that.

Marketing practitioners must understand how consumers experience brands, which is crucial for developing marketing strategies for goods and services (Brakus et al.,2009). Previous studies have shown that brand experience affects brand loyalty (Brakus et al.,2009). However, more research is needed to determine how this relationship affects South African smartphone users.

We often ignore the many enjoyable activities and experiences we encounter daily, such as sensory pleasures, aesthetic enjoyment, daydreaming, and responses (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The more engaged a consumer is, the more effective and memorable the brand experience is likely to be (Schmitt, 2013). According to Bapat & Thanigan (2016), brands that provide a great experience thrive in the marketplace.

The following theories will be used, and are relevant to the study:

- The theory of consumer decision-making
- Theory of Buyer Behaviour
- Marketing Theory: Traditional vs. Experiential Marketing

Consumer decision-making is closely linked to the actions or outcomes that result from a consumer's past or initial interactions with a brand. Understanding how consumers process their experiences and how those experiences affect their decision-making is significant (Schmitt, 2013). This knowledge is particularly important for marketing professionals who need to be aware of the types of brand experiences that have a positive impact on decision-making in favour of their brands. Knowing what influences the consumer in their buying decision process enables companies to target consumers more effectively and improve their products and services, placing them in a better position relative to their competitors (Stankevich, 2017).

2.2.1. The Theory of Consumer-Decision-Making

Consumer behaviour refers to the processes individuals, groups, and organisations use to select, purchase, use, and apply products, services, ideas, and experiences to satisfy their needs and desires (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015). According to Liu & Liang (2014), consumer behaviour involves decision-making when buying and using

products or services. Dalla Pozza (2014) emphasizes the importance of customer experience during the purchase process and its positive impact on consumer behaviour, particularly customer satisfaction. Companies can enhance consumer connections by understanding the shopping experience and identifying moments that connect with the consumer before, during, and after the purchase (Stankevich, 2017).

The traditional perspective of consumer behaviour, such as the positivist paradigm and its proponents, takes a utilitarian approach to the benefits of consumption. However, when it comes to experiential marketing, the consumer's approach to consumption and purchase behaviour is more subjective than objective (Brakus et al., 2009). The consumer decision-making perspective is one of the three research perspectives in consumer behaviour. It emphasizes rational, logical, and cognitive approaches to the purchase process. According to Sahney (2014), this perspective suggests that the buying process follows a sequential pattern, where the consumer first perceives that a problem or need exists (problem recognition) and then moves across several logical and rational steps to solve the problem. These stages include problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Sahney, 2014). For instance, when someone buys a smartphone, they may consider upgrading to a newer version of the same brand they already use. Alternatively, they consider switching to a different brand for various reasons. On the other hand, someone who has never owned a smartphone before may be looking to buy one for the first time. Each situation presents a unique journey in the consumer purchase decision process.

Understanding the behaviour of consumers when they make purchasing decisions is crucial for companies to improve their marketing strategies and become more successful (Stankevich, 2017). Marketers face the challenge of influencing consumer purchase behaviour in favour of their products or services, as per Stankevich.

The consumer's decision-making process is influenced by their information environment (Foxall, 2012). Foxall (2012) posits that the consumer’s process in decision-making is triggered by a realisation of a need or want, and the means of satisfying it which is typically retrieved from the information environment. This

environment includes the information provided through advertising, packaging, in-store displays, and activations, which are intended to assist with decision-making but can also make it difficult for the consumer to arrive at a decision.

The consumer decision-making process traditionally involves five stages that a buyer typically goes through when purchasing a product or service (Stankevich, 2017). These stages include need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternative options, making the purchase, and assessing the post-purchase experience. This process is vital as it enables businesses the opportunity to influence consumer behaviour in their favour, leading to their loyalty. Therefore, marketing experts must devise innovative ways to break the consumers' routine decision-making process and encourage them to consider different options (Stankevich, 2017).

In today's world, consumers have easy access to information about various products and brands on the internet. This vast availability of information provides consumers with more options and allows them to share their opinions publicly about brands they like or dislike (Batat, 2019). Social media, for example, has played a significant role in enabling consumers to have a voice that companies can't ignore, making it crucial for marketing professionals to create a positive brand experience that can influence consumer behaviour in their favour.

Brand A and Brand B should therefore be aware of the factors that influence consumer purchasing behaviour and decision-making. One of the most crucial goals of marketing is to reach consumers during the moments that significantly impact their decisions. These moments, also known as "touchpoints" or "moments that matter," are the times when consumers are most open to being influenced (Stankevich, 2017). Within the context of smartphones, one such moment is when a consumer is due for an upgrade and is actively seeking information on suitable smartphone options that will fulfil their desired need or want. For many years, marketers have used the funnel model to analyse these touchpoints in decision-making.
The diagram below (Figure 2) shows the traditional funnel in consumer decision-making.

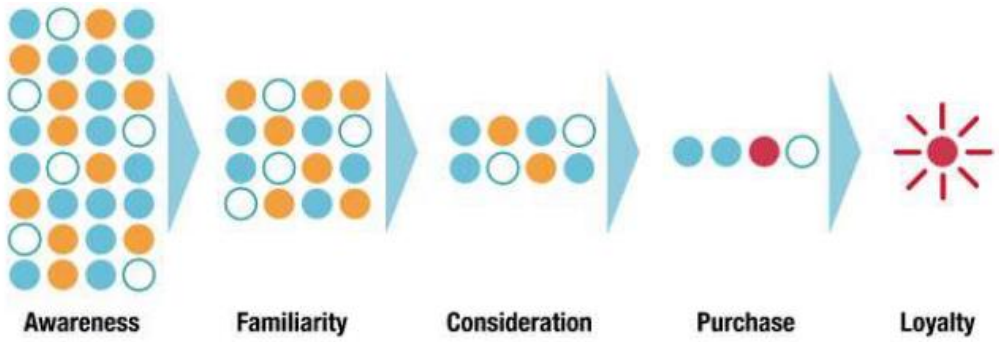


Figure 2: The Traditional Funnel (Stankevich, 2017)

Consumers begin their purchasing journey on the left side of the funnel with some potential brands in mind. As they move through the funnel, marketing efforts help direct them and reduce the number of brands they consider. Finally, they arrive at the right end of the funnel, where they choose the brand they want to purchase (Stankevich, 2017).

When consumers decide to buy a specific smartphone brand, they usually base their decision on various factors, including their interests, exterior features, functions, and brand impression (Liu & Liang, 2014). According to Liu and Liang (2014), the smartphone brand plays a significant role in the consumer's buying decision, and to the device's functions. The influence of a brand gained over time is typically guided by brand equity and trust.

According to Tyagi and Kumar (2004), consumers do not follow any fixed rules when making purchase decisions. They may decide to buy the product at the time of purchase or search for the item beforehand. Experiences can influence purchase decisions at any stage of the consumer buying process (Verhoef et al., 2009). Sometimes, consumers know what they want, when, and where to buy it. However, social environments such as friends, family, colleagues, and society can influence their decisions (Tyagi & Kumar, 2004). These factors can impact how consumers perceive a brand.

The buyer behaviour model is a process that a consumer follows when making a purchase decision. The consumer is influenced by various marketing stimuli such as price, promotion, product, place, and environmental factors such as technology, politics, economics, and culture (Sydorenko, 2023). Figure 3 depicts the consumer

decision process, but also expands on it by reflecting factors that influence this process.

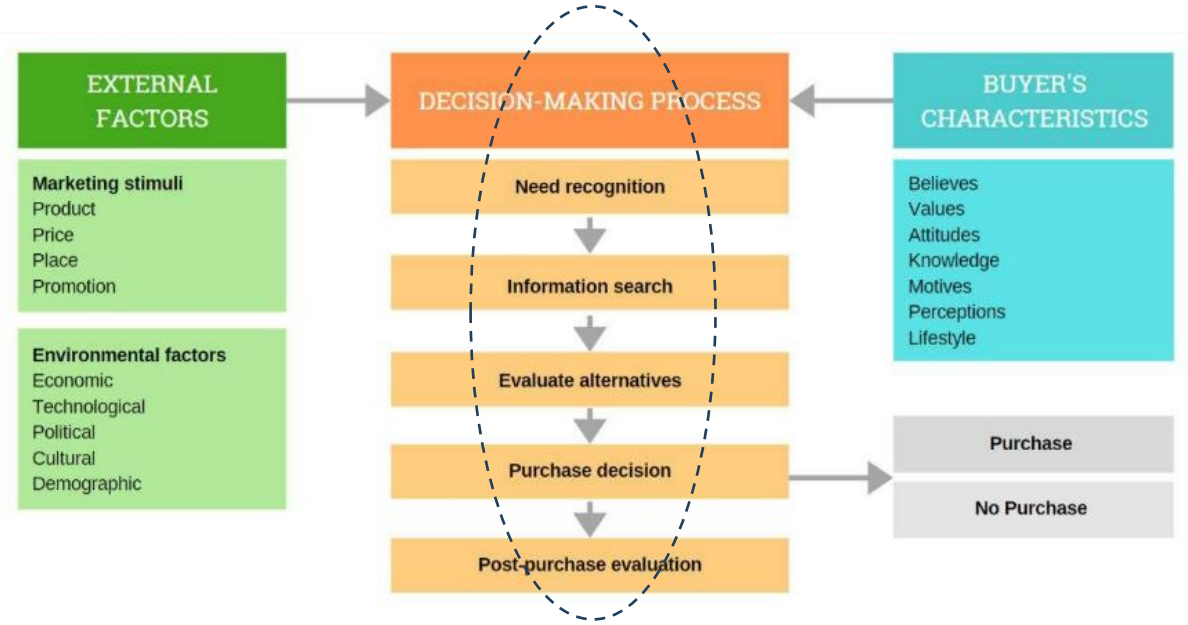


Figure 3: Consumer Decision-Making Process (Albrecht et al., 2023)

2.2.2. Theory of Buyer Behaviour

The Howard-Sheth Theory of Buyer Behaviour was published in 1969 and is widely recognized as a significant catalyst for the emergence of consumer behaviour. According to the theory, consumers are active decision-makers who gather information from multiple sources to make informed choices and address their brand choice behaviour over time (Howard & Sheth, 1969). This theory is relevant for this study because it is grounded on the notion that, brand choice results from an evaluation of multiple factors affecting the consumer's purchase process. Moreover, it is essential in that it highlights the importance of understanding buyer behaviour in this context as an important point of departure to effectively influence behaviour through non-traditional and creative methods at different touchpoints in the consumer purchase and decision-making process, with the intent of fostering brand loyalty.

The theory seeks to identify and observe elements of the decision process, analysing the possible changes that occur over time due to their repetitive nature, which can empower businesses to make improved decisions in capturing the customer in their favour. Buyers establish purchase cycles for various products to determine how often they will buy them because of the repetitiveness (Howard & Sheth, 1969). For

instance, products such as washing powder have a more frequent purchase cycle than a laptop or smartphone. This is because the two product categories require different buying behaviours based on the consumers' level of involvement in the purchase process. Washing powder requires lower participation as it is a purchase conducted more frequently than smartphones or electronics as a product category.

Chapter 1 discusses extensively how the evolution of mobile phones to smartphones has led to major brands dominating and fiercely competing in the industry. Smartphone brands are continuously improving their products and advancing their technical capabilities, making for a more complex purchase decision. This has been the general reason for the decline in brand loyalty among South African consumers (deBeer, 2019). In most cases, brand choice comes down to the experience in the brand interaction, as suggested in the theory of buyer behaviour. While some argue that variety is beneficial for providing consumers with a range of options, it also presents a challenge for consumer decision-making on the best-suited brand choice.

The buyer behaviour model shown in Figure 4 consists of four main components. It demonstrates that the customer is always on a mission to solve a problem at each stage of the consumer buyer journey and is influenced by various factors. The four components are input, perceptual and learning constructs, outputs, and exogenous or external variables (Howard & Sheth, 1969).

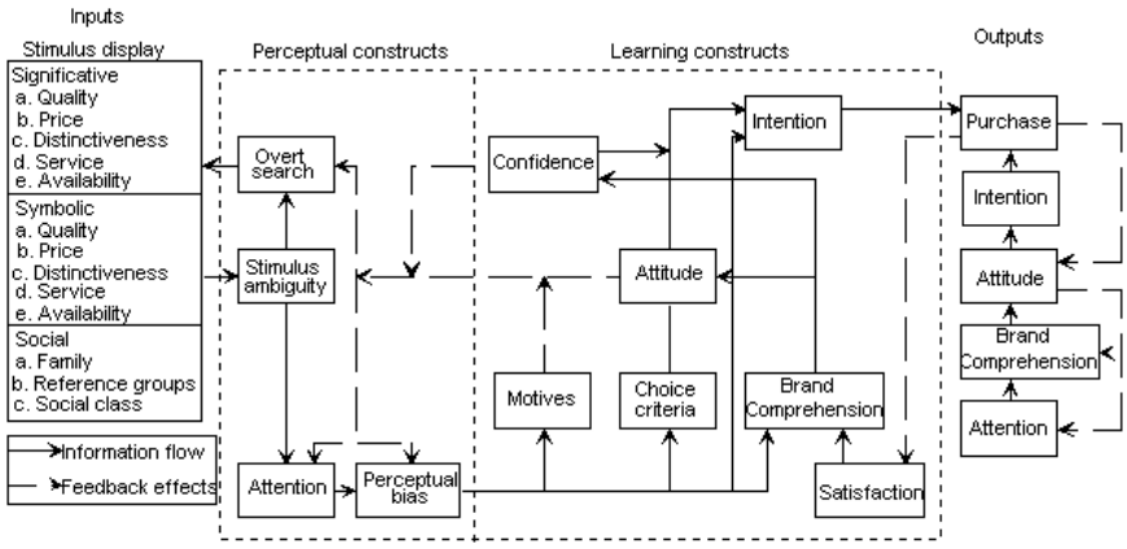


Figure 4: Model of Buyer Behaviour (Howard & Sheth, 1969)

2.2.2.1. Types of Buyer Behaviour

Understanding buyer behaviour is crucial to the success of any marketing strategy. It involves comprehending the reasons and methods by which people make buying decisions and develop brand loyalty. The level of involvement and risk involved in the decision-making process significantly influence buyer behaviour. When the price is high, the risk is also high, and as a result, the level of consumer involvement also increases (Sydorenko, 2023).

Therefore, companies that want to attract more customers and enhance their business must prioritise research and analysis of buyer behaviour. Based on the level of involvement and the degree of differences among brands, there are four types of buyer behaviour. These are illustrated below in Figure 5.

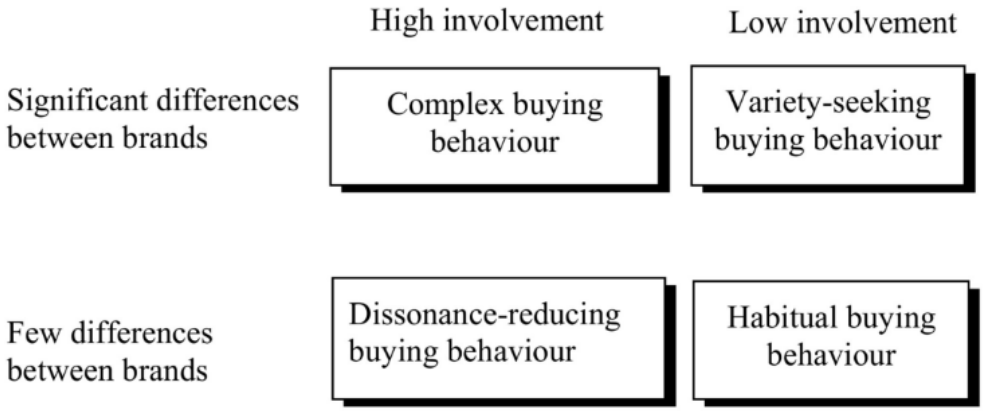


Figure 5: Types of Buyer Behaviour

1. **Complex Buying Behaviour**: With this type of buyer behaviour, the consumer is highly involved in the purchase. They are also extensively involved in gathering as much knowledge as possible on the differences between the brands in the product category they seek to purchase. This is contributed to the high economic and psychological risks involved (University, 2022). Examples include the purchase of a house or a motor vehicle.
2. **Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behaviour: H**ere, consumer involvement is also high; however, the differences in brands are few, but there are a few differences between brands. The involvement is high because of price (expensive product);

however, because there is not much difference between brands, consumers find it hard to choose between brands out of fear of regret (dissonance) after the purchase (University, 2022). A smartphone purchase decision would be representative of this buying behaviour.

3. **Habitual Buying Behaviour:** This buying behaviour requires low involvement of the consumer in the purchase process where the product is concerned, and there are few differences between brands (University, 2022). This usually relates to products such as grocery food items like sugar or flour.
4. **Variety-Seeking Buying Behaviour:** There is low consumer involvement regarding the product and significant differences between brands. Consumers generally buy different products not due to dissatisfaction but to seek variety (University, 2022). For instance, an individual may shop around for different breakfast cereals because he/she wants variety in the mornings.

2.3. An Overview: Marketing Theory

Marketing is the process of moving a product or service from the organisation to the consumer. It involves understanding customers' needs, developing products or services to meet those needs, identifying potential customers, promoting the products or services, and delivering them through appropriate distribution channels (Gamble et al., 2011). Essentially, marketing is all about comprehending what your customers want and utilizing that knowledge to drive your business (Albrecht et al., 2023). It is the process of providing value to a specific target audience to generate profits (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015).

Many have misunderstood what marketing is, equating it to selling or promoting things that consumers don't want (Palmer, 2012). Marketing theory extends beyond promotions and selling, encompassing a wide range of concepts that are crucial to business success. Understanding the needs of consumers is the starting point of any marketing activity. Marketing professionals aim to deliver on the consumers' needs in ways that can capture them more meaningfully and better than their competitors. To achieve this, they employ marketing tactics commonly known as the marketing mix,

also referred to as the 4P's: product, price, place, and promotion. The marketing mix is used to promote a company's products and services in the market, with the aim of favourably influencing the targeted consumer to buy (Albrecht et al., 2023).

It is through the marketing process that businesses attempt to establish profitable relationships and achieve customer equity through effective marketing strategies. This process involves understanding the marketplace and customer needs and developing solutions and experiences that capture value (Kotler, 2020). Understanding and addressing customer needs is the foundation of any successful business. Marketing is centred around the concept of human needs, which can either be physical (like food and clothing) or social (like belonging and affection), also known as "states of felt deprivation" (Kotler et al., 2013).

In more recent times, marketing has shifted its focus towards the overall experience and consumption of the customer as a unified encounter. This approach aims to convert the customer's enjoyable experience into business revenue benefits and overall business performance (Harmeling, 2017). When a consumer is meaningfully engaged, they are attentive and open to receiving information and may act in a way that benefits the firm. Harmeling (2017) suggests that customer engagement marketing is a strategic endeavour by businesses to encourage customers to contribute to marketing functions beyond the core economic transaction voluntarily. Ideally, this transformation should motivate customers to make self-directed contributions to the business and brand. This is more likely to be achieved when taking a more consumer-centred approach, as opposed to the traditional approach that provides ‘one-way’ communication which focuses on functional features and benefits of a product or service (Schmitt, 1999b). Section 2.3.1 unpacks the differences between a traditional and experiential marketing approach.

2.3.1. Traditional Marketing versus Experiential Marketing

In today's world, technology and socio-cultural factors play a significant role in marketing and are used to influence consumer behaviour. Many traditional marketing methods have been criticized for their lack of interactivity and engagement (Schmitt, 1999a). One such method is traditional advertising. As one of the most common

traditional marketing approaches, advertising aims to communicate and reach targeted consumers mostly through impersonal channels such as radio, television (TV), newspapers and magazines (Tellis, 2004). These channels lack direct and personal engagement with the consumer. A more interactive and engaging approach to marketing is needed to meaningfully capture the consumer, as suggested by (Schmitt, 1999a).

According to Schmitt (2010), companies have moved beyond traditional marketing methods that focus solely on presenting product features and benefits. Instead, they are now focused on creating experiences for their customers. Experience marketing is a relatively new concept, but it offers exciting opportunities for marketers to transform the marketing process, as proposed by Schmitt (2010), and create more engaging and interactive marketing campaigns.

Recent research has shown that traditional marketing channels that provide one-way communication have lost effectiveness (Smilansky, 2018). As a result, marketers must adapt and create customer experiences to stay relevant.

Experiential Marketing, as defined by pioneer Schmitt (1999), involves engaging customers with a product in an immersive context to create a delightful memory of the experience. This process allows customers to sense, feel, think, act, and relate to the promoted product in a meaningful way within an experiential context.

Nowadays, traditional marketing and one-way communication channels are becoming less effective. Instead, companies are now focused on creating customer experiences rather than simply promoting features and benefits, as stated by Smilansky (2018) and Schmitt (2013). By using experiential marketing, customers develop a personal connection with the product or service, resulting in a more vivid memory. Therefore, entertaining, stimulating, and emotionally affecting consumers through their consumption experience is essential. Although research on consumer brand experiences is still emerging, understanding them is vital for both consumer and marketing research (Schmitt, 2010).

2.4. Brands and Branding

2.4.1. Historical Evolution of Branding

The word "brand" has its roots in the Old Norse term "brandr," which means "to burn," according to (Clifton, 2009). This term was used in Anglo-Saxon times to signify ownership over livestock. As trade developed, buyers began to use brands to differentiate between the cattle of different farmers. Farmers with good reputations for producing quality animals were highly sought after, while those with lesser reputations were avoided or viewed cautiously. This established the role of brands as a guide for making choices, which remains unchanged today.

According to Bastos and Levy (2012), branding has been a common practice throughout history. In 2700 BCE, the Egyptians branded oxen with hieroglyphics, and the ancient Greeks and Romans also marked livestock and enslaved people, using fire to do so. In the sixteenth century, distillers would burn their brand name onto wooden containers such as kegs or casks to differentiate their liquor from other distillers.

Verma (2006) refers to these acts as branding. He notes that branding has been used since the earliest times to distinguish the goods of one producer from those of another. It is a creative process that ultimately creates distinctiveness in a customer-relevant fashion (Murphy, 1988). Doing so is the beginning of creating value as determined by the customer. Branding is not just images but lies central to creating customer value and is a vital tool for creating and maintaining competitive advantage, as noted by (Holt, 2003).

2.4.2. Definition

The term "brand" encompasses a name, symbol, sign, term, or design used to identify a business's goods or services. These elements are called brand identities, and together they form a brand (Keller, 1993). Unlike a product, which is a tangible item, a brand is a perceptual entity that lives within the consumer's mind and is a key driver of competitive advantage (Bastos & Levy, 2012).

A successful brand can increase the value of a product beyond its functional purpose and generate revenue for a company (Sinclair & Keller, 2014). Effective brand-building can secure future revenues for businesses (Sinclair & Keller, 2014). Most marketing efforts by brands aim to positively influence consumer behaviour for the benefit of both the brand and the company. Strategies such as using symbols, distinctive fonts, and packaging differentiate and position a brand in the consumer's mind, influencing brand image and consumer perceptions. According to Verma (2006), a successful brand is a name, symbol, design, or combination that identifies a particular organisation's product as having a sustainable differential advantage.

According to Keller (2000), a brand's power is determined by its customers' perceptions, usually based on their experiences and brand knowledge over time. This suggests that the likelihood of how the customer will feel about a brand (satisfied or loyal) can be influenced by their experience of the brand. As a result, brands should remain informed of trends and advancements in marketing practices to stay relevant and memorable to customers.

2.4.3. Brand Elements

Brand elements are the essential components that set one brand apart from its competitors. A brand is more than just a product; it has unique characteristics and features. According to Murphy (1988), brand elements include product, brand name, packaging, and advertising. Murphy also emphasizes that brands can be valuable assets if they continue offering customers the desired value. The Keller (2000) Brand Report Card states that a brand excelling in providing customers with desired benefits is on the right track to building a robust brand.

A brand is associated with symbolic attributes such as social image, trustworthiness, perceived value, and country of origin. These attributes contribute to how consumers perceive the brand (Lee & Leh, 2011). For instance, BMW and Audi car brands are associated with quality linked to German engineering, which is associated with precision and quality. Brand A is associated with social image and status; owning one is considered a symbol of social status.

Keller (2001) suggests that building brand equity enables marketers to focus on driving brand memorability (look and feel and logo), meaningfulness, and likeability (aesthetics, design), which are central elements affecting brand experience. Both Brand A and Brand B have distinct identities, and brand associations may affect consumer sentiment positively or negatively. Brand sentiment refers to the underlying emotion expressed in a mention of a brand. It can convey positive, negative, or neutral opinions in the customer's view (Walz, 2023).

Keller (2000) also adds that consumers do not purchase a product based on its attributes alone but because those attributes, along with the brand's image, service, and other tangible and intangible factors, create an appealing whole. According to Lee and Leh (2011), the symbolic attributes commonly linked to a brand include social image, perceived value, trustworthiness, and country of origin.

The four key branding concepts are Brand Identity, Brand Image, Brand Position, and Brand Equity, each explained in detail below.

2.4.3.1. Brand Identity

The brand identity encompasses the unique characteristics of a brand that customers use to identify the goods or services of a seller. As per Keller (1993a), these characteristics may include a brand name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these elements. For instance, the bitten fruit icon or logo represents a means of identifying a product of Brand A. The brand characteristics that constitute the brand identity play a significant role in building brand awareness and brand image. A robust brand identity translates into a strong brand awareness.

Brand A and Brand B have distinct brand identities that differentiate one from the other. Brand B's brand identity revolves around creating human-driven innovations that defy barriers to make a better world for all. This positions Brand B in the innovation space, the same space where Brand A also competes. However, both brands have successfully built unique identities for themselves.

Both brands have created brand equity over the years, which involved building strong brand awareness and knowledge. It is important to note that simply creating a brand identity is not sufficient. The brand must be promoted and made known to its target audience (Dahlén et al., 2009).

2.4.3.2. Brand Image

Brand image is a significant factor that drives brand equity, as stated by (Zhang, 2015). Keller (1993a) defined brand image as consumers' perceptions of a brand based on the brand associations they hold in their memory. These associations are based on the consumer's experiences, interactions with the brand, and the company's mission and values. For instance, Nike's brand image portrays performance and success, among other values. This is evident in the practicality of their shoe design and engineering, which are created to enhance performance and comfort. The brand's endorsement deals are also intended to embody these values. Nike's sports sponsorship endorsement deals with top sports performers such as Tiger Woods, Serena Williams, and Michael Jordan are all examples of the brand personified.

Consumers who associate themselves with values such as performance and success and are fans of the sportspeople mentioned above will likely be customers or aspiring customers of the Nike brand. According to Lee and Leh (2011), consumers relate the organisation behind the brand to people, values, and programs. It is worth noting that even people who do not use or need a brand's products or services can form associations and create an image of the brand.

Regarding smartphones, the perception and association related to Brand A, for example, are that of prestige, premium quality, and exclusivity. Brand A consumers are generally known to associate with quality, status, and innovation.

2.4.3.3. Brand Equity

According to Aaker (2009), brand equity represents the previous investments in marketing a brand. He defines it as the "added value" that a brand provides to a product from the firm's, the trade or the consumer's perspective. It refers to a set of

brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol, which can either increase or decrease the value provided by a company's offering (Aaker, 1991).

Aaker (2009) identifies two primary motivations for studying brand equity: financial and strategy-based. Financial motivation arises from estimating a brand's value for accounting purposes or mergers and acquisitions, while strategy-based motivation aims to improve marketing productivity (Keller, 1993a).

To build strong brand equity Keller (2001) suggests three steps: first, building a high level of brand awareness; second, linking the brand name to its points of parity and difference; and third, building a deep emotional connection between the brand and its target customers. Strong brand equity can positively influence customer loyalty.
Keller (2000) argues that consumers buy a product not only for its attributes but also for the brand's image, the service, and other tangible and intangible factors that create an attractive whole. The holistic brand experience delivers full-rounded value and satisfaction to the consumer.

2.4.4. Customer-Based Brand Equity

Keller (2003) argues that brand equity is determined by consumers' perception of the brand, which is central to the Customer-Based Equity Model (CBBE). According to Keller (1993a), CBBE refers to the effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to a brand's marketing. When consumers respond more positively to a specific aspect of a brand's marketing mix compared to a similar element associated with an unknown or generic version of the product or service, the brand is said to have positive customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993a).

In the CBBE model, the power of the brand lies in what customers feel or think about the brand (Mukiira et al., 2017). This occurs when consumers have high brand awareness and familiarity with the brand and hold firm, favourable, and unique brand associations in memory (Keller, 2002). Consumers' various brand associations with the brand, such as functional qualities, benefits, purchase, and consumption situations, form the core of CBBE (Keller, 1993a).

According to Keller's associative network memory theory, brand associations shape a consumer's inclination to consider and purchase a particular brand (Keller, 1993b). For example, a consumer who values innovation may be more likely to choose Brand A over Brand B due to the brand's positive association with innovation. Building brand knowledge through brand awareness is essential for brand consideration and loyalty. Effective CBBE is a firm step towards achieving brand loyalty, and the CBBE model serves as a tool for brands to measure and assess their progress in brand-building efforts (Keller, 1993b).

The brand equity pyramid by Keller (1993) breaks down the development of brand equity into four stages: brand identity, brand meaning, brand response, and brand resonance. These four stages build on each other to support a positive customer perception of the brand.

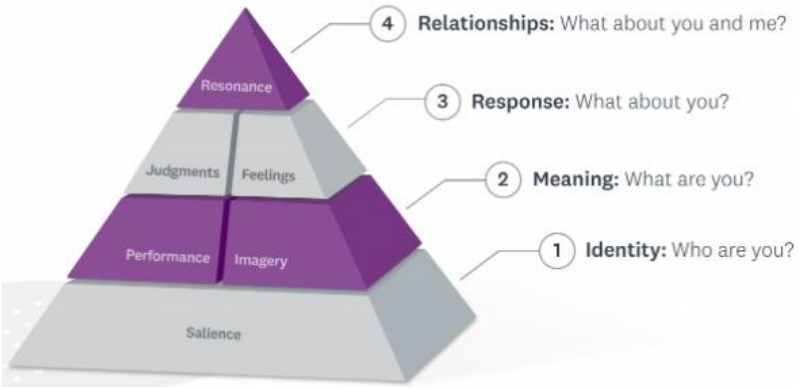


Figure 6: Keller's CBBE Pyramid

There are similarities between the CBBE model and the Harmeling (2017) Consumer Engagement Marketing theory. Both aim to create strong relationships between brands and customers that can lead to brand advocacy.

2.4.5. Branding Strategies

2.4.5.1. Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is a critical marketing concept that involves creating a unique perception of a brand in the minds of consumers within a competitive marketplace. It starts with establishing a frame of reference that signals consumers the goal they can expect to achieve by using a brand (Keller et al., 2002). This is particularly important

as it dictates the types of attributes that will function as ‘points of parity’ and ‘points of difference’ (Keller et al., 2002).

Points of parity refer to brand attributes that competing brands share from a competitive nature, such as the operating system used by Huawei and Brand B smartphones, which is Android. On the other hand, points of difference refer to brand attributes that are competitively different from one another and are also used for positioning purposes. These could include battery life, camera picture quality, smartphone aesthetics such as size and colours, and screen size, amongst others—for instance, Brand B’s Android operating system versus Brand A’s iOS operating system. Strong, favourable, unique associations that distinguish a brand from others in the same frame of reference are fundamental to successful brand positioning (Keller et al., 2002).

The value proposition is the value that the company seeks to “build” into the product and its value as perceived by the business (Holt, 2003). In marketing, the value proposition is sometimes called the positioning statement (Holt, 2003). It is crucial in brand positioning for brands to determine what makes them unique compared to the competition and also understand their value to the consumer.

2.4.5.2. Brand Differentiation

Differentiation is crucial in building a successful brand as it creates a unique identity that appeals to consumers and encourages them to stick around. Brands can differentiate themselves through various means, including product features, customer service, brand image, price, or brand values. Marketers must differentiate their brands to face less competition (Romaniuk et al., 2007). The success of a brand depends on what consumers value in a product, which could be a material feature or something symbolic, emotional, or even trivial (Romaniuk et al., 2007).

One example of successful differentiation is the Brand A smartphone, which grew exponentially due to the unique features that differentiated it from other leading brands like Blackberry. Brand A focused on sleek screen design without physical keypads, integration, and performance. They also differentiated themselves through price by charging a premium for their high-quality design and impressive features. Another key

differentiator between Brand B and Brand A is their operating systems, Android and iOS, respectively.

2.4.5.3. Brand Architecture: Parent vs Sub-brands

Brand architecture is a structure that determines the roles and relationships between brands in a portfolio (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Its purpose is to provide coherence and effective organization of the brand portfolio. This is important as it helps consumers understand the role and position of each brand within the portfolio (Petromilli et al., 2002). Sub-brands are created as extensions of the main brand and can be employed with insight and subtlety to enhance the brand's architecture strategy (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

There are three primary models of brand architecture: Branded House, House of Brands, and Hybrid Brand Architecture. Branded House is the most common model, where a single master brand spans a set of offerings with only descriptive sub-brands (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). This model is all-encompassing and allows the brand to grow and market itself (Julian, 2022). However, one disadvantage is that if a sub-brand fails, it may taint the image and reputation of the other sub-brands. The opposite is also true, as the success of sub-brands can positively affect the mother brand.

Brand A and Brand B both use the branded house brand architecture type and have been successful in doing so. In this model, sub-brands do not operate independently of one another and abide by the corporate brand's overall guidelines and strategy.

2.5. Brand Experience

Experiences happen when we encounter certain situations that provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values that go beyond functional values (Schmitt, 2015). The experiential perspective in consumer behaviour believes that not all buying decisions are rational and logical. It emphasizes that consumers are both feelers and thinkers, and sometimes, their purchases result from their desire for fun, fantasy, hedonic pleasures, emotions, and moods (Sahney, 2014).

Smilansky (2018) highlights the importance of emotionally connecting with customers. Brands need to engage customers in a way that touches them beyond their conscious thoughts. Pine and Gilmore (1999) emphasize the importance of embedding goods in an experiential brand. They highlight the value derived from this by some of the world's well-known brands, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, who do not just sell their products but convince consumers through their advertising that people who drink their soda have better drinking experiences.

Brand experiences can foster customer loyalty by creating emotional connections through an engaging, compelling, and consistent context (Sahin et al., 2011). According to Brakus et. al (2009), brand experience refers to subjective internal consumer responses, including sensations, feelings, and cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli. The product experience, shopping experience, and consumption experience make up the experience concept, which can be measured on four dimensions: sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual (Brakus et al., 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to examine brand experience during the consumer buying process.

Customer experience is the customer's "journey" with a firm over time during the purchase cycle across multiple touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Harley Davidson is an example of a brand that has successfully integrated its products into a complete experience, targeting a community of individuals who connect with the brand on a deeper level. This has resulted in customers getting the brand's logo tattooed on their bodies, which is a testament to their obsession with the brand due to the experience it provides (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Emotions like fun and fantasies play a significant role in motivating purchases (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Both Schmitt (1999) and Holbrook et. al (1982) agree that effectively stimulating the senses of touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste through marketing activation experiences can lead to a more profound and meaningful connection between brands and customers.

2.5.1. Dimensions of Brand Experience

In 2009, Brakus et al. were the first to conceptualize and measure brand experience by developing a brand experience scale that many academics have since popularly used. This study also adopts and tests the same multi-dimensional measurement

scales within the context of the SA smartphone market; namely sensory, affective, behavioural and intellectual brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009). In their paper, the academics reviewed when experiences occurred, and how they affected attitudes, judgement, and other aspects of consumer behaviour. They further identified and distinguished among three types of experiences: namely the product experience, shopping and service experience, and consumption experience. They posit that a product experience occurs when consumers search for products when they shop for them and receive service, and when they consume them (Brakus et al., 2009). It is important, therefore, that marketers examine experience during the consumer buying process and how it impacts the consumer decision-making process.

The shopping and service experience occurs when the consumer interacts with the store's physical environment, which includes its staff and store policies and practices (Kerin, Jain, and Howard, 2002) as cited by (Brakus et. al., 2009). The consumption experience occurs when the consumer uses or consumes the product. These collectively contribute to the overall consumer experience.

Similarly, Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs) comprise five dimensions of brand experience: sense, feel, think, act, and relate (Schmitt, 1999a). The sense dimension refers to sensory experiences, feel to affective experiences, think to creative cognitive experiences, act to physical experiences, behaviours, and lifestyles, and relate to social-identity experiences.

Sensory experiences aim to tantalize the customer's senses of touch, smell, sight, taste, and hearing. Affective experiences are related to the customer's emotions and how a product or service affects their feelings or mood. Behavioural experiences relate to intention and action. Intellectual experiences appeal to the customer's intellect, aiming to create cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020).

According to Same and Lorimo (2012b), experiences can affect changes in consumer attitudes or behaviour. Consumer attitude is made up of three components: cognitive (mental images, understanding, interpretations), affective (feelings, emotions), and conative (intentions, actions, behaviour), which all contribute to the brand experience.

According to academic literature, there is a noticeable overlap in the brand experience dimensions. Several authoritative authors who have studied this critical concept have identified similar brand experience dimensions and explained them in detail. These dimensions overlap with each other quite significantly, as pointed out by Brakus et al. (2009), Schmitt (1999a), and Same and Lorimo (2012b),. The details of these dimensions are outlined in Table 1, and this study adopts the dimensions outlined by (Brakus et al., 2009).

Table 1: Dimensions of Brand Experience - Different Perspectives

(Brakus et al., 2009)	(Schmitt, 1999a)	(Same & Larimo, 2012a)
1. Sensory (Sensations) 2. Affective (Feelings) 3. Behavioural 4. Intellectual (Cognitions)	1. Sense (sensory) 2. Feel (affective) 3. Think (intellectual) 4. Act (behavioural) 5. Relate	1. Sensory (Sense) 2. Affective (feel) 3. Cognitive (Intellectual) 4. Conative (behavioural)

2.6. Consumer Perceptions

Consumer perception is one of the four psychological factors that influence consumer buying behaviour. It refers to the psychological process individuals go through to determine the quality of a product or service (Agyekum et al., 2015). Keller (2001) argues that the power of a brand lies in the minds of customers and what they have learned and experienced about the brand over time. It is important to note that people with the same needs may not buy the same products due to differences in perception (Jisana, 2014).

A study on experiential marketing for tourism destinations suggests that the customers perceived benefits from his/her travel offerings, actually lie in the experience (Rather & Hollebeek, 2020).

According to Mothersbaugh (2016), the process of perception in marketing begins when a consumer is exposed to and pays attention to the marketing stimuli. It ends when the consumer interprets what they perceive to be the reality. A brand's strength depends on how consumers perceive and understand the brand based on what they have learned, observed, understood, and heard about it (Keller, 2003). A brand with positive customer-based brand equity is more likely to be perceived positively by the

consumer. Brands that are well-recognised and have built brand equity over time can create favourable attitudes and perceptions more efficiently, leading to increased sales (Ishak & Abd Ghani, 2013).

Marketing emphasizes that customer value is based on perception rather than objective fact (Holt, 2003). The value of a product is shaped by the subjective understanding of customers and often has little to do with the qualities that the firm considers to be "objective" (Holt, 2003). Customers never objectively experience products. Instead, the brand culture creates a frame that shapes how they perceive the product through their senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell) (Holt, 2003).

Brands can create a positive image in customers' minds by influencing the sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioural aspects of the brand experience. This perception is based on the customer's interaction with the brand environment (Same & Larimo, 2012b). For example, if a brand is known for its high-quality products, customers are more likely to remain loyal to it. German engineering, for example, is a term that signifies exceptional quality, and therefore, German vehicle brands like Audi and BMW are perceived as vehicles that are of excellent quality. This perception contributes to customer satisfaction and thus helps build brand loyalty (Ishak & Abd Ghani, 2013).

There are various ways that companies can influence how customers perceive their brand. This can be achieved by creating unique and engaging branding designs, user interfaces that are easy to use and understand, associating the brand with influential personalities, and considering the opinions of others towards the brand. All these factors influence how customers view a brand. In the competitive smartphone market, there is a significant opportunity for brands to capture customers' attention through effective brand marketing strategies. Brands must leave an impression on consumers' minds, so they easily remember the brand and its associated feelings when making a purchase decision. Ghimire and Karki (2022) suggest that a consumer's purchase decision for a smartphone is heavily influenced by their perception.

In Nation Branding, Professor Simon Anholt created the Nation Brand Hexagon, which suggests that a customer's perception of a nation brand is influenced by their personal

experience with one or more of the six pillars of the hexagon. The overall experience across these pillars shapes the customer's perception of the nation brand. Similarly, if a customer receives negative feedback about a smartphone brand, is dissatisfied with the customer service, does not find the brand socially appealing, or has any other negative interaction with the brand, their perception of the brand is likely to be negative, according to Professor Anholt's theory. The same is true for positive experiences.

2.6.1. The Perceptual Process - information processing for Decision-making

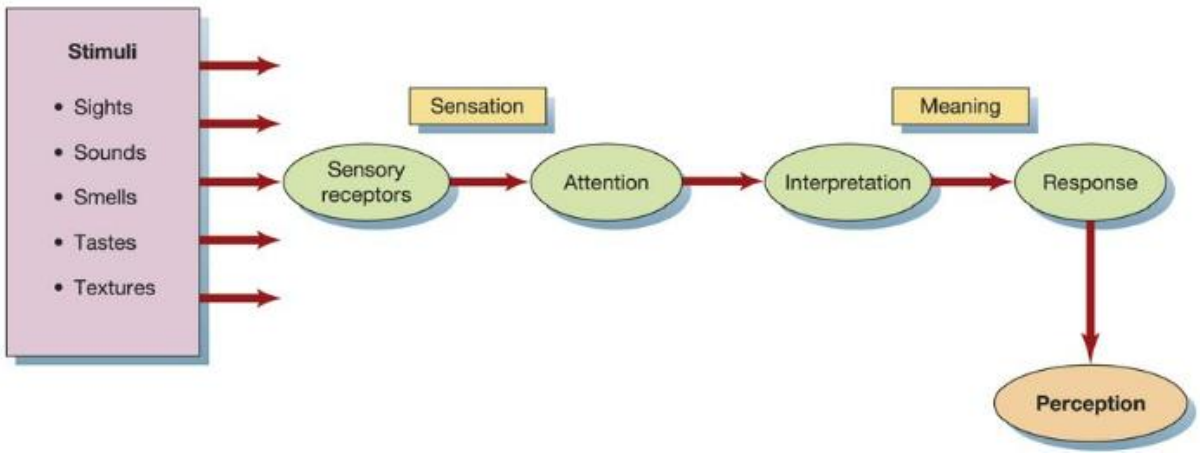


Figure 7: The Perceptual Process

The perceptual process refers to the psychological process that involves six sensory stimuli. These stimuli are affected by the sensory receptors and result in an individual experiencing a specific encounter (Krishna, 2012). The exposure to the stimuli can either be random or deliberate, and it can elicit a high or low level of involvement from the consumer, which affects their attention.

Brand and marketing managers must consider this process when designing experiences that positively influence a consumer's behaviour towards their brand. Perception is a three-stage process that translates raw stimuli into meaning. The core of the brand experience is sensory stimulation, which involves the stimulation of the six sensory stimuli: sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. This can positively influence the consumer's perceptions towards the brand and effectively tantalize their senses to achieve success.

The six sensory stimuli are directly related to sense experiences, which is one of the dimensions of brand experience, as identified by the authors (Schmitt, 2015) and

(Same & Larimo, 2012b). Information processing involves a series of activities through which stimuli are perceived, transformed into information, and stored (Mothersbaugh, 2016). Therefore, the perceptions of a consumer and the extent to which they influence their purchase and consumption decisions depend on how the consumer is exposed to the brand, the level of attention that the brand demands, as well as how the recipient or consumer interprets the brand information. Tyagi and Kumar (2004) argue that different perceptions of the same stimuli are due to three perceptual processes: selective exposure, selective distortion, and selective retention.

2.7. Customer Engagement Marketing

Engagement marketing, also known as experiential or participation marketing, is a strategy that involves consumers directly and encourages them to act based on their feelings towards a brand (Mukiira et al., 2017). Engagement is a crucial concept in various fields such as organisational behaviour, marketing, social psychology, and education (Alvarez-Milán et al., 2018).

From a marketing standpoint, an engaged customer is a potential target for influence in their purchasing decision-making process. Consumer Engagement Marketing (CEM) is a firm's strategic effort to motivate, empower, and measure customer contributions to marketing functions (Harmeling, 2017). CEM uses meaningful brand interactions and experiences to connect with the consumer, with the aim of building brand equity and loyalty.

The goal is to make the customer a brand ambassador who advocates for the brand, which creates a rich social capital that can be leveraged for the company's capital gains. CEM aims to engage customers intimately, creating a brand connection that enables companies to influence consumer behaviour and achieve value.

According to Harmeling (2017) customers offer more than just financial support to a business. He identified four resources that customers can contribute to a firm's engagement marketing strategy: network assets, persuasion capital, knowledge stores, and creativity. When harnessed effectively, these resources can give businesses a competitive edge. By providing customers with engaging experiences

that inspire them to take voluntary actions, smartphone companies can leverage these resources to their advantage. This can lead to unprompted positive contributions to the brand from customers.

2.8. Brand Loyalty

According to Dr Oliver in 1999, loyalty is when a customer has a strong commitment to repeatedly purchase a preferred product or service, even when situational influences or marketing efforts suggest switching to a different brand (Oliver, 1999). This behaviour is known as brand loyalty, and it is an essential factor in a company's success in retaining customers across product lines. Brand loyalty can be defined as a consumer's conscious or unconscious decision to continually repurchase a brand, which is influenced by both attitudes and habits (Kha, 2008). To foster brand loyalty, a positive attitude towards the brand must be paired with positive purchasing behaviour (Cuong, 2020). By increasing retention, customer lifetime value, and satisfaction, companies are more likely to increase their earning potential (Kopp, 2023).

Marketers have commonly viewed loyalty as repurchase behaviour, however, it can also relate to the consumer’s attitude towards the brand, i.e., how a consumer thinks about or identifies with a brand or company, and their preference thereof over alternatives. Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007) argue that the brand loyalty construct is sometimes identified as having a complex mixture of attitudinal and behavioural elements and that nearly 75% of the purchase decisions made by customers are based on their attitudes and emotions.

Dr Oliver's framework proposes that loyalty can be identified by four distinct sequential phases - cognitive, affective, conative, and action loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Cognitive loyalty is based on the brand attributes that consumers are exposed to in relation to alternatives. Affective loyalty is characterized by the emotions or feelings towards the brand. Conative loyalty is associated with the behavioural intention to repurchase, and Action loyalty refers to the actual behaviour of the consumer towards the brand (Oliver, 1999). These four phases are further categorised into two types of loyalty: attitudinal loyalty, which relates to how people feel or think about a brand or company, and

behavioural loyalty, which reflects what people intend to do or actually do with a brand (Oliver, 1999; Cuong, 2020). While some studies measure loyalty as a single factor, Ong et. al (2018) argue that examining attitudinal and behavioural loyalty separately can provide better insights into revenue management. This study takes this approach in terms of brand loyalty measurement int the context of the SA smartphone market.

Brand loyalty has a significant effect on business revenue and profit, where loyal customers are typically prone to spending more money than other customers, more so over the course of their entire customer lifespan (SurveyMonkey, 2020). Loyal customers are also typically less price-conscious than other customers, thus making it easier to retain them even if prices increase, or a more cost-effective alternative is available (SurveyMonkey, 2020).

2.9. Levels of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a critical component of brand equity. It is the core of brand equity, and to create significant brand equity it requires reaching the top of the brand resonance pyramid, which occurs only if the right building blocks are put into place (Hwai-Shuh & Wei-Hsun, 2017). The levels of brand loyalty, outlined below, determine the strength of loyalty a consumer has for the brand *(SurveyMonkey, 2020).*

2.9.1. Brand recognition

Brand recognition refers to the ability of a brand to capture a consumer's attention. Capturing and retaining customer attention translates to successful and good brand recognition (SurveyMonkey, 2020). Brand recognition relates to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue., in other words, it requires that consumers correctly discriminate the brand as having been previously seen or heard (Keller, 1993a). The elements to enable effective brand recognition include a brand logo, jingle tagline, or narrative – and these need to be captivating and memorable. Building brand familiarity amongst customers ahead of them making a purchase strengthens brand equity (SurveyMonkey, 2020). Memorability, meaningfulness, and aesthetic appeal are some useful criteria for choosing and designing brand elements to build brand recognition and equity (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) as cited from (Keller, 2003).

Brand recognition is associated closely with brand image. Recognition is linked to memory, and the image of the brand is linked to the perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. The Brand A logo is easily recognizable because of the brand equity which has been built over time and has an automatic association with the brand's products. Brand recognition is a step toward achieving brand loyalty.

2.9.2. Brand preference

Consumer brand preference is a term used when a consumer chooses a particular brand over its competitors in the same product or service category. Brand recognition plays a crucial role in brand preference, as the way a product is packaged or marketed can significantly influence consumer choice and buying decisions (SurveyMonkey, 2020). According to Howard and Sheth (1969), brand preference refers to consumers' inclination towards specific brands, which summarizes their cognitive information processing towards brand stimuli. It is the possible interactions between cognitive information processing and experience that are considered essential in analysing consumer preference dynamics (Ebrahim et al., 2016). It represents a transition state between the inputs and outputs of the consumer choice model and can lead to brand loyalty if maintained appropriately.

2.9.3. Brand insistence

According to Survey Monkey (2020) to achieve brand insistence, customers would have to associate a brand with the industry it is part of. If a consumer thinks of the Skip brand when it's time to buy washing powder, it means no other brand compares to it, where that consumer is concerned. Brand insistence means a consumer has become a loyal customer of the Unilever company and will most likely commit to any other product associated with Skip, e.g., liquid detergent.

The success of a company depends largely on its ability to attract consumers towards its brands; more particularly, it is critical for its survival to retain its current customers and to make them loyal to the brand (Mellens et al., 1996). Loyalty to a company's brands represents a strategic asset which has been identified as a major source of the brands' equity (Mellens et al., 1996).

2.10. Dimensions of Brand Loyalty

2.10.1. Attitudinal and Behavioural Loyalty

Attitudinal loyalty is a term used to describe a customer's inclination towards a brand based on their psychological processes, including their attitude and commitment towards the brand (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002). This type of loyalty is developed when customers engage in extensive problem-solving behaviour that involves comparing brands and attributes with each other, leading to strong brand preferences (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002).

Consumer attitudes are a composite of a consumer's beliefs, feelings, and behavioural intentions toward a product or service (Albrecht et al., 2023). Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing. Attitudinal loyalty thus refers to a customer's identification with a particular service provider and preference for a product/service over alternatives (Cuong, 2020). It includes a degree of dispositional commitment regarding some unique value associated with the brand.

Behavioural or purchase loyalty on the other hand, refers to the repeated purchase of a particular brand by customers (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Studies have shown that three out of five people prefer to purchase from a familiar brand rather than a brand they do not know (SurveyMonkey, 2020) (Nielsen, 2013). The four phases of loyalty: cognitive, affective, conative, and action, are categorized into two types of loyalty, namely attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

Brand loyalty measurement is divided into brand-oriented and individual-oriented categories (Mellens et al., 1996). The former is further broken down into brand-oriented attitudinal measures and brand-oriented behavioural measures, while the latter is broken down into individual-oriented attitudinal measures and individual-oriented behavioural measures. This study focuses mainly on brand-oriented loyalty, which is related more to the brand than the individual.

Behavioural measures define brand loyalty in terms of the actual purchase observed over a certain period (Mellens et al., 1996). One of the advantages of behavioural loyalty measures is that they are based on actual purchases, which are directly related to the performance and existence of the firm. Additionally, they are not likely to be

incidental as they are usually based on behaviour over a period of time and are relatively easier to collect than attitudinal data (Mellens et al., 1996). However, the most critical limitation of behavioural measures is that they do not distinguish between brand loyalty and repeat buying, which may lead to false loyalty (Mellens et al., 1996) from (Day 1969).

In contrast, attitudinal measures can distinguish between brand loyalty and repeat buying. They are based on the stated preferences, commitment, or purchase intentions of the consumers, thus emphasizing the cognitive element of brand loyalty (Mellens et al., 1996. However, a limitation of attitudinal loyalty measures is that they may not accurately represent reality as they are not based on actual purchases (Mellens et al., 1996). Even though the variables that make up behavioural loyalty include proportional buying, purchase sequence, and likelihood of buying, attitudinal loyalty is given more emphasis more often than behavioural loyalty (Ghimire & Karki, 2022)

Academic research conducted on brand experience has explored its effect on various consumer behavioural outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, brand trust, brand love, and loyalty. Effective marketing campaigns aimed at enhancing the brand experience can be a potential tool to positively differentiate one brand from another, thus influencing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. It has been affirmed that there is a positive relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty; however, the outcomes may differ based on context and industry (Brakus et al., 2009) (Cuong, 2020).

2.11. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The study seeks to determine the degree to which the multidimensional construct of brand experience influence the dimensions of brand loyalty within the context of the smartphone industry in South Africa. Figure 8 provides a representation of the conceptual model in diagram format.

The study adopts a framework that relates to the dimensions of brand experience and brand loyalty depicted in (Brakus et al., 2009) and (Cuong, 2020). The dimensions of

brand experience include sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual experiences, and the dimensions of brand loyalty include attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The various alternative hypotheses and the conceptual foundations that inform the framework in Figure 8 are discussed thereafter.

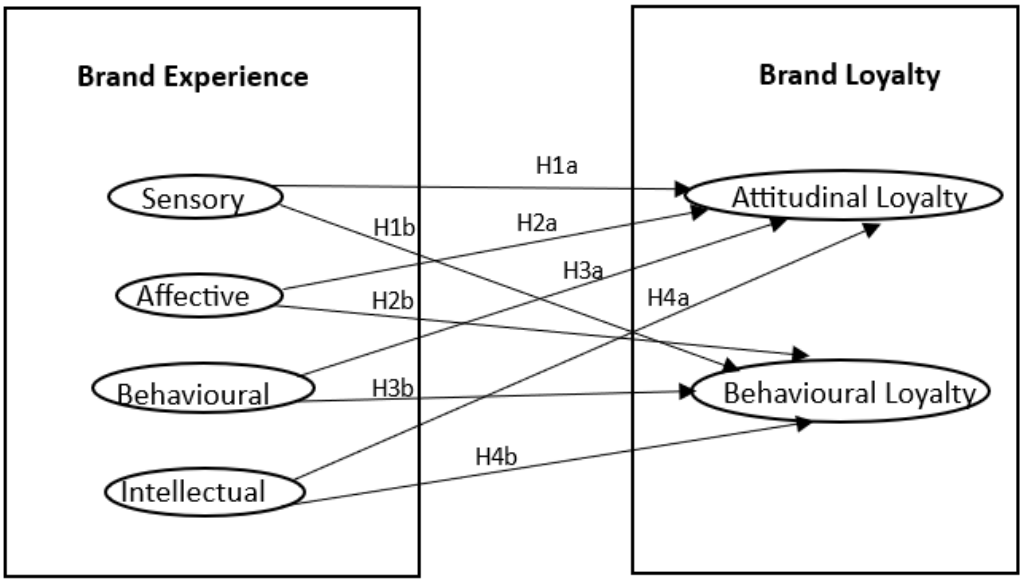


Figure 8: Conceptual Framework

2.11.1. Sensory Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty

A sensory experience can intensify a brand experience (Schmitt, 1999). Sense experiences usually include aesthetic and sensory qualities, according to (Brakus et al., 2009). The sensory qualities the author refers to are those related to the human senses of sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste. Within the context of smartphones, aesthetics, such as visual design, device colours, sound (ringtone and keypad sounds) and feel in terms of texture and contours, are the sensory characteristics that stimulate a consumer's senses. Successfully appealing to each of the senses and the customer's emotions can capture their attention, leading to brand trust, which contributes to satisfaction (Punniyamoorthy & Raj, 2007). It has been suggested that satisfaction leads to brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Wu & Tseng, 2015).

Hoch (2002) referred to product seduction, which is essential to draw the customer close to the product, brand, or service. These tactics are adopted by businesses to engage their customers intentionally and in a manner that draws them close to the

brand or service, resulting in a memorable and meaningful connection. A study conducted in the hospitality industry revealed that the restaurant brand has a positive impact on customers' senses (Moreira et al., 2017) which was achieved through the decor, services, products, and environment provided by the brand, which makes their stay a memorable experience and contributes positively to levels of satisfaction and possible loyalty (Moreira et al., 2017). Engaging customers' senses through marketing activation experiences and brand interaction creates a profound, meaningful connection between brands and customers. It is essential to stimulate the senses of touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste to connect meaningfully with the brand.

Ong et. al (2018) investigated the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty in the hospitality industry and found that sensory brand experience positively affected brand loyalty. However, the brand loyalty dimensions studied were ‘willingness to pay more’ (WPM)’, ‘word of mouth’ (WOM), and ‘repurchase intentions (RI). The study found that brand experience had a positive effect on a customer's willingness to pay more (WPM) and showed that they had more repurchase intentions (RI) in a restaurant setting where their senses were tantalized. The researchers categorised these dimensions of brand loyalty into attitudinal or behavioural loyalty, with WOM and WPM falling under attitudinal loyalty, and RI under behavioural loyalty. Therefore, specifically translated in relation to the current study, the study found that brand experience had a positive effect on a customer’s willingness to pay more (WPM) and shows that they have more repurchase intentions (RI) (both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty) in a restaurant setting where their senses are tantalised.

The findings of another study in the Indonesian hospitality industry conducted by Hussein (2108) showed that brand experience had a positive effect on brand loyalty, which suggests brand loyalty will increase as a result of the perceived brand experience by the consumer.

A study on the brand experience of BMW vehicles and how they influence brand loyalty Walter et al. (2013) reveals a significant influence of brand experience on consumer brand loyalty. The authors also adopt the Brakus et al. (2009) brand experience dimensions and measurement scale. Although the context and sectors of the above-mentioned studies are different from the present study, the outcomes of the current study may reveal similar results. The following alternative hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: There is a positive relationship between sensory experience and attitudinal loyalty.

2.11.2. Sensory Experience and Behavioural Loyalty

Sensory experience plays a crucial role in developing brand love, which is a key driver for building consumer behavioural loyalty, as stated by (Huang, 2017). Ong et. al (2018) also assert that a sensory experience has a significant impact on loyalty in a restaurant setting.

Behavioural loyalty is observed as repeat purchase behaviour, which is characterized by the continuous purchase of a brand and repeated intention to purchase it in the future, as defined by (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). When consumers interact with brands, they experience them through their senses of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and cognition. Engaging these senses can create lasting impressions (Smilansky, 2018).

Similarly, Gilad (2019) highlighted that brand experiences aim to activate audience senses and emotions while connecting with their values, resulting in long-term memory and behavioural patterns. In Cuong (2020) study on the impact of brand experience dimensions on attitudinal and behavioural loyalty of motorcycle brands, the findings revealed that brand experience dimensions showed a positive and significant effect on behavioural loyalty. However, the sensory dimension had a negative impact on behavioural loyalty.

Brakus and his academic colleagues proposed that due to the nature of experiences resulting from stimulation and leading to positive outcomes, consumers were more likely to want to repeat the experience, resulting in satisfaction from a past experience and affecting future-directed consumer loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). When a consumer feels good because a brand stimulates their senses, they may want to seek such stimulation again (Brakus et al., 2009). Their study findings, focused on satisfaction and loyalty as the behavioural outcomes; indicate that brand experience affects both satisfaction and loyalty, both directly and indirectly through brand personality. This suggests a potential area for future research, considering brand personality as a mediator between brand experience and brand loyalty, among SA smartphone users.

Effective stimulation of the human senses through brand experiences can have a positive impact on behavioural loyalty. For example, Brand A stores are known for creating an enticing in-store experience that appeals to all relevant consumer senses. From eye-catching product displays to bright and inviting store lighting, the feel of their vibrant products, and the hands-on service provided by the store consultants. These are some brand stimuli that can positively influence customer satisfaction and behavioural loyalty. Marketers in the Indian smartphone industry can influence consumers with high-quality products and brand engagement to ensure that they remain loyal to the brand (Mohan, 2014). The findings of another study conducted in Indonesia on the constructs of brand experience and brand loyalty (among others) on the Samsung smartphone brand show that sensory experience and behavioural are essential and foundational characteristics to building brand trust, which the authors posit is crucial in shaping customer brand loyalty (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Therefore, the following alternative hypothesis is proposed:

> H1b: There is a positive relationship between sensory experience and behavioural loyalty.

2.11.3. Affective Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty

Marketing professionals have to analyse and understand the customer journey that leads to brand loyalty. Recent studies have shown that 65% of consumers are influenced more by positive experiences than great advertising throughout their purchase journey, (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021) as cited from (eMarketer, 2020). A positive brand experience in the customer purchase journey is likely to influence a consumer to purchase the same brand and even recommend it to others in future.

Customers' experience with a brand can be influenced by their emotions, moods, and feelings towards it (Riza & Wijayanti, 2018). Affective experiences are related to an individual's psychological emotion when there is a strong connection between judgment and a psychological situation towards a particular event or brand (Huang, 2017). Emotions and senses are crucial in providing differentiated and improved experiences because they allow individuals to give meaning to brands. Consumers want to have feelings, sensations or good memories about brands (Başer et al., 2016).

Attitudinal loyalty is not easily diverted because of a slightly more attractive alternative choice (Cuong, 2020), but likely because it relates very closely to the consumer's emotions. Thus, creating positive or negative feelings towards a product or service will influence the extent to which it is consumed (Grundey, 2008).

Brand loyalty is a significant factor that indicates a company's performance and can become a competitive advantage for them if garnered effectively. It can be assessed in terms of both attitude and behaviour (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Loyalty to a brand must connect a positive attitude with positive purchasing behaviour (Cuong, 2020), and while the findings show that overall brand experience dimensions had a positive effect on overall brand loyalty, the impact of affective experience on attitudinal loyalty is revealed to be weak (Cuong, 2020). However, contrary to these findings, in the hospitality industry, affective experience positively influenced Word of Mouth (attitudinal loyalty) (Ong et al., 2018). The following hypothesis is proposed:

H2a: There is a positive relationship between affective experience and attitudinal loyalty.

2.11.4. Affective Experience and Behavioural Loyalty

Unlike the effects of traditional marketing practice, enhancing the customer's experience is not wholly about cognitive and rational thinking, but mostly emotional. Evoking emotions engages the consumer on a more personal and engaged level (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Marketing professionals should therefore focus on enhancing customers' experience by positively evoking their emotions related to their brands. This personal connection is likely to encourage brand commitment, brand love and loyalty.

According to Kotler et al. (2010), as cited by Batat (2019), emotions play a central role in influencing the decision to buy or be loyal. Furthermore, emotions are a key component in the consumer decision-making process. Emotions are a powerful resource for capturing experience-driven consumer affection for brands, and consumer emotional involvement increases brand loyalty and sales by improving brand image and positioning (Batat, 2019). For example, Brand A and Brand B may arouse feelings of anticipation upon announcing the launch of a new model

smartphone device, and through this feeling of anticipation, come emotions such as interest, attention, curiosity, expectation, and attention (Batat, 2019).

In the context of the hospitality industry (dining), research findings on brand experience effects on brand loyalty show that affective experience has a major influence on a customer's exhibition of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty (word of mouth and repurchase intention), however, this effect does not apply to the customer's willingness to pay more (Ong et al., 2018).

A study by Ghimire and Karki (2022) exploring the factors influencing brand loyalty among young mobile phone users shows a remarkably significant correlation between brand experience and brand loyalty. This finding is supported by similar findings from studies by Brakus et al. (2009), Cuong (2020), Hussein (2018), Ong et al. (2018) and Walter et al. (2013); with Cuong (2020) specifically finding affective experience having a positive effect on behavioural loyalty. This reiterates the importance for marketing practitioners to pay attention to delivering a brand experience with the desired outcome of brand loyalty. The following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H2b: There is a positive relationship between affective experience and behavioural loyalty.*

2.11.5. Behavioural Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty

Behavioural experiences are those that impact the intentions and physical actions of the customer and integrate behavioural reactions triggered by brand-related stimuli (Brakus et al., 2009). This experience dimension usually relates to the behaviour exuded as a result of consumption product or service consumption. This includes bodily experiences such as keeping physically active, e.g., a consumer who owns a Brand A or Brand B smartwatch is likely to lead a physically active lifestyle. Thus, behavioural experiences appeal to customers by targeting their physical experiences and showing them alternative ways of doing things by appealing to their lifestyles and interactions (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019).

Harley Davidson, for example, is one such brand that appeals to a consumer's behavioural lifestyle; so much so that consumers subscribe to a Harley Davidson community of loyal customers for an elevated sense of belonging. Harley Davidson consumers are known to be loyal to the brand and are unlikely to be deterred by an alternative similar offering, or one that may be positioned as a more attractive alternative, because of the emotional connection the consumer has with the brand.

In contrast to the Harley Davidson example, the findings in Cuong (2020) reveal that in a hospitality setup (dining), the impact of behavioural experience on attitudinal loyalty is not as strong, instead resulting in a medium impact. This suggests that consumers have some inclination to consider alternative options if the behavioural experience aspects of their brand interactions are not fulfilled. Contrary to this finding, however, the findings of Ong et al. (2018) show behavioural experience as a major influencer of a consumer's WOM and WPM (attitudinal loyalty) – also in the context of hospitality. The following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H3a: There is a positive relationship between behavioural experience and attitudinal loyalty.*

2.11.6. Behavioural Experience and Behavioural Loyalty

Madeline and Sihombing (2019) state that behavioural and lifestyle changes are motivated by emotions and inspiration; also suggesting that using celebrities in marketing campaigns can stimulate the act experience. Act experiences Schmitt (1999a) are behavioural experiences. Behavioural experiences appeal to consumers by targeting their physical experiences and showing them alternative ways of doing things by appealing to their lifestyles and interactions (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019).

Continuing the Harley-Davidson example, this is a community that is all about being part of and committed to the biker lifestyle. Being a part of this community thus encourages the consumption of other biker-related products, other than the Harley Davidson bike. Consumers are motivated to purchase related products such as a Harley-Davidson biker jacket and other branded gear. In a Malaysian restaurant setting, behavioural experience was found to not have a positive effect on repurchase intentions (behavioural loyalty) (Ong et al., 2018). The researchers conclude that this finding may be a plausible explanation that behavioural experience induces short-term excitement for dine-in customers (Ong et al., 2018). However, a study conducted in the motorcycle industry on the impact of brand experience dimensions on attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty of motorcycle brands indicates that behavioural experience had a positive effect on behavioural loyalty (Cuong, 2020).

This finding supports the Harley Davidson example. Similarly, Madeline and Sihombing (2019) also conclude in their findings that in the context of the Indonesian smartphone industry, behavioural experiences contribute positively to brand loyalty, as a result of brand trust. The following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H3b: There is a positive relationship between behavioural experience and behavioural loyalty.*

2.11.7. Intellectual Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty

Intellectual experiences are those that trigger consumers' thoughts and induce their curiosity (Schmitt, 1999a). Sensory and intellectual experiences are categorised as those that solicit 'cognitive responses'; e.g. see, touch, know, therefore having cognitive elements (Huang, 2017). An intellectual experience is induced when a customer encounters a new type of product that they have never seen or heard of before (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019); thus encouraging the consumer to acquire knowledge on the product or brand. Keller (1993a) suggests that understanding the content and structure of brand knowledge as a step toward brand equity is important because it influences what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand in response to marketing activity for that brand.

Smartphone brands such as Brand A and Brand B are constantly introducing to the market, new models with new features and functions. This inherently requires users to learn about the new characteristics of the smartphone (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Loyal consumers are likely to re-purchase the improved version of the same brand because they have had consistent positive experiences with the brand and are familiar with most of its features. It's important to note that knowledge stored in memory and newly acquired knowledge of a product or service is important to consumer decision-making.

Cognition can be based on prior or vicarious knowledge or recent experience-based information (Oliver, 1999). A research study conducted on the motorcycle industry found that intellectual experience had a low impact on attitudinal loyalty and the f^2 effect size of the relationship of intellectual experience and attitudinal loyalty was small

where the f^2 provides an assessment of the independent variable contribution to the dependent variable (Cuong, 2020). In contrast, Ong et al. (2018) found intellectual experience to have a positive effect on WPM and WoM (attitudinal loyalty), contributing this to a possible curiosity trigger of customers about the recipes used in the preparation of the meals in a restaurant setting. A similar finding was discovered in a study on the motor vehicle industry, confirming that intellectual experiences have a significant and positive effect on customer brand loyalty (Walter et al., 2013). The following hypothesis is proposed:

> *H4a: There is a positive relationship between intellectual experience and attitudinal loyalty.*

2.11.8. Intellectual Experience and Behavioural Loyalty

Keller (1993a) postulates that understanding the content and structure of brand knowledge is important because they influence what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand-for example, in response to marketing activity for that brand (Keller, 1993a)

Intellectual experiences engage consumers intellectually by appealing to them cognitively and creatively (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Innovative brands such as Brand A, for example, deliver intellectual experiences because of the technical complexity of their products, but also because of continuous improvement of the product characteristics which requires learning.

Mentally stimulating brands are attractive to consumers who seek to be mentally challenged in their interaction with the brand. The findings in Cuong (2020) reveal, however, that the impact of intellectual experience on behavioural loyalty is weak, and f^2 effect size of the relationship between intellectual experience and behavioural loyalty was small - these results relate to the motorcycle industry. In the hospitality industry, however, the findings show a positive relation between intellectual experience and repurchase intentions (behavioural loyalty), suggesting that consumers exhibit behavioural loyalty when they are intellectually stimulated by a dining experience with a restaurant brand (Ong et al., 2018).

Similarly, Walter et al. (2013) found intellectual experience to have a significant and positive effect on consumer brand loyalty in motor vehicle brands, specifically the BMW brand. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H4b: There is a positive relationship between intellectual experience and behavioural loyalty.

2.12. Chapter Summary / Conclusion:

Chapter 2 assessed various peer-reviewed research papers that investigated the topics of brand experience and brand loyalty, primarily. Other constructs such as customer satisfaction, brand trust and brand love also came up frequently in some of the literature as a related topic. Literature suggests that brand loyalty is influenced by various factors such as customer satisfaction, brand experience, brand equity, and brand trust which is also evident in studies by Brakus et al. (2009), Cuong (2020), and Mostafa and Kasamani (2021). It is worth considering future research in these areas, as they relate to the constructs of brand experience and brand loyalty.

The literature also spanned across various industries such as smartphone, hospitality, tourism, motor vehicle and motorcycle industries. It was apparent that the topic of brand experience is popularly researched in the Asian parts of the world, namely Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and China, and not so much in the African region. This is indicative of the need for further research on the topic of brand experience on the continent. The results mostly displayed similar trends in as far as the findings are concerned. It did, however, become more apparent that some of the different results were attributed to the differences in contexts, countries and sectors. The above is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, more so as it relates to the results of the current study.

3. CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology can be broadly defined as the overall approach that guides the research process, from the theoretical underpinnings to the collection and analysis of data (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). It provides a framework within which the facts are situated to enhance their clarity and meaning (Walliman, 2011). The methodology chosen can be either explanatory, descriptive, or exploratory depending on the research design. The sources of primary and secondary data used in the research process are also highlighted, alongside the argument and rationale (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Furthermore, methodology involves a critical evaluation of alternative research strategies and methods (Baker & Edwards, 2012a), and the analysis of and justification for the method or methods used in a given study.

This chapter specifies the procedures and the techniques used in the study. It encompasses various sections that provide clear a roadmap that was followed in the delivery of the study. This chapter is made up of several sections, each aimed at painting a clear picture of the specific research methods and techniques to be employed.

The research design, research method, research paradigm of the study, as well as the sampling strategy and method, are all unpacked in this chapter. Further to this, the data collection instrument, ethical considerations and fully fledged pilot study with data analysis and interpretation. A quantitative method was adopted, where one research instrument was used for the collection of data. The chapter discusses at length, the reasons for the selection of the chosen instrument, and the process followed for the collection of data. The research design, sample, and sampling method used, are also discussed.

3.1. Research Philosophy

The term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge and sets out the world view within which one's research is conducted (Mark Saunders et al., 2023)

Neumann, et al. (2009) sees interpretive methodology as "the systemic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds". For interpretive researchers, social reality is based on people's definition of it. They see social reality as consisting of people who construct meaning and create interpretations through their daily social interaction. Neumann, et al. (2009) argue that the interpretive methodology is the foundation of social research techniques that are sensitive to context. This section describes the methods used in carrying out this research.

3.2. Research Paradigm

3.2.1. Pragmatism

The word "pragmatism" comes from the Greek term "Pragma," which means action. Pragmatism emphasizes that practical application is more crucial than abstract philosophy when it comes to knowledge. According to James (1909), pragmatism views thinking as a tool for prediction, problem-solving, and action. It also rejects the notion that thinking's purpose is to describe, represent, or reflect reality. Pragmatists place more weight on actions than ideas and believe that experimentation is the best way to learn.

Rawat (2014) stated that pragmatists believe that intelligence is not an abstract concept, but rather a quality of thinking that aims to solve real-life problems efficiently. Reflective thinking is a method that should be used in our daily lives. John Dewey, who introduced pragmatism in education, believed that education is only useful if it promotes human welfare. Therefore, the education system should be modified to be both desirable and beneficial. The aim of education should be to provide learners with real-life experiences that make them dynamic, resourceful, efficient, and enterprising (Rawat, 2014).

The philosophy of pragmatism highlights the importance of creating a comfortable learning environment for students. Educators should present students with problems to solve and guide and motivate them to find the solution. The focus should always be

on the interaction between students and the subject matter, with consideration given to current needs and concerns (Agarwal, 2010). According to John Dewey, an educational institution is a ‘miniature society’ where students can explore activities based on their interests, aptitudes, and capacities.

Pragmatism emphasizes the need to plan and conduct research based on what will best help answer the research questions. In this study, participants will have the opportunity to respond to questionnaires at their convenience. The data collected will be analysed, interpreted, and aligned with the study objectives to draw conclusions.

3.3. Research Design

For this study, the quantitative method will be adopted, and the design will be the Comparative Descriptive Design under a cross-sectional setup.

The Quantitative Method

Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (Babbie, 2020) (Muijs, 2010). Experiments and surveys are the principal research designs in quantitative research (Watson, 2015). “In an experiment, the researcher can manipulate the independent variable and study its effect on a dependent variable, however, a survey cannot easily distinguish between cause and effect.” (Watson, 2015). Surveys may either be longitudinal or cross-sectional. This study used the cross-sectional survey design, which is the most common research design and looks at studying a specific phenomenon at a particular time, which in this case is the phenomenon of brand experience marketing and its consequences on brand loyalty.

Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. Leonard (2011) adds that quantitative data are more efficient and able to test hypotheses but may miss contextual detail. Further, it uses a static and rigid approach and so employs an inflexible process of discovery. The development of standard questions by researchers can lead to "structural bias" and false representation, where the data reflects the view

of the researcher instead of the participating subject. Furthermore, results provide less detail on behaviour, attitudes, and motivation.

3.4. Sampling Techniques

There are two main sampling strategies in research: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a technique that selects a specific sample, and the sample directly reflects the characteristics of the population. It ensures all individuals in the population have an equal chance of being selected for the sample, and is said to provide the most credible results because of its direct representation of the population (McClendon, 2015). Examples include simple random sampling, stratified sampling, and multistage cluster sampling.

Non-probability sampling strategy is considered less desirable because it may not be representative of the population. Examples of this technique of sampling include convenience sampling, snowball sampling, quota or purposive (McClendon, 2015). This study employs convenience sampling and snowballing, which are non-probability techniques. This is a good approach because the accessibility to members of the population is easier in this case, the practicality in the ease at which members of the population are available at a given time, and their general willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling technique is also cost-effective, and easy, and the subjects are easily accessible (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.4.1. Sampling Method

Magobe et al. (2011) define a sample as a part of a group that is taken to decide on a principle about the population from which it has been drawn. By studying the sample, the researcher can accurately generalize results by inferring back to the population from which the sample was drawn (Barchiesi, 2011). According to Fouka and Mantzorou (2011), a population is defined as a group of elements that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study. For example, the population for a study on smartphone usage in South Africa would comprise all those who own a smartphone in the Republic of South Africa. A convenience sampling and snowballing method was used for this

study. Snowballing is when initial respondents identify other people to sample and complete the questionnaire (McClendon, 2015).

In some situations, practical constraints on sampling may not seriously constrain conclusions (Myers et al., 2010). If the study involves basic sensory or perceptual processes, the results from a sample of college students can probably be generalised to individuals of a similar age who do not attend college (Myers et al., 2010).

3.4.2. Sample Size

According to a Statista (2023) report, around one-third of South Africa's population, which is equivalent to 20-22 million people, use smartphones. It is estimated that by 2023, the number of smartphone users will increase by more than 5 million (Statista, 2023) (Taylor, 2023). This study will use a sample size of 383, calculated using the following formula.

The sample size that will be representative of this target population with a 5% error rate (Margin of error) at 95% confidence interval is given by:

Sample Size = n

$$n = \frac{N(0.5^2)}{(N-1)\left(\frac{Eror\ Rate}{(1.96)}\right)^2 + 0.5^2}$$

Where n is sample size, N is target population.

Thus, Sample size $= \frac{22\ 000\ 000(0.5^2)}{(22\ 000\ 000-1)\left(\frac{0.05}{(1.96)}\right)^2 + 0.5^2}$

= 383.15

= **383 participants required**.

According to Braga (2015), conducting a study or project using the entire population can be challenging due to the amount of time, resources, and personnel required. Hence, researchers usually rely on data collected from a sample of the population.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire is a set of written questions and statements that research subjects will respond to, to obtain data relevant to the research topic (De Wet & Jacobs, 2010). Different to a structured questionnaire, a semi-structured questionnaire includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions, providing greater depth than a structured questionnaire (O'Sulivan et al., 2008).

This study will employ one research instrument: a structured questionnaire consisting of only closed-ended questions, in the form of an online survey. Closed-ended questions in a survey limit the respondents' answers but generate more easily manageable data. The reason for using a questionnaire in this study is that it gathers a lot of information within a short time frame and reaches many respondents more quickly than other methods.
The questionnaire used for the pilot study was different to the one used in the main study. The researcher decided against including the created scale items that were included in the pilot, but rather test scale items from previous studies in the main study.

Both questionnaires were divided into three parts. Sections A-C. Section A requested general and demographic information from participants. Section B requested information related to the participant's brand experience, and Section C requested information related to brand loyalty. The questionnaire was disseminated through email and the WhatsApp social media platform.

Likert scale questions are the most common among ranking scale questions and were used for both questionnaires. A 5-point Likert scale was used in both the pilot and main study. Participants were provided with a set of ranked scale response options to choose from. This type of question requires respondents to rank a statement, such as "My smartphone is visually attractive," based on the degree to which they agree or disagree, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The responses were coded from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "strongly disagree," and 5 represents "strongly agree." The value of the statement increases from 1 to 5 depending on the participant's response. It is widely accepted that according to the Likert scale, negativity has a lower

value than positivity. The scale items are shown in Tables 3 and 4 below for the pilot and main study, respectively.

The online survey consisted of a set of 26 scale items in the pilot study and 33 scale items for the main study. It took an average of 5 to 10 minutes to complete, including the questions that asked for general and demographic information. The questionnaire for the pilot study can be found in Appendix A and for the main study in Appendix B.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe, condense, evaluate, and illustrate data (Williams-Jones & Smith, 2011), various analytic procedures provide a way of drawing inductive inferences from data and distinguishing the signal from the noise present in the data. Data analysis was approached and divided into two phases: (a) reducing the collected data to manageable proportions and (b) identifying patterns and themes in the data (Marais, 2012). This study used 100% quantitative analysis as most of the questions were quantitative. Four types of analysis were employed: tabular analysis, chart analysis, inferential analysis, descriptive analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

CFA was employed in this study due to the existence of a pre-specified theoretical model that delineated expected relationships among observed variables. The primary objective was to confirm or disconfirm these hypotheses by rigorously assessing how well the data aligned with the proposed model. CFA's superiority over Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was evident in its ability to specifically evaluate both convergent and discriminant validity, ensuring that the measurement model accurately represented the underlying constructs and that these constructs were distinct from each other.

Subsequently, structural equation modelling was chosen for hypothesis testing, building upon the foundation of CFA. SEM offers a broader statistical framework encompassing both CFA and regression models, allowing for the simultaneous examination of complex relationships among observed and latent variables. Additionally, the visual appeal of SEM, represented through path diagrams, enhances

the clarity and comprehensibility of the hypothesized structural model, making it a preferable choice over multiple regression models for hypothesis testing in this study.

The tabular and chart analysis will be under descriptive analysis and will consist of percentages and frequencies of the responses within a given question for comparative purposes. IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 28 will be used for descriptive analysis, and AMOS version 28 will be used for factor analysis. Table 2 below shows the constructs, dimensions, and scale items used in the pilot study, whereas Table 3 shows the same but for the main study.

Table 2: Measures used in the Pilot Study.

Construct	Literature sources	Dimensions	Scale items
Brand Experience	Brakus et al. (2009) Walter et. al (2013) Ong et al. (2018) (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021)	**Sensory Experience**	1. My smartphone makes a strong positive impression on my visual senses. 2. When I hold my smartphone, I enjoy the way it feels in my hand. 3. My smartphone ringtone has a pleasant sound when it rings. 4. My smartphone is not visually attractive. 5. My smartphone is the perfect size for me.
		Affective Experience	1. I have a positive emotional connection with the brand of my smartphone. 2. My mood improves when I'm using my smartphone. 3. I am emotionally attached to my smartphone brand. 4. My smartphone's operating system makes for an enjoyable user experience.
		Behavioural Experience	1. My smartphone makes me think of lifestyle activities such as exercise. 2. My smartphone makes me want to get accessories for it. 3. I chose my smartphone brand because it is a popular brand choice. 4. I would change my smartphone brand if it were to receive negative product reviews.

		Intellectual Experience	1. I engage in a lot of thinking when I use my smartphone. 2. My smartphone's technical features are helpful in stimulating my problem-solving ability. 3. My smartphone creatively stimulates my thinking. 4. It is important to me that my smartphone engages my thinking.
Brand Loyalty	(Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Moolla, 2010)	**Attitudinal Loyalty**	1. I would choose the same smartphone brand again. 2. I chose this brand because it is the best choice for me. 3. If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would still choose it over other brands. 4. I strongly relate to what my smartphone brand stands for. 5. I feel a stronger connection to my smartphone brand than to its competitors.
		Behavioural Loyalty	1. I always choose this brand of smartphone over similar alternatives. 2. If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would switch to a different brand. 3. I would happily recommend my smartphone brand to my friends. 4. Upon my next smartphone purchase, I plan on selecting a different brand.

Table 3: Measures used in the Main Study.

Construct	Literature sources	Dimensions	Scale items
Brand Experience	(Brakus et al., 2009) (Walter et al., 2013) (Ong et al., 2018) (Mostafa & Kasamani, 2021)	**Sensory Experience**	1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses 2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way. 3. This brand appeals to my senses. 4. This brand focuses on experience through positive senses.
		Affective Experience	1. This brand induces positive feelings and sentiments. 2. I have strong positive emotions for this brand. 3. This brand is an emotional brand.

			4. This brand focuses on experience through positive emotions
		Behavioural Experience	1. I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand. 2. This brand results in bodily experiences. 3. This brand is action oriented. 4. This brand tries to remind me of activities I can do. 5. This brand tries to make me think of my lifestyle 6. This brand focuses on experience through positive activities.
		Intellectual Experience	1. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand. 2. This brand makes me think. 3. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving. 4. This brand focuses on experience through positive thoughts.
Brand Loyalty	(Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Moolla, 2010) (Zeng, Bhutto, & Soomro, 2019) (Choi et al., 2011)	**Attitudinal Loyalty**	1. I commit to not changing this brand though there are many other options. 2. I am willing to pay more over other brands to get this particular brand. 3. I will always use this brand. 4. I encourage friends and relatives to use this brand. 5. I say positive things about this brand to others 6. I recommend my brand to anyone who seeks advice. 7. I use this brand because it is the best choice for me 8. I consider myself to be a loyal user of this smartphone brand
		Behavioural Loyalty	1. I will use this brand in the future. 2. I intend to continue purchasing this brand. 3. I do not buy other brands If this brand is available. 4. I always buy this brand instead of other brands that offer similar products. 5. I consider this brand to be my first choice for a smartphone.

			6. I would try new products that are provided by this brand. 7. I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available at the store.

3.7. Pilot Study

According to Cadete (2017), pilot studies are important because they help researchers predict an appropriate sample size for the full-scale project and improve the study design. Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are time-consuming and expensive, so researchers must be confident in the key steps they take when conducting these types of studies to avoid wasting resources.

In essence, a pilot study must answer the question, "can the full-scale study be conducted as planned, or should some components be altered?" Before actual data collection, pilot testing is necessary to ensure objectivity, relevance, and effectiveness. Piloting is the process of rehearsing the main study, and it helps researchers check aspects of reliability and validity (Oppong, 2013).

The process is essential as it assists researchers in finding the best wording and balance between the amount of information requested and the proportion of respondents who complete the questionnaires (Baker & Edwards, 2012b). The study carried out a pilot data collection and aimed to collect approximately 30 online questionnaires for a pilot analysis before the main research study was conducted. The pilot data collection helped note areas that required improvement. The necessary corrections and adjustments were thereafter made to the research instrument.

3.7.1. Pilot Study Procedure for Data Collection

The presentation of the research findings begins with an overview of the sample characteristics, which include demographics, occupation, education, income levels, smartphone ownership, and usage. The next section discusses the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, which was used to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement scale items. Finally, the research hypothesis testing results are presented.

The study used a random sampling method, and an online questionnaire was distributed to 50 participants through the WhatsApp social media platform. The questionnaire started with an introductory statement that invited respondents to participate in a confidential survey. They were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity.

The pilot study received 40 responses. However, two respondents were automatically disqualified from the study because they selected "none of the above" in response to the disqualifying question "Select the smartphone brand you own". As neither owned Brand A nor Brand B smartphones, they were disqualified. Additionally, one respondent had not completed the survey, leaving a total of 37 responses that were analysed for the pilot study.

3.7.2. Demographic Profile of the Pilot

3.7.2.1. Gender

The pilot study had an almost equal representation of male and female participants, with males representing 49% of the sample and females representing 51%.

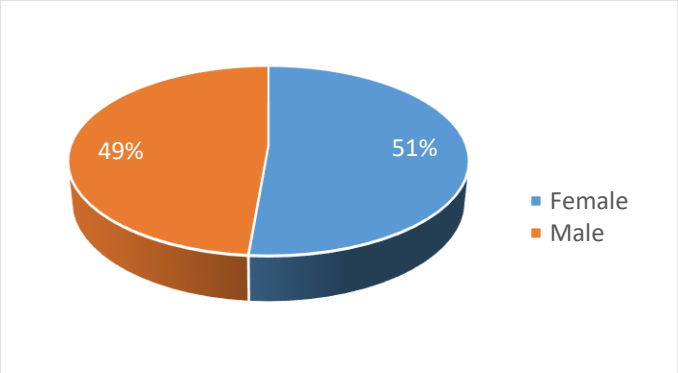


Figure 9: Gender Distribution – Pilot

3.7.2.2. Age

The age distribution represented in the pilot study is outlined in Figure 10. The majority of the pilot study participants were in the age group of 35-44 years, accounting for 54.1% of the total sample. The next highest age group represented in the study was 25-34 years, accounting for 29.7% of the sample, followed by the age group of 45-54

years, which accounted for 10.8%. The age groups of 55-64 years and 65-70 years were the least represented, both comprising only 2.63% of the total sample.

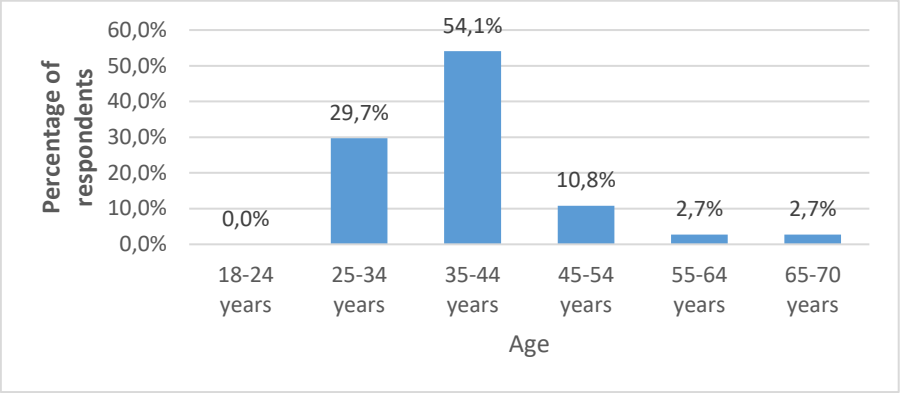


Figure 10: Age Distribution - Pilot

3.7.2.3. Education

51.4% of the respondents have a postgraduate degree, followed by 18.42% who have university degrees. 18.9% have a diploma, and 10.8% have a matric qualification.

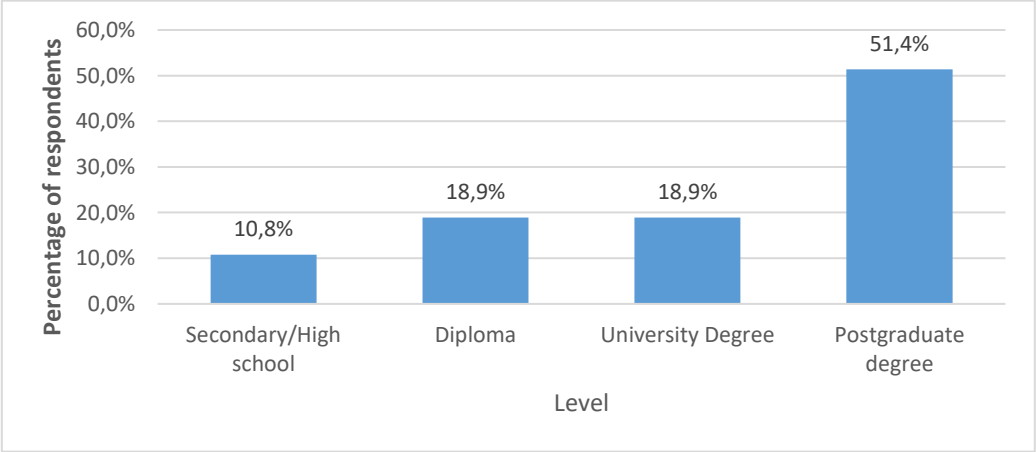


Figure 11: Education Level - Pilot

3.7.2.4. Employment Status

In the pilot study, 71.1% of the participants are employed full-time, making them the majority. Only 10.5% of the respondents have part-time jobs or work in other fields, while 5% are self-employed. Additionally, 2.6% of the participants are students, and 10.5% are retired.

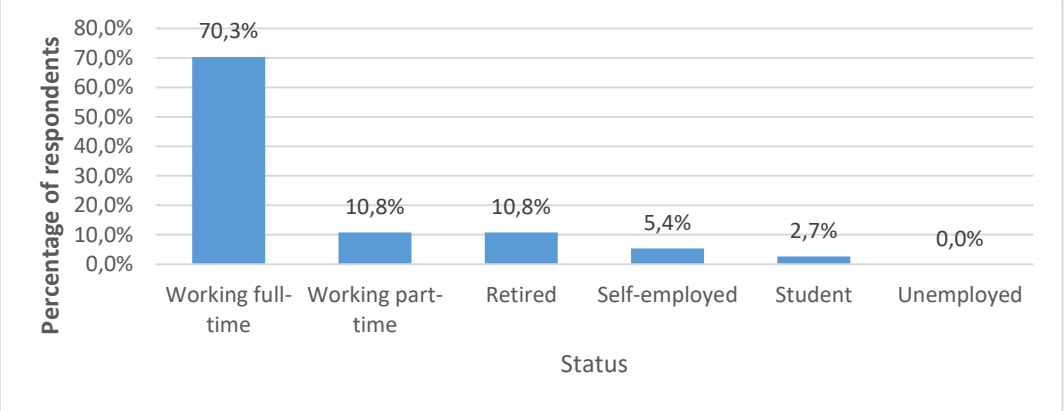


Figure 12: Employment Level - Pilot

3.7.2.5. Income

The pilot study included participants from all income brackets. However, the majority of the respondents, i.e., 34.21%, belonged to the income group earning more than R1,200,000. The next two most represented income groups were those earning between R300,001-R500,000 (18.42%) and R100,001-R300,000 (10.53%) respectively.

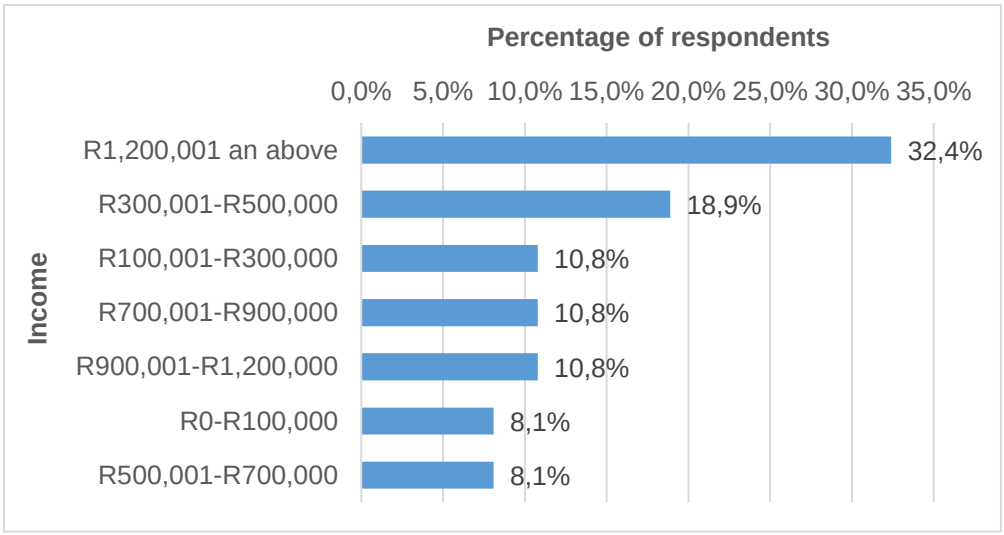


Figure 13: Annual Income Distribution - Pilot

3.7.2.6. Geographical Representation – Provincial Split

All respondents were South African residents, with 86% from Gauteng, 11% from KwaZulu Natal, and only 3% from the Western Cape.

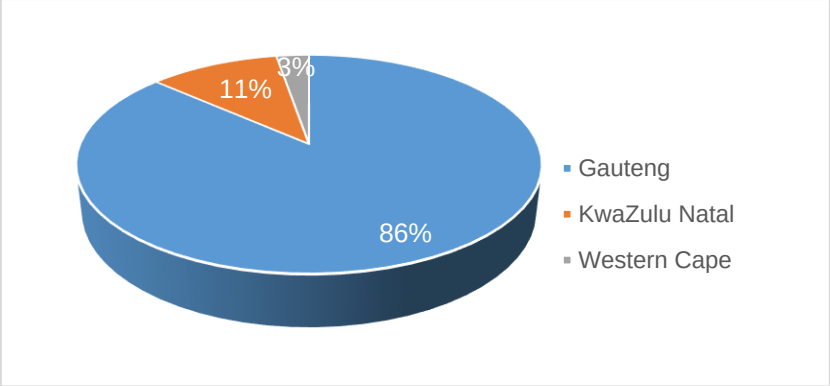


Figure 14: Provincial Breakdown - Pilot

3.7.2.7. Brand Split – Smartphone Brand Ownership

According to the survey results, 59% of the participants had a Brand A smartphone, while 41% owned a Brand B smartphone. It is apparent that both brands are quite popular in the South African smartphone market, as more than 90% of the respondents in the pilot study owned either one of these brands. Only two individuals out of the sample did not possess any of these two brands.

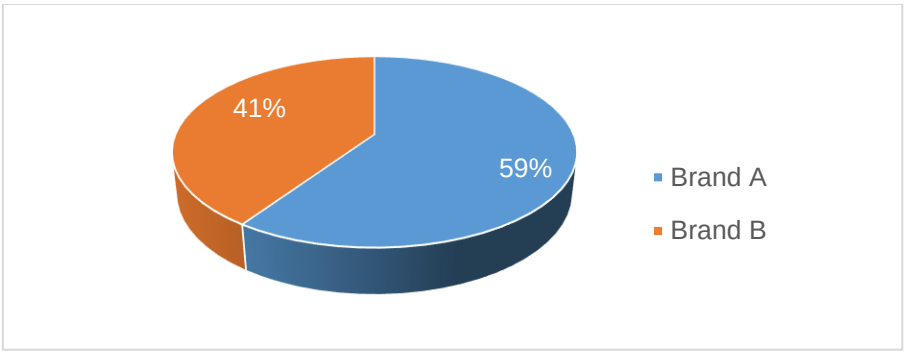


Figure 15: Smartphone Brand Ownership – Split -Pilot

3.7.2.8. Period of Ownership

Based on the survey results, it was found that the majority of the respondents, comprising 51.4%, have been using their smartphones for more than 5 years. The second highest group of respondents, which accounts for 24.3%, have owned their smartphones for 2-3 years. Meanwhile, 13.5% of the respondents have owned their smartphones for 3-5 years and 10.8% have used their smartphones for 1-2 years.

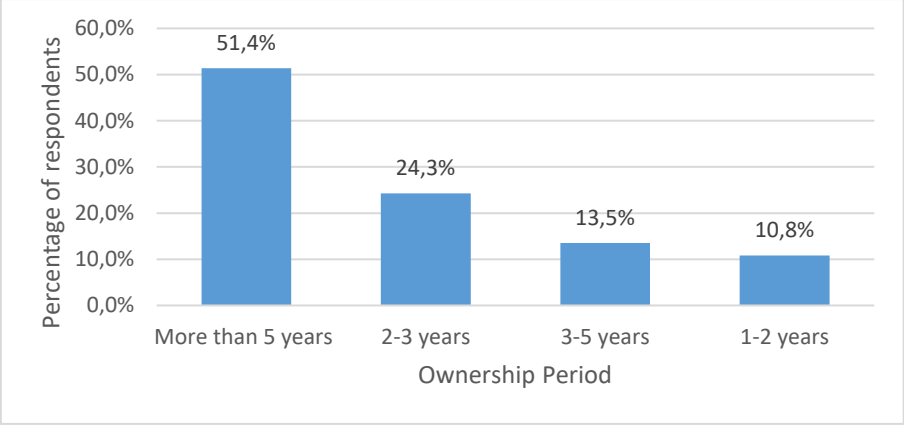


Figure 16: Ownership Period - Pilot

3.7.2.9. Summary Description of the Respondents

Table 4: Summary Description of Respondents - Pilot Study

Variables		**Percentage (%)**
Age	18-24	-
	25-34	29.7%
	35-44	54.1%
	45-54	10.8%
	55-64	2.7%
	65-70	2.7%
Gender	Male	48.6%
	Female	51.4%
Education	Primary school	-
	Secondary/High school	10.8%
	Diploma	18.9%
	University degree	18.9%
	Postgraduate degree	51.4%
Employment	Working full time	70.3%
	Working part time	10.8%
	Self-employed	5.4
	Unemployed	-
	Student	2.7%
	Retired	10.8%
Income	R0-R100,000	8.1%
	R100,001-R300,000	10.8%
	R300,001-R500,000	18.9%
	R500,000-R700,000	8.1%
	R700,001-R900,000	10.8%
	R900,001-R1,200,000	10.8%
	Above R1,200,000	32.4%
Smartphone Brand Ownership	Brand B	40.5%
	Brand A	59.5%
Period Owned	0-1 year	-
	1-2 years	10.8%
	2-3 years	24.3%
	3-5 years	13.5%
	More than 5 years	51.4%

3.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from the survey was analysed using the IBM SPSS and AMOS 28 statistical software. The data was initially exported from Qualtrics, an online data collection tool, to an Excel spreadsheet, and then imported into SPSS for analysis.

Descriptive analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling were performed to analyse the data. The respondents provided general feedback that the questionnaire was easy to understand and complete, although some expressed confusion about understanding the meaning of some of the scale items. Other respondents suggested the inclusion of other smartphone brands such as Huawei. However, the study focused primarily on Brand A and Brand B smartphone brands.

3.9. Measurement Scale of the Study

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to determine the validity of the constructs, while Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the research instrument and data. Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure that determines the internal consistency of a research tool. A score of 0.7 or above indicates good reliability.

CFA is a statistical technique that confirms the factor structure of a set of observed variables. CFA is a type of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) that deals with measurement models, specifically the relationship between observed variables or indicators (Hoyle, 2023). CFA is part of the SEM family but focuses on the relationship between observed variables and latent variables, while SEM includes structural or causal paths between latent variables (Harrington, 2009). The primary objective for using CFA was to confirm or disconfirm these hypotheses by rigorously assessing how well the data aligned with the proposed model.

In the pilot study, brand experience was measured using a 17-item scale, which was a modified version of the 12-item scale used by (Brakus et al., 2009), as adopted by various other authors, including (Cuong, 2020). The researcher added five extra indicators to the scale. These additional items were not taken from previous studies but were created by the researcher. The additional items are outlined below:

- When I hold my smartphone, I enjoy the way it feels in my hand (sensory)
- My smartphone ringtone has a pleasant sound when it rings. (Sensory)
- My smartphone is the perfect size for me. (Sensory)
- My mood improves when I'm using my smartphone. (affective)
- I am emotionally attached to my smartphone brand. (affective)

A 9-item scale was used to assess the loyalty of customers towards a brand. This scale was derived from the 7-item scale developed by (Cuong, 2020), with minor changes made to improve its clarity. Two additional items were included in Cuong's scale to make it more comprehensive, also created by the researcher.

- I strongly relate to what my smartphone brand stands for.
- I feel a stronger connection to my smartphone brand than to its competitors.

Three scale items in the survey were negatively worded and therefore were reversed. The first reversed scale is related to the Sensory Experience construct, which states "My phone is not visually attractive". The other two reversed scales are from the Behavioural Experience dimension, which is "If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would be willing to switch to a different brand" and "Upon my next smartphone purchase, I plan on selecting a different smartphone brand." The reversed scale values for these items were as follows: 5=1, 4=2, 3=3, 2=4, 1=5.

3.10. Reliability Outcomes

Table 5: Reliability Outcomes of the Pilot Study

Construct	Measurement Items / Indicators	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR (composite reliability)	AVE (average variable extracted)
Sensory Experience (SENS)	SENS2_1 When I hold my smartphone, I enjoy the way it feels in my hand.	0.687	0.662	0.694	0.371
	SENS3_1 My smartphone ringtone has a pleasant sound when it rings.	0.502			
	SENS4_1_R *My smartphone is not visually attractive. **[scale reversed]**	0.458			
	SENS5_1 My smartphone is the perfect size for me.	0.741			
Affective Experience (AFF)	AFF1_1 I have a positive emotional connection with the brand of my smartphone.	0.605	0.704	0.706	0.381
	AFF2_1 My mood improves when I'm using my smartphone.	0.531			
	AFF3_1 I am emotionally attached to my smartphone brand.	0.772			
	AFF4_1 My smartphone's operating system makes for an enjoyable user experience.	0.530			
Behavioural Experience (BEH.EX)	BEHX1_1 My smartphone reminds me of the importance of healthy lifestyle activities such as exercise.	0.589	0.569	0.675	0.437
	BEHX2_1 My smartphone inspires/has inspired me to invest in its accessories.	0.906			
	BEHX3_1 I chose my smartphone because it is a popular brand choice.	0.378			
Intellectual Experience (INTEL)	INTELL1_1 I engage in a lot of thinking when I use my smartphone.	0.737	0.857	0.873	0.634
	INTELL2_1 My smartphone's technical features stimulate my problem-solving ability.	0.865			
	INTELL3_1 My smartphone creatively stimulates my thinking.	0.814			
	INTELL4_1 It is important to me that my smartphone engages my thinking.	0.762			
Attitudinal Loyalty (ATT)	ATTD1_1 I would choose the same smartphone brand again.	0.869	0.894	0.905	0.661
	ATTD2_1 I chose this brand because it is the best choice for me.	0.855			
	ATTD3_1 If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would still choose it over other brands.	0.814			
	ATTD4_1 I strongly relate to what my smartphone brand stands for.	0.553			
	ATTD5_1 I feel a stronger connection to my smartphone brand than to its competitors.	0.922			
Behavioural Loyalty (BEH.LOY)	BEHLOY1_1 I always choose this brand of smartphone over similar alternatives.	0.826	0.791	0.821	0.538
	BEHLOY2_1_R *If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would be willing to switch to a different brand. **[scale reversed]**	0.813			
	BEHLOY3_1 I would gladly recommend my smartphone brand to my friends.	0.676			
	BEHLOY4_1_R *Upon my next smartphone purchase, I plan on selecting a different smartphone brand. **[scale reversed]**	0.593			

The study analysed 37 complete responses and found that the different constructs displayed varying levels of internal consistency. Among the constructs, Intellectual Experience and Attitudinal Loyalty exhibited the highest reliability, with Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.85 and AVE greater than 0.63. Affective Experience also showed relatively strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.704 and AVE of 0.381.

However, Sensory Experience, Behavioural Experience, and the second instance of Sensory Experience exhibited lower internal consistency and convergent validity, as indicated by lower alpha and AVE values. This was after removing one item (SENS1_1 "My smartphone makes a strong positive impression on my visual senses") from the Sensory Experience construct and reversing the scale for the items displayed in Table 7.

Table 6: Reversed Scales

Construct	Measurement Items / Indicators
Sensory Experience (SENS)	SENS4_1_R *My smartphone is not visually attractive.
Behavioural Loyalty (BEH.LOY)	BEHLOY2_1_R *If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would be willing to switch to a different brand.
	BEHLOY4_1_R *Upon my next smartphone purchase, I plan on selecting a different smartphone brand.

It is not necessary to remove more items from the questionnaire since it will not significantly improve its reliability. Although it may seem logical to remove the item "SENS1_1 My smartphone makes a strong positive impression on my visual senses" before data collection for the main study, this item has been used by various authors Brakus et al. (2009), Cuong (2020), Walter et al. (2013) (Choi et al., 2011) in different contexts, countries, and industries and shall be tested in its exact form in the SA smartphone industry context.

For the main study, the same items as used by these authors were tested without any modification or addition of new items. The use of negatively worded items often helps identify respondents who may not be paying attention while completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire had an increased number of indicators. Although some constructs showed promising reliability and validity, collecting more data would further improve these values.

3.11. Hypothesis Testing Results Summary

In regression analysis, one needs to determine the significance of a given relationship, based on the p-value. The task of regression analysis is to learn as much as possible about the environment reflected by the data (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013). The analysis is performed at a chosen level of significance, known as α. This level can be set at

0.05, 0.01, or 0.001. The p-value is calculated using the critical value (CR), which is equal to the estimate divided by the standard error We need to consider two hypotheses:

1. Ho, which states that CR is equal to 0.
2. H1, which states that CR is not equal to 0.

We can either reject or not reject the null hypothesis. If the p-value is less than or equal to the level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis. Otherwise, we do not reject it. Rejecting the null hypothesis implies that the critical value (CR) is significant, which means that the proposition by the null hypothesis is null and void (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2013).

The level of significance (α) helps us determine whether to reject or not reject the null hypothesis. Statisticians often use normal-shaped curves, which are divided into two regions: one for rejecting the null hypothesis, and the other for not rejecting it.

Table:7: Hypothesis Testing - Results

Hypotheses / Path Analysis	**Standardised Estimates**	**T-value**	**P-Value**
Sensory Experience ⟶ Attitudinal Loyalty	,174	,905	,365
Affective Experience ⟶ Attitudinal Loyalty	1,005	2,884	,004
Behavioural Experience ⟶ Attitudinal Loyalty	,032	,139	,890
Intellectual Experience ⟶ Attitudinal Loyalty	-,636	-2,508	,012
Sensory Experience ⟶ Behavioural Loyalty	-,395	-1,246	,213
Affective Experience ⟶ Behavioural Loyalty	1,879	2,442	,015
Behavioural Experience ⟶ Behavioural Loyalty	-,635	-1,337	,181
Intellectual Experience ⟶ Behavioural Loyalty	-,720	-1,633	,102
SEM Fit Indices: x^2 = (292.92); x^2/df = 3.182; RMSEA = .172; CFI = .578, TLI = .511; AGFI = .426; GFI = .545; NFI = .440 ***P < 0.001			

Affective Experience (β =1,005, t-value = 2.884, p-value = 0.004) had a significant and positive effect on Attitudinal Loyalty. Conversely, Intellectual Experience (β =-0.636, t-value = -2.508, p-value = 0.012) had a negative significant effect on Attitudinal Loyalty. However, there was no sufficient evidence at 5% significance level to suggest that Sensory Experience (β =0,174, t-value = 0.905, p-value = 0.365), and Behavioural

Experience (β =0,032, t-value = 0.139, p-value = 0.890) have an impact on Attitudinal Loyalty since their p-values were greater than 0.05.

It is worth noting that Affective Experience (β =1,879, t-value = 2.442, p-value = 0.015) had a significant and positive effect on Behavioural loyalty since the coefficient was positive and the p-value was less than 0.05. However, there was no sufficient evidence at 5% significance level to suggest that Sensory Experience (β =-0,395, t-value = -1.246, p-value = 0.213), Behavioural Experience (β =-0,635, t-value = -1.337, p-value = 0.181), and Intellectual Experience (β =-0.720, t-value = -1.633, p-value = 0.102) have an impact on Behavioural Loyalty since their p-values were greater than 0.05.

It is worth noting that the results may have been negatively affected by the small sample size. As such, the main study targeted a minimum sample size of 383. A larger sample size can positively impact the results of the main study by enhancing the statistical power of the study. Statistical power is the probability of detecting if a true effect exists. A larger sample better equips the study to detect smaller, yet potentially meaningful, effects. A larger sample size also reduces the margin of error.

3.12. Limitations of the Pilot Study

The survey only included participants who owned Brand A or Brand B smartphones and excluded those who owned other brands. These brands were particularly selected because they are the most popular smartphone brands in SA (StatCounter, 2022). Additionally, the survey was restricted to residents of South Africa only. These limitations were also upheld in the main study.

3.13. Ethical Considerations

The researcher took measures to ensure that participants were not exposed to any risk during the research process. Confidentiality and anonymity were respected and maintained throughout. Before commencing the study, participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

As part of the cover letter for disseminating each questionnaire, the researcher provided a formal letter of introduction requesting formal consent. This letter included all the necessary details concerning the participants' right to withdraw at any point and assurance of confidentiality. Participants were given the freedom to choose whether or not they consent to participate in the study.

4. CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the research study are presented. A structured online questionnaire was created using Qualtrics software to collect data. The online survey link was distributed through email and WhatsApp platforms, and a total of 498 responses were received using convenience and snowballing sampling techniques. The collected data was imported to IBM SPSS software and analysed according to the research methods detailed in Chapter 3.

The presentation of the results begins with an overview of the sample characteristics in terms of demographics, occupation, education, income levels, smartphone ownership, and usage. Then, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis used to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement scale items are discussed. Finally, the results of the hypothesis testing are presented.

4.2. Data Screening

A total of 498 people responded to the survey. However, 109 of these responses were disqualified. Out of the 109 disqualified respondents, 3 were not residents of South Africa, and 106 respondents did not own either Brand A or a Brand B smartphone. Therefore, 389 responses were used for the main study. All 389 responses had complete information, so no data imputation was necessary.

4.3. Descriptive Profile of the Respondents

4.3.1. Age Profile

The age distribution of the sample is presented in Figure 17, with the findings indicating that 17% of the respondents were aged 18 - 24, 22% were aged 25 - 34, and the largest group, comprising 39%, belonged to the 35 - 44 age range.

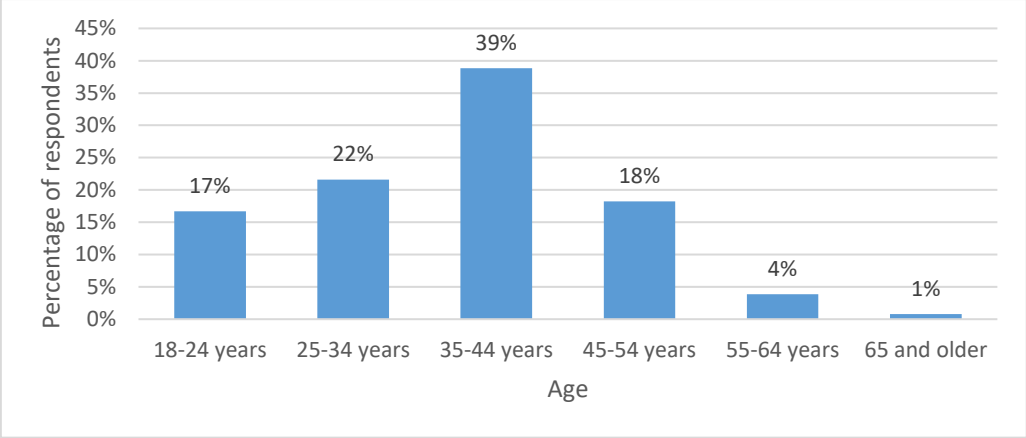


Figure 17: Respondent Age

4.3.2. Gender Profile

68% of the respondents identified as female, 32% as male, 0.5% as non-binary, and 0.3% as other gender classifications. The results are presented in Figure 18.

Previous studies have revealed gender to be among the important consumer characteristics that shape consumer behaviour (Zeng et al., 2019) as cited in (Solomon,2007; Wolters, 2014).

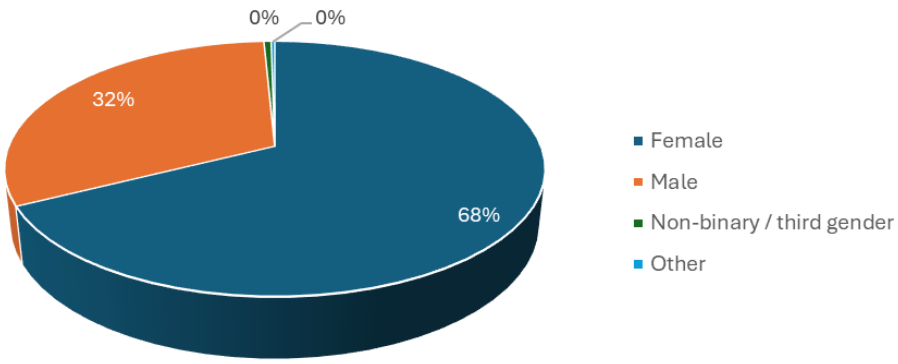


Figure 18: Respondent Gender

4.3.3. Education Profile

Figure 19 shows that 31% of respondents had earned an undergraduate degree, while the remaining 19% had only a matric qualification.

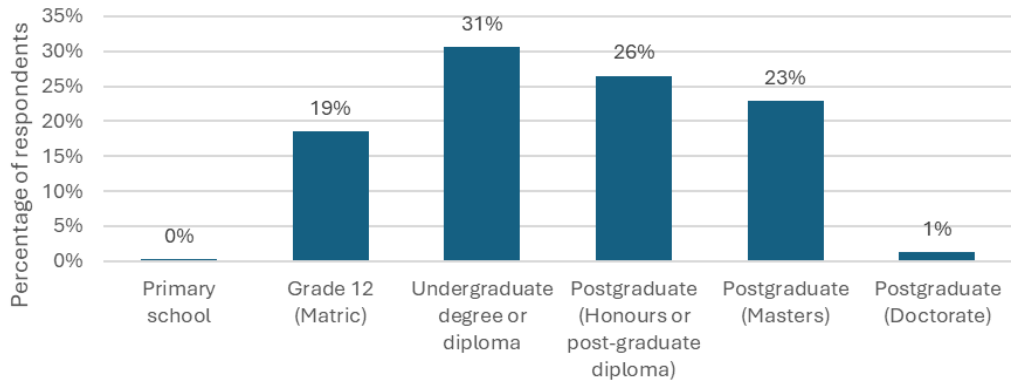


Figure 19: Level of Education

4.3.4. Employment Profile

Out of all the participants, 57% were engaged in full-time employment. A significant percentage of 20% were self-employed, while 18% were enrolled as students. A smaller percentage of 3% reported working part-time, while 2% indicated being unemployed. Additionally, only 1% of the respondents identified themselves as retired.

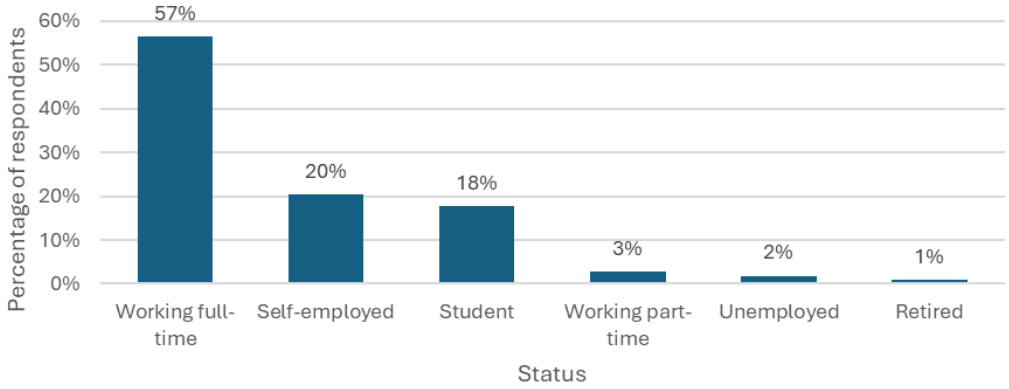


Figure 20: Employment Status

4.3.5. Income Profile

The respondents' annual income is distributed among several brackets. Notably, 25% of the respondents reported earning an income range between R0 and R180,000, while 5% fell within the R180,001 to R250,000 bracket. In addition, 15% of the respondents indicated an income falling between R250,001 and R500,000, and 18%

were situated in the R500,001 to R750,000 range. Furthermore, 9% reported earning between R750,001 and R950,000, while the largest portion, comprising 28%, indicated an income of R950,001 and above.

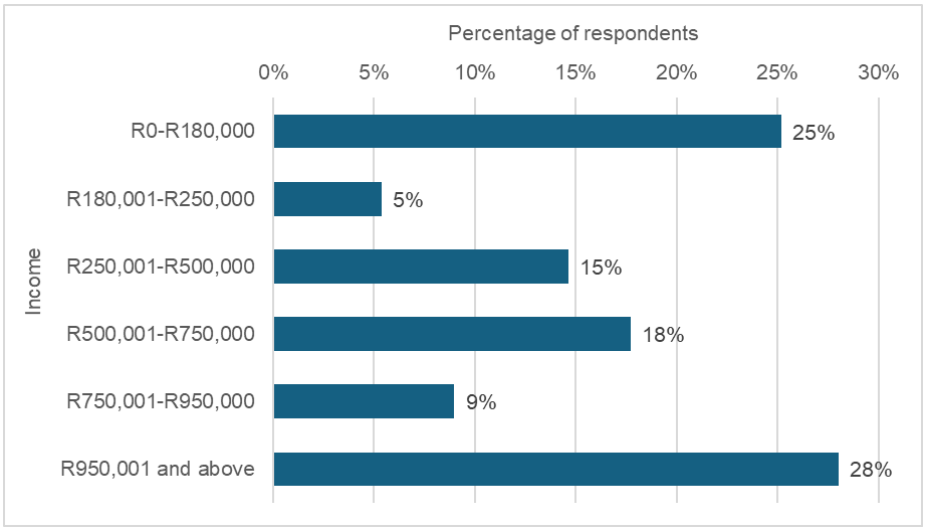


Figure 21: Income Profile

4.4. Smartphone Usage

4.4.1. Smartphone Brand Currently Owned

According to the results presented in Figure 22, 61% of the respondents own a Brand A smartphone, while 39% own Brand B.

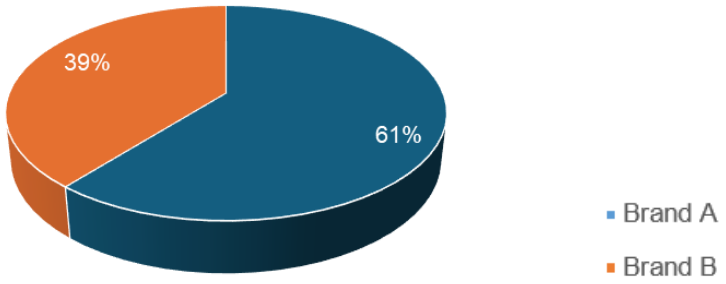


Figure 22: Brand Currently Owned.

4.4.2. Smartphone Model Owned

Out of the brands presented, the Brand A model 13 was the most popular with 20% of the respondents owning that particular model. The second most popular was the

Brand A model 14 with 11%, followed by the Brand B Galaxy S22 model with 6%. However, 46% of the respondents indicated that they owned a model other than the ones presented. It is likely, that individuals in the R0-R180,000 income bracket, who make up 25% (second highest representation) of the respondents, own a more affordable smartphone model not represented in this study, or affordable models offered by Brands A and Brand B. Samsung has captured the South African market due to its extensive range of budget-friendly and mid-range smartphones which have proven to be highly popular (Illidge, 2023). The statistics are illustrated in Figure 23.

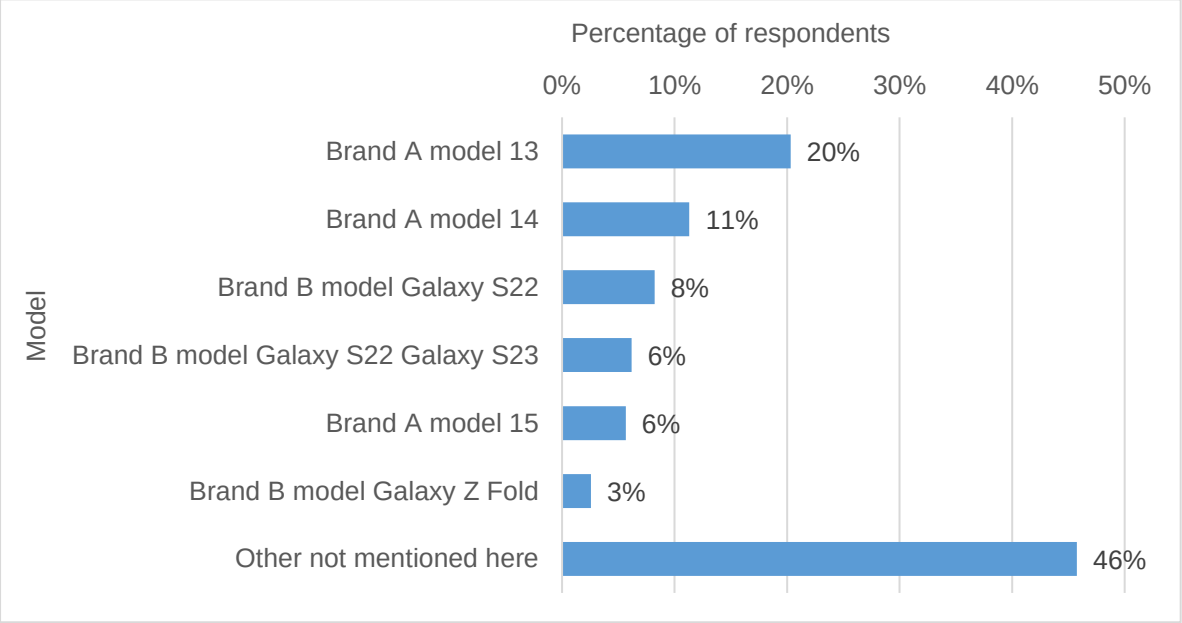


Figure 23: Smartphone model owned.

4.4.3. Customer Type

Figure 24 illustrates that more than half of the sample consisted of contract customers, while the remaining 43% were prepaid customers.

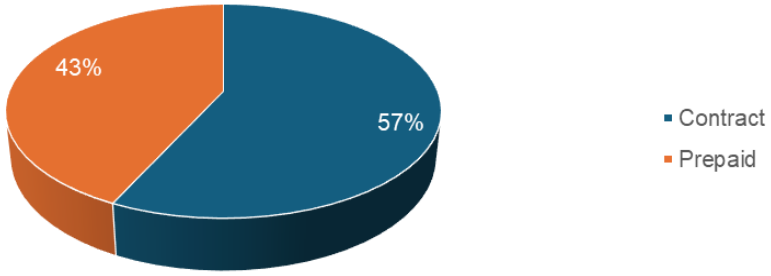


Figure 24: Customer Type

4.4.4. Upgrade Frequency

The survey results on the frequency of upgrading smartphones showed a variety of patterns among participants. Only 1% mentioned changing their phones every year, indicating a minimalist approach to upgrades. This could also be due to the 2–3-year contract terms offered by most cellular network providers such as Vodacom, MTN, Telkom Mobile and Cell C; considering that more than half of the respondents are contract customers. About 30% of respondents opted for a biennial replacement cycle, upgrading after two years while an even larger proportion, at 33%, preferred a three-year interval before switching devices – which coincides with the length of period offered on SA contracts.

Interestingly, 15% of respondents indicated that they waited for four years before considering an upgrade, reflecting a preference for longer usage of their smartphones. Furthermore, a significant 22% of participants reported holding onto their devices for five years or more before contemplating an upgrade, highlighting a trend towards maximising the lifespan of their smartphones.

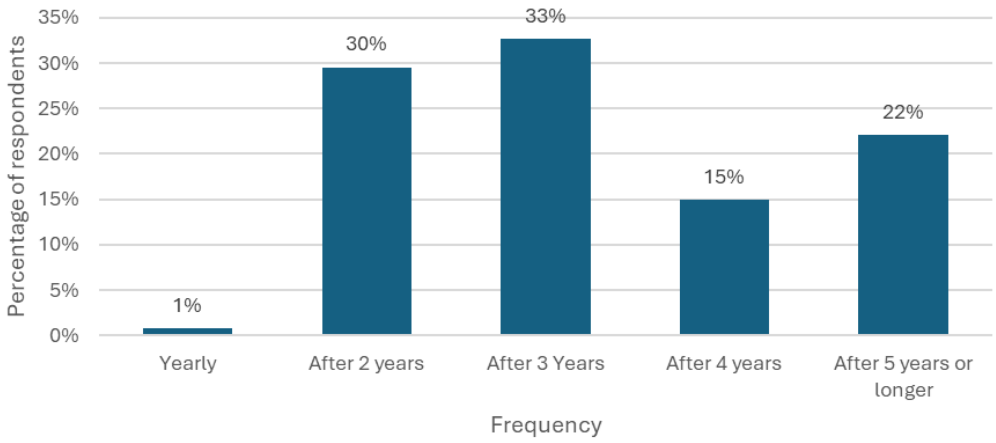


Figure 25: Upgrade frequency.

4.4.5. Recent Changes

It is notable that most respondents in the sample had not recently changed their smartphones (81%). This indicates that respondents are not opting to change their smartphones more frequently, reinforcing the statistical findings in Figure 26.

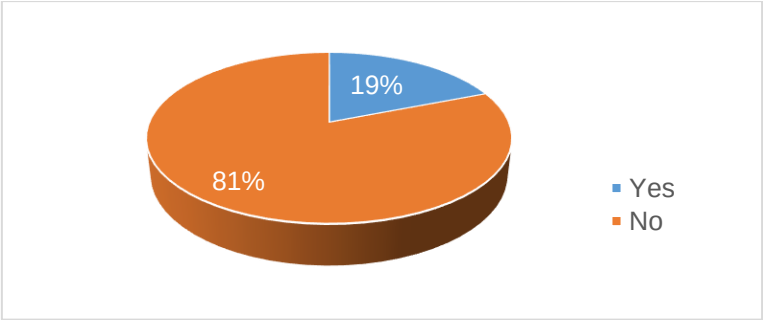


Figure 26: Recent Changes

4.4.6. Brand Ownership Period

The data shows that most respondents owned their phone for more than 5 years (41%), while 22% of them owned it for 0-1 year, another 22% for 2-3 years, and 15% for 3-5 years. The ownership behaviour of those who owned their phones for 0-1 year and 2-3 years can be attributed to the contract periods offered by most cell phone networks in South Africa, which usually last for 2 or 3 years.

It is interesting to note that the respondents who owned their phones for 5 years or more demonstrated a high level of brand loyalty, as they had the option to switch brands at some point during that period, especially if they were contract customers.

This indicates that they are satisfied with their current brand and are likely to continue using it in the future.

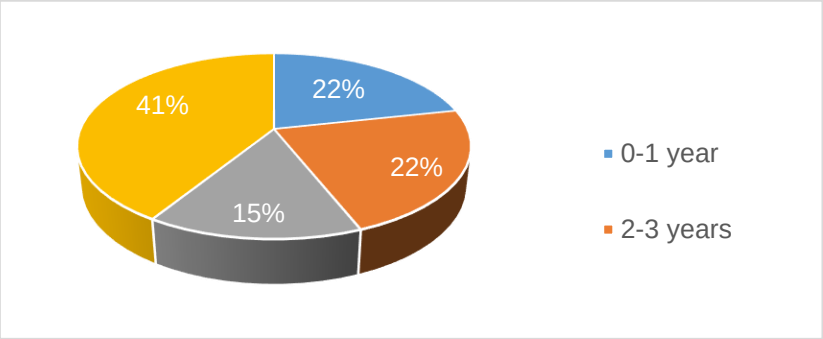


Figure 27: Ownership Period

4.5. Descriptive Statistics for Constructs

4.5.1. Sensory Experience (SENS)

In the evaluation of sensory experiences associated with a particular smartphone brand, the participants gave the highest ratings to the statement "this brand appeals to my senses," with a mean score of 3.97 ± 0.83. The next highest-rated sentiment was that "this brand makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses," with a mean score of 3.95 ± 0.98, highlighting the brand's impact on multiple sensory levels. Moreover, the idea that "this brand focuses on experience through positive senses" received a commendable mean score of 3.94 ± 0.77. Similarly, the brand was found intriguing in a sensory context, with a mean score of 3.94 ± 0.82, indicating a consistent appeal across various sensory dimensions.

Table 8: Sensory Experience - Descriptive Statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
SENS1_1	This brand makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses	4%	3%	18%	44%	31%	3.95	.98
SENS2_1	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way	2%	3%	19%	54%	23%	3.94	.82
SENS3_1	This brand appeals to my senses	1%	5%	14%	56%	24%	3.97	.83
SENS4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive senses	1%	2%	19%	57%	21%	3.94	.77

4.5.2. Affective Experience (AFF)

On affective experiences associated with the smartphone brand, respondents expressed strong sentiments toward the smartphone's ability to evoke positive feelings and sentiments (mean = 3.86 ±0.82). Similarly, respondents reported having strong positive emotions linked to the brand (mean = 3.83 ±0.92), indicating a substantial emotional connection. While slightly lower, the notion that "this brand focuses on experience through positive emotions" (mean = 3.68± 0.87) suggests that the brand focuses on creating positive emotional experiences. However, participants rated the brand lower when it was explicitly labelled an "emotional brand" (mean =3.35 ±1.01).

Table 9: Affective Experience - Descriptive Statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
AFF1_1	This brand induces positive feelings and sentiments	1%	4%	23%	52%	20%	3.86	.82
AFF2_1	I have strong positive emotions for this brand	2%	6%	22%	48%	23%	3.83	.92
AFF3_1	This brand is an emotional brand	3%	16%	36%	32%	13%	3.35	1.01
AFF4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive emotions	2%	7%	28%	48%	15%	3.68	.87

4.5.3. Behavioural Experience (BEX)

On behavioural experience, the highest-rated statements were "this brand tries to remind me of activities I can do" (mean=3.96 ±0.88) and "this brand tries to make me think of my lifestyle" (mean=3.96 ±0.93). The third-highest rated statement was "This brand focuses on experience through positive activities" (mean=3.79 ±0.83). On the other hand, the lowest-rated statement was "this brand results in bodily experiences" (mean=3.10 ±0.99).

Table 10: Behavioural Experience – Descriptive statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
BEX1_1	I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand	2%	14%	32%	43%	10%	3.44	.92
BEX2_1	This brand results in bodily experiences	5%	21%	41%	24%	8%	3.10	.99
BEX3_1	This brand is action-oriented	3%	7%	29%	50%	12%	3.61	.88
BEX4_1	This brand tries to remind me of activities I can do	2%	6%	12%	54%	26%	3.96	.88
BEX5_1	This brand tries to make me think of my lifestyle	2%	7%	13%	49%	29%	3.96	.93
BEX6_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive activities	1%	6%	24%	52%	17%	3.79	.83

4.5.4. Intellectual Experience (INT)

On intellectual experience, “this brand focuses on experience through positive thoughts” (mean=3.60±0.84) was the highest rated followed by “this brand stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving” (mean=3.55±0.97) and the lowest rated was “This brand makes me think” (mean=3.41±0.98).

Table 11: Intellectual Experience – Descriptive statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
INT1_1	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand	2%	15%	32%	37%	14%	3.46	.97
INT2_1	This brand makes me think	3%	15%	32%	37%	12%	3.41	.98
INT3_1	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving	2%	12%	31%	39%	16%	3.55	.97
INT4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive thoughts	1%	7%	34%	46%	12%	3.60	.84

4.5.5. Attitudinal Loyalty (ATT)

In terms of attitudinal loyalty, respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I use this brand because it is the best choice for me” (mean=4.16±0.86), followed by “I say positive things about this brand to others” (mean=4.04±0.85). However, the lowest rated statement was “I will always use this brand” (mean=3.62±1.15)

Table 12: Attitudinal Loyalty - Descriptive Statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
ATT1_1	I commit to not changing this brand though there are many other options	5%	12%	18%	31%	34%	3.77	1.18
ATT2_1	I am willing to pay more over other brands to get this particular brand	5%	16%	15%	39%	26%	3.65	1.16
ATT3_1	I will always use this brand	5%	13%	23%	32%	26%	3.62	1.15
ATT4_1	I encourage friends and relatives to use this brand	3%	11%	21%	41%	24%	3.72	1.04
ATT5_1	I say positive things about this brand to others	1%	5%	13%	51%	30%	4.04	.85
ATT6_1	I recommend this brand to anyone who seeks advice	2%	8%	17%	47%	26%	3.87	.94
ATT7_1	I use this brand because it is the best choice for me	1%	5%	11%	45%	39%	4.16	.86
ATT8_1	I consider myself to be a loyal user of this smartphone brand	3%	11%	12%	37%	37%	3.93	1.09

4.5.6. Behavioural Loyalty (BEL)

According to the survey results, the highest-rated statements on behavioural loyalty towards a particular brand were, "I would try new products that are provided by this brand" with a mean rating of 4.11±0.8, and "I will use this brand in the future" with a mean rating of 4.11±0.89; followed by "I consider this brand to be my first choice for a smartphone" with a mean rating of 4.10±0.97. On the other hand, the lowest rated statement was "I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available at the store" with a mean rating of 3.44±1.23.

Table 13: Behavioural Loyalty – Descriptive statistics

	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
BEL1_1	I will use this brand in the future	2%	3%	15%	43%	37%	4.11	.89
BEL2_1	I intend to continue purchasing this brand	2%	3%	17%	42%	37%	4.08	.91
BEL3_1	I do not buy other brands if this brand is available	4%	12%	18%	36%	29%	3.74	1.13
BEL4_1	I always buy this brand instead of other brands that offer similar products	3%	14%	13%	38%	32%	3.82	1.12
BEL5_1	I consider this brand to be my first choice for a smartphone	2%	7%	10%	42%	39%	4.10	.97
BEL6_1	I would try new products that are provided by this brand	1%	3%	11%	54%	31%	4.11	.80
BEL7_1	I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available at the store	6%	22%	18%	31%	23%	3.44	1.23

4.6. Testing Validity and Reliability

4.6.1. Hypothesized CFA Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs. IBM SPSS Amos version 28 was employed to conduct the analysis. The hypothesized CFA model is presented in Figure 28

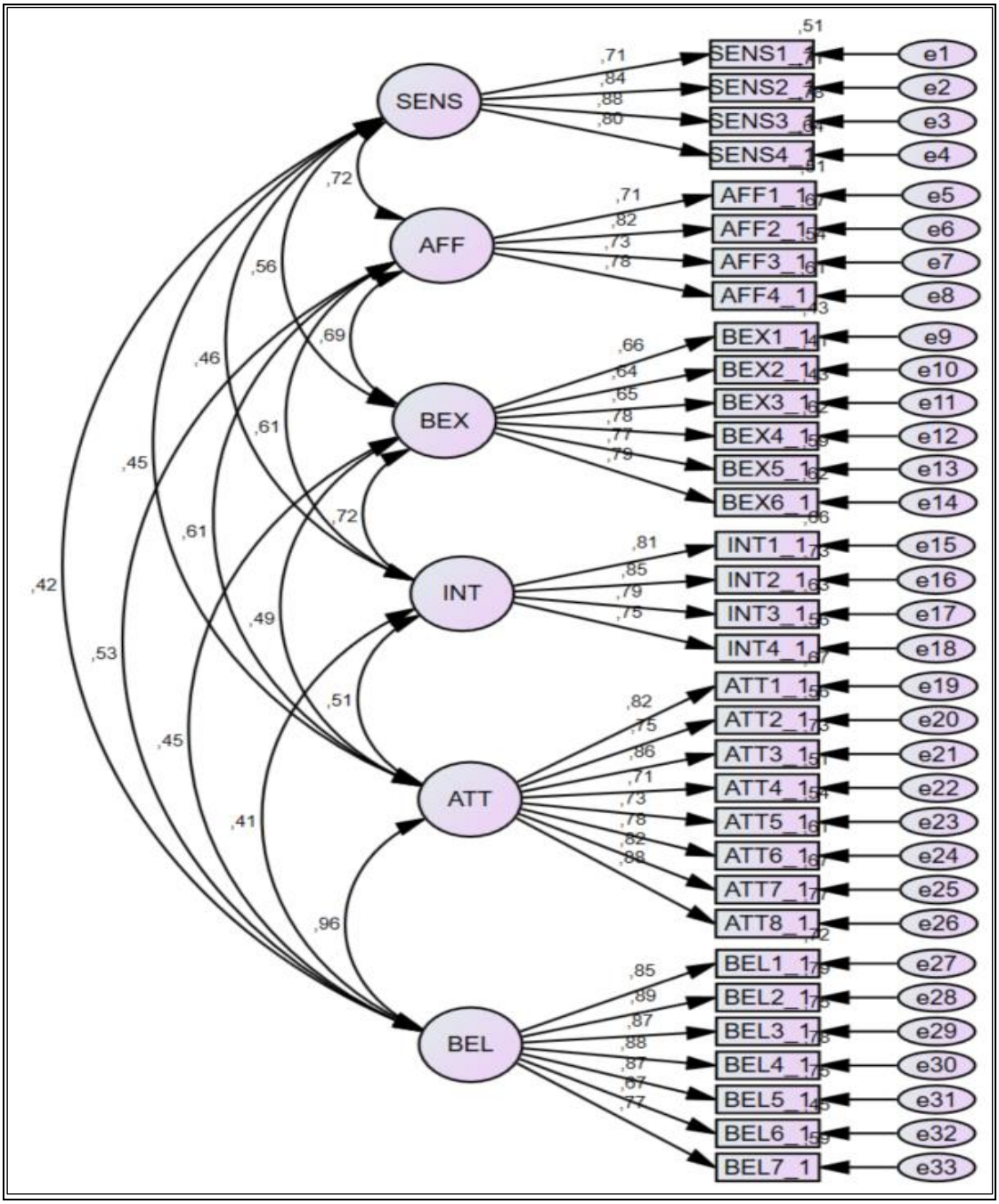


Figure 28: Hypothesized CFA Model

4.6.2. Hypothesis Results

The study results indicate that there was convergent validity for all constructs, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the acceptable minimum of 0.5. However, there was an issue with divergent validity, as the diagonal elements of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Attitudinal Loyalty (ATT) and Behavioural Loyalty (BEL) were less than the off-diagonal correlations against each other. This suggests that the items within the attitudinal loyalty construct were more correlated with the items within the behavioural loyalty construct, and vice versa. This indicates that there was cross-loading for the two constructs, which requires further investigation on how to improve divergent validity.

Table 14: Criterion Values – Hypothesized model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	SENS	AFF	BEX	INT	ATT	BEL
SENS	0.885	0.659	0.523	0.897	**0.812**					
AFF	0.847	0.581	0.523	0.852	,723	**0.762**				
BEX	0.863	0.515	0.513	0.873	,560	,692	**0.718**			
INT	0.879	0.645	0.513	0.884	,460	,612	,716	**0.803**		
ATT	0.932	0.632	0.920	0.938	,454	,613	,494	,508	**0.795**	
BEL	0.939	0.689	0.920	0.948	,421	,532	,448	,413	,959	**0.830**

4.6.3. Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate how all the items were correlated to each other and identify which items were cross-loading into multiple factors. The correlation metric can be found in Table 16, where the items with a correlation coefficient greater than 0.5 are highlighted in red. It was discovered that all the attitudinal and behavioural loyalty items were highly correlated, **indicating that one construct called Brand Loyalty cannot be split into attitudinal and behavioural loyalty**.

Consequently, a revised conceptual framework (figure 30) and revised CFA model (figure 29) were implemented, *combining Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioural Loyalty into one Brand Loyalty construct.*

Table 15: Correlation Matrix for all items

	SENS1_1	SENS2_1	SENS3_1	SENS4_1	AFF1_1	AFF2_1	AFF3_1	AFF4_1	BEX1_1	BEX2_1	BEX3_1	BEX4_1	BEX5_1	BEX6_1	INT1_1	INT2_1	INT3_1	INT4_1	ATT1_1	ATT2_1	ATT3_1	ATT4_1	ATT5_1	ATT6_1	ATT7_1	ATT8_1	BEL1_1	BEL2_1	BEL3_1	BEL4_1	BEL5_1	BEL6_1	BEL7_1
SENS1_1	1	.661	.632	.510	.439	.429	.293	.327	.252	.196	.239	.307	.230	.249	.169	.189	.200	.242	.253	.248	.288	.270	.316	.301	.280	.278	.326	.287	.188	.207	.290	.275	.208
SENS2_1	.661	1	.749	.647	.499	.475	.381	.382	.296	.308	.312	.362	.277	.317	.268	.308	.291	.358	.238	.286	.252	.268	.304	.283	.297	.299	.301	.292	.244	.284	.346	.337	.257
SENS3_1	.632	.749	1	.708	.523	.535	.369	.431	.302	.306	.363	.408	.309	.345	.280	.318	.289	.353	.282	.313	.332	.311	.370	.351	.360	.343	.359	.356	.252	.270	.376	.369	.244
SENS4_1	.510	.647	.708	1	.609	.546	.425	.572	.350	.351	.420	.503	.404	.455	.373	.377	.373	.463	.240	.265	.281	.325	.417	.369	.323	.316	.336	.325	.204	.279	.331	.358	.251
AFF1_1	.439	.499	.523	.609	1	.619	.466	.516	.305	.287	.312	.387	.328	.334	.351	.385	.434	.399	.273	.344	.303	.261	.332	.304	.377	.337	.282	.342	.258	.300	.366	.375	.283
AFF2_1	.429	.475	.535	.546	.619	1	.620	.605	.394	.354	.374	.365	.313	.365	.324	.281	.393	.416	.407	.413	.450	.416	.500	.493	.455	.508	.431	.455	.375	.422	.445	.468	.321
AFF3_1	.293	.381	.369	.425	.466	.620	1	.635	.437	.509	.391	.304	.368	.387	.371	.402	.409	.414	.295	.340	.325	.323	.367	.358	.280	.351	.272	.311	.285	.289	.290	.331	.247
AFF4_1	.327	.382	.431	.572	.516	.605	.635	1	.470	.484	.472	.454	.455	.521	.364	.365	.455	.504	.305	.326	.383	.421	.443	.441	.338	.391	.323	.369	.297	.328	.335	.404	.298
BEX1_1	.252	.296	.302	.350	.305	.394	.437	.470	1	.606	.477	.479	.460	.465	.381	.324	.289	.408	.290	.292	.246	.314	.280	.277	.275	.280	.285	.281	.252	.315	.289	.357	.310
BEX2_1	.196	.308	.306	.351	.287	.354	.509	.484	.606	1	.545	.459	.399	.411	.434	.440	.343	.424	.209	.228	.213	.315	.269	.287	.187	.256	.214	.238	.223	.257	.183	.264	.204
BEX3_1	.239	.312	.363	.420	.312	.374	.391	.472	.477	.545	1	.512	.421	.461	.324	.392	.400	.421	.270	.234	.233	.276	.260	.280	.245	.285	.259	.274	.254	.258	.251	.273	.233
BEX4_1	.307	.362	.408	.503	.387	.365	.304	.454	.479	.459	.512	1	.682	.631	.369	.373	.396	.456	.344	.295	.303	.322	.377	.389	.311	.302	.343	.336	.290	.295	.335	.427	.300
BEX5_1	.230	.277	.309	.404	.328	.313	.368	.455	.460	.399	.421	.682	1	.676	.405	.416	.428	.481	.317	.339	.272	.377	.351	.358	.331	.290	.291	.319	.238	.228	.329	.409	.265
BEX6_1	.249	.317	.345	.455	.334	.365	.387	.521	.465	.411	.461	.631	.676	1	.525	.478	.490	.673	.235	.287	.235	.348	.379	.405	.316	.268	.268	.301	.213	.238	.284	.406	.185
INT1_1	.169	.268	.280	.373	.351	.324	.371	.364	.381	.434	.324	.369	.405	.525	1	.733	.609	.593	.282	.351	.304	.387	.372	.406	.354	.368	.297	.354	.238	.287	.351	.318	.210
INT2_1	.189	.308	.318	.377	.385	.281	.402	.365	.324	.440	.392	.373	.416	.478	.733	1	.697	.605	.289	.339	.291	.352	.322	.366	.323	.322	.243	.323	.231	.254	.293	.266	.224
INT3_1	.200	.291	.289	.373	.434	.393	.409	.455	.289	.343	.400	.396	.428	.490	.609	.697	1	.591	.317	.378	.350	.436	.395	.409	.389	.334	.294	.360	.252	.292	.368	.344	.251
INT4_1	.242	.358	.353	.463	.399	.416	.414	.504	.408	.424	.421	.456	.481	.673	.593	.605	.591	1	.202	.294	.253	.341	.384	.379	.286	.306	.271	.257	.213	.276	.285	.345	.243
ATT1_1	.253	.238	.282	.240	.273	.407	.295	.305	.290	.209	.270	.344	.317	.235	.282	.289	.317	.202	1	.635	.793	.522	.515	.585	.650	.728	.679	.707	.732	.690	.714	.465	.606
ATT2_1	.248	.286	.313	.265	.344	.413	.340	.326	.292	.228	.234	.295	.339	.287	.351	.339	.378	.294	.635	1	.677	.496	.491	.523	.627	.641	.601	.646	.621	.653	.635	.514	.602
ATT3_1	.288	.252	.332	.281	.303	.450	.325	.383	.246	.213	.233	.303	.272	.235	.304	.291	.350	.253	.793	.677	1	.593	.576	.641	.661	.740	.708	.742	.738	.733	.726	.501	.654
ATT4_1	.270	.268	.311	.325	.261	.416	.323	.421	.314	.315	.276	.322	.377	.348	.387	.352	.436	.341	.522	.496	.593	1	.674	.728	.559	.609	.558	.626	.512	.550	.570	.541	.429
ATT5_1	.316	.304	.370	.417	.332	.500	.367	.443	.280	.269	.260	.377	.351	.379	.372	.322	.395	.384	.515	.491	.576	.674	1	.773	.599	.644	.598	.619	.527	.559	.576	.599	.418
ATT6_1	.301	.283	.351	.369	.304	.493	.358	.441	.277	.287	.280	.389	.358	.405	.406	.366	.409	.379	.585	.523	.641	.728	.773	1	.640	.674	.648	.638	.569	.590	.635	.566	.469
ATT7_1	.280	.297	.360	.323	.377	.455	.280	.338	.275	.187	.245	.311	.331	.316	.354	.323	.389	.286	.650	.627	.661	.559	.599	.640	1	.733	.673	.742	.660	.671	.763	.563	.554
ATT8_1	.278	.299	.343	.316	.337	.508	.351	.391	.280	.256	.285	.302	.290	.268	.368	.322	.334	.306	.728	.641	.740	.609	.644	.674	.733	1	.708	.772	.744	.771	.767	.545	.598
BEL1_1	.326	.301	.359	.336	.282	.431	.272	.323	.285	.214	.259	.343	.291	.268	.297	.243	.294	.271	.679	.601	.708	.558	.598	.648	.673	.708	1	.856	.664	.710	.726	.606	.614
BEL2_1	.287	.292	.356	.325	.342	.455	.311	.369	.281	.238	.274	.336	.319	.301	.354	.323	.360	.257	.707	.646	.742	.626	.619	.638	.742	.772	.856	1	.726	.741	.759	.628	.636
BEL3_1	.188	.244	.252	.204	.258	.375	.285	.297	.252	.223	.254	.290	.238	.213	.238	.231	.252	.213	.732	.621	.738	.512	.527	.569	.660	.744	.664	.726	1	.853	.742	.522	.774
BEL4_1	.207	.284	.270	.279	.300	.422	.289	.328	.315	.257	.258	.295	.228	.238	.287	.254	.292	.276	.690	.653	.733	.550	.559	.590	.671	.771	.710	.741	.853	1	.757	.562	.759
BEL5_1	.290	.346	.376	.331	.366	.445	.290	.335	.289	.183	.251	.335	.329	.284	.351	.293	.368	.285	.714	.635	.726	.570	.576	.635	.763	.767	.726	.759	.742	.757	1	.600	.633
BEL6_1	.275	.337	.369	.358	.375	.468	.331	.404	.357	.264	.273	.427	.409	.406	.318	.266	.344	.345	.465	.514	.501	.541	.599	.566	.563	.545	.606	.628	.522	.562	.600	1	.485
BEL7_1	.208	.257	.244	.251	.283	.321	.247	.298	.310	.204	.233	.300	.265	.185	.210	.224	.251	.243	.606	.602	.654	.429	.418	.469	.554	.598	.614	.636	.774	.759	.633	.485	1

4.6.4. Revised CFA Model

The revised CFA model combining Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioural Loyalty into one construct called Brand Loyalty (BLOY) is presented in Figure 29. The motivation for this updated model resulted from highly correlated attitudinal and behavioural loyalty items. The interpretation of the revised CFA model is tabulated in Table 17, with a detailed interpretation of the presented values under 4.8.

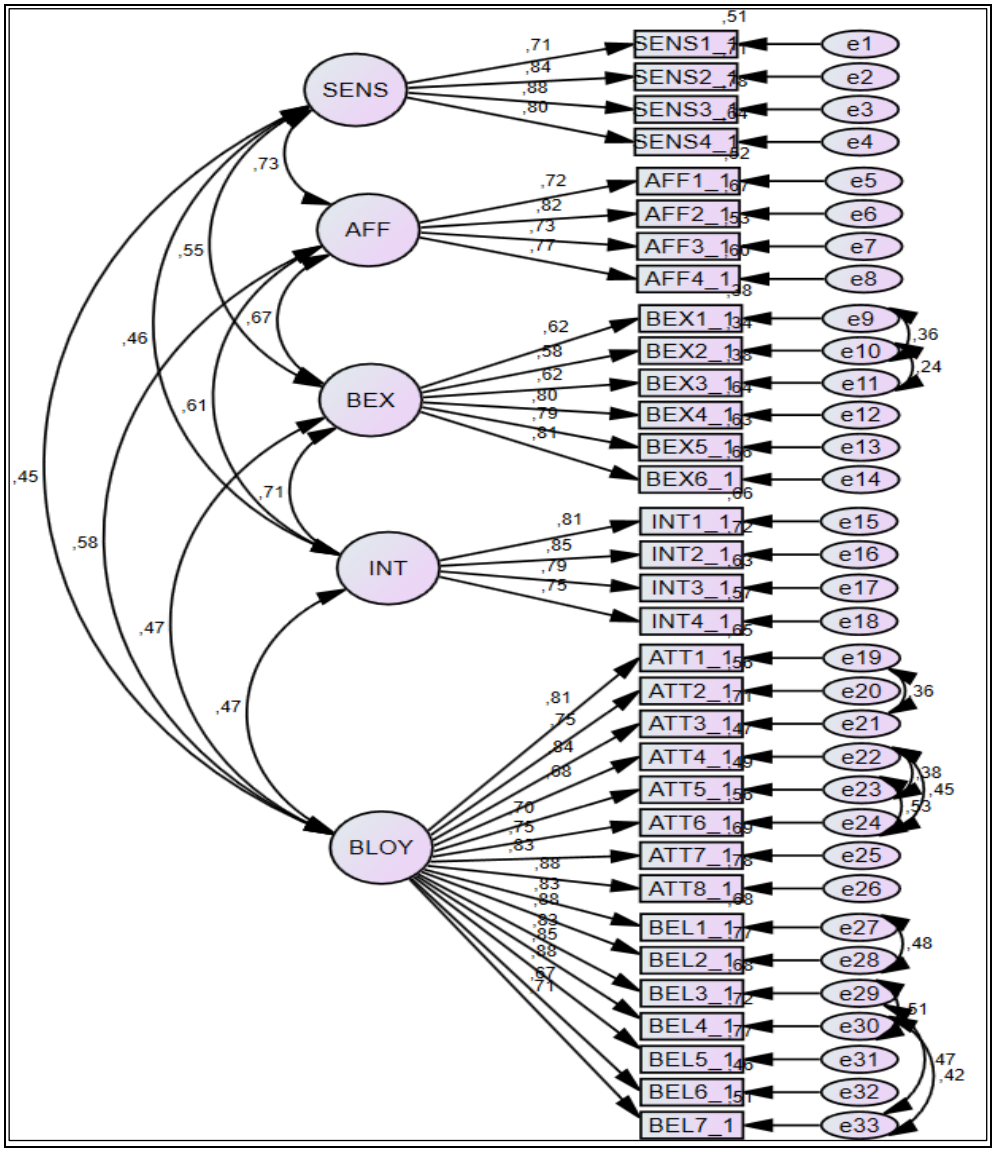


Figure 29: Revised Model

4.7. Results - Revised Model

The findings presented in Table 16 indicate that all items and statements were highly loaded onto their respective constructs. The study shows that there was a convergent validity for all constructs, as all the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the minimum acceptable value of 0.5. Additionally, there was divergent validity as the diagonal elements of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion revealed that the diagonal elements were greater than the off-diagonal correlations with other

constructs. This suggests that the items within each construct were more correlated with each other than with items within other constructs.

Moreover, all the MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) values were lower than the AVE values, confirming the existence of divergent validity. The results show that there was high and acceptable reliability for all the constructs, as the composite reliability (CR) values were all above 0.7. The results are presented in Table 16 below.

Table 16 Criterion Values - Revised model

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	SENS	AFF	BEX	INT	BLOY
SENS	0.885	0.659	0.527	0.897	**0.812**				
AFF	0.847	0.581	0.527	0.852	0.726	**0.762**			
BEX	0.856	0.503	0.503	0.877	0.551	0.667	**0.709**		
INT	0.878	0.644	0.503	0.883	0.460	0.613	0.709	**0.803**	
BLOY	0.962	0.632	0.342	0.967	0.450	0.585	0.474	0.472	**0.795**

Table 17 below, summarises the final factor composition after revising the model, the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR) scores and Cronbach's Alpha values (α). The interpretation and discussion of these values follow thereafter.

Table 17: Final construct composition, Cronbach's Alpha, CR and AVE

Construct	Measurement Items / Indicators		Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR (composite reliability)	AVE (average variable extracted)
Sensory Experience (SENS)	SENS1_1	This brand makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses	0.714	0.877	0.885	0.659
	SENS2_1	I find this brand interesting in a sensory way	0.841			
	SENS3_1	This brand appeals to my senses	0.881			
	SENS4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive senses	0.801			
Affective Experience (AFF)	AFF1_1	This brand induces positive feelings and sentiments	0.721	0.844	0.847	0.581
	AFF2_1	I have strong positive emotions for this brand	0.820			
	AFF3_1	This brand is an emotional brand	0.730			
	AFF4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive emotions	0.773			
Behavioural Experience (BEX)	BEX1_1	I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand	0.615	0.861	0.856	0.503
	BEX2_1	This brand results in bodily experiences	0.579			
	BEX3_1	This brand is action-oriented	0.619			
	BEX4_1	This brand tries to remind me of activities I can do	0.798			
	BEX5_1	This brand tries to make me think of my lifestyle	0.793			
	BEX6_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive activities	0.811			
Intellectual Experience (INT)	INT1_1	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand	0.810	0.876	0.878	0.644
	INT2_1	This brand makes me think	0.850			
	INT3_1	This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving	0.794			
	INT4_1	This brand focuses on experience through positive thoughts	0.753			
Brand Loyalty (BLOY)	ATT1_1	I commit to not changing this brand though there are many other options	0.808	0.962	0.962	0.632
	ATT2_1	I am willing to pay more over other brands to get this particular brand	0.749			
	ATT3_1	I will always use this brand	0.841			
	ATT4_1	I encourage friends and relatives to use this brand	0.682			
	ATT5_1	I say positive things about this brand to others	0.700			
	ATT6_1	I recommend this brand to anyone who seeks advice	0.746			
	ATT7_1	I use this brand because it is the best choice for me	0.829			
	ATT8_1	I consider myself to be a loyal user of this smartphone brand	0.881			
	BEL1_1	I will use this brand in the future	0.826			
	BEL2_1	I intend to continue purchasing this brand	0.879			
	BEL3_1	I do not buy other brands if this brand is available	0.827			
	BEL4_1	I always buy this brand instead of other brands that offer similar products	0.848			
	BEL5_1	I consider this brand to be my first choice for a smartphone	0.876			
	BEL6_1	I would try new products that are provided by this brand	0.675			
	BEL7_1	I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available at the store	0.712			

4.8. Interpretation of Table 17 Results

4.8.1. Sensory Experience (SENS)

The factor loadings for the measurement items (SENS1_1 to SENS4_1) are all positive and range from 0.714 to 0.881, indicating that each item contributes significantly to the Sensory Experience construct. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.877 suggests a high level of internal consistency among the items, indicating that they measure a similar underlying concept reliably.

The Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.885 further supports the internal consistency, and the Average Variable Extracted (AVE) of 0.659 indicated that 65.9% of the variance in the observed variables was due to the underlying Sensory Experience construct.

4.8.2. Affective Experience (AFF)

The factor loadings for the measurement items (AFF1_1 to AFF4_1) range from 0.721 to 0.820, indicating strong associations with the Affective Experience construct. The Cronbach's alpha (0.844) indicates high internal consistency, and the CR score of 0.847 further supports the reliability of the scale.

The AVE was 0.581, suggesting that 58.1% of the variance in the observed variables was due to the underlying construct.

4.8.3. Behavioural Experience (BEX)

Factor loadings for the measurement items (BEX1_1 to BEX6_1) range from 0.579 to 0.811, indicating substantial contributions to the Behavioural Experience construct. The Cronbach's alpha (0.861) and the CR value of 0.856 suggest high internal consistency, while the AVE of 0.503 indicates that 50.3% of the variance is explained by the construct.

4.8.4. Intellectual Experience (INT)

Factor loadings for the measurement items (INT1_1 to INT4_1) range from 0.753 to 0.850, showing strong associations with the Intellectual Experience construct. The Cronbach's alpha (0.876) and the CR of 0.878 indicated a high internal consistency,

while the AVE) of 0.644 suggests that 64.4% of the variance was attributed to the underlying construct.

4.8.5. Brand Loyalty (BLOY)

The measurement items (ATT1_1 to BEL7_1) have factor loadings ranging from 0.675 to 0.962, indicating substantial associations with the Brand Loyalty construct. The high Cronbach's alpha (0.962) and the CR of 0.962 suggest exceptional internal consistency, while the Average Variable Extracted (AVE) of 0.632 indicates that 63.2% of the variance in the observed variables was due to the underlying construct.

The results suggest that the measurement items within each construct were reliable and contributed significantly to their respective factors. The high factor loadings, internal consistency values, and reasonable AVE values indicate robustness in measuring the intended constructs. These constructs could be used for assessing Sensory Experience, Affective Experience, Behavioural Experience, Intellectual Experience, and Brand Loyalty.

4.9. Model Fit

The revised CFA model's fit indices are presented in Table 18. The indices indicate that the model fit was either good or slightly below the acceptable range. Therefore, we can conclude that the revised model was a suitable fit for the data.

Table 18: Model Fit Indices

Absolute Fit Indexes	Acceptable Value	Value	Outcome
GFI	>0.9	0.836	Slightly outside acceptable range
AGFI	>0.9	0.806	Slightly outside acceptable range
RSMEA	<0.08	0.065	Acceptable
NFI	>0.9	0.884	Slightly outside acceptable range
NNFI (TLI)	>0.9	0.916	Acceptable
CFI	>0.9	0.924	Acceptable
CMIN/DF	< 5	2.630	Acceptable

4.10. Hypothesis Testing using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

To test the hypotheses, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was employed using the constructs that were included in the final CFA model. The combination of attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty into a single construct called Brand Loyalty (BLOY) resulted in the collapsing of the hypotheses from six to four. The following is the revised conceptual framework and four revised hypotheses that were analysed:

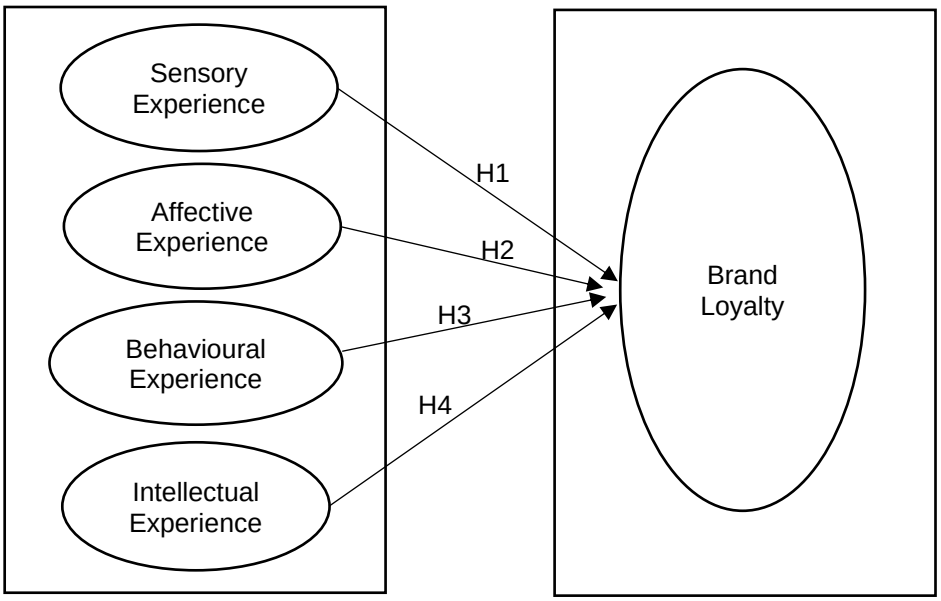


Figure 30: Revised Conceptual Framework

H1: *There is a positive relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).*

H2: *There is a positive relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty.*

H3: *There is a positive relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty.*

H4: *There is a positive relationship between intellectual experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty.*

The results are presented in the revised conceptual framework in figure 30, and the structural equation model depicted in Figure 31

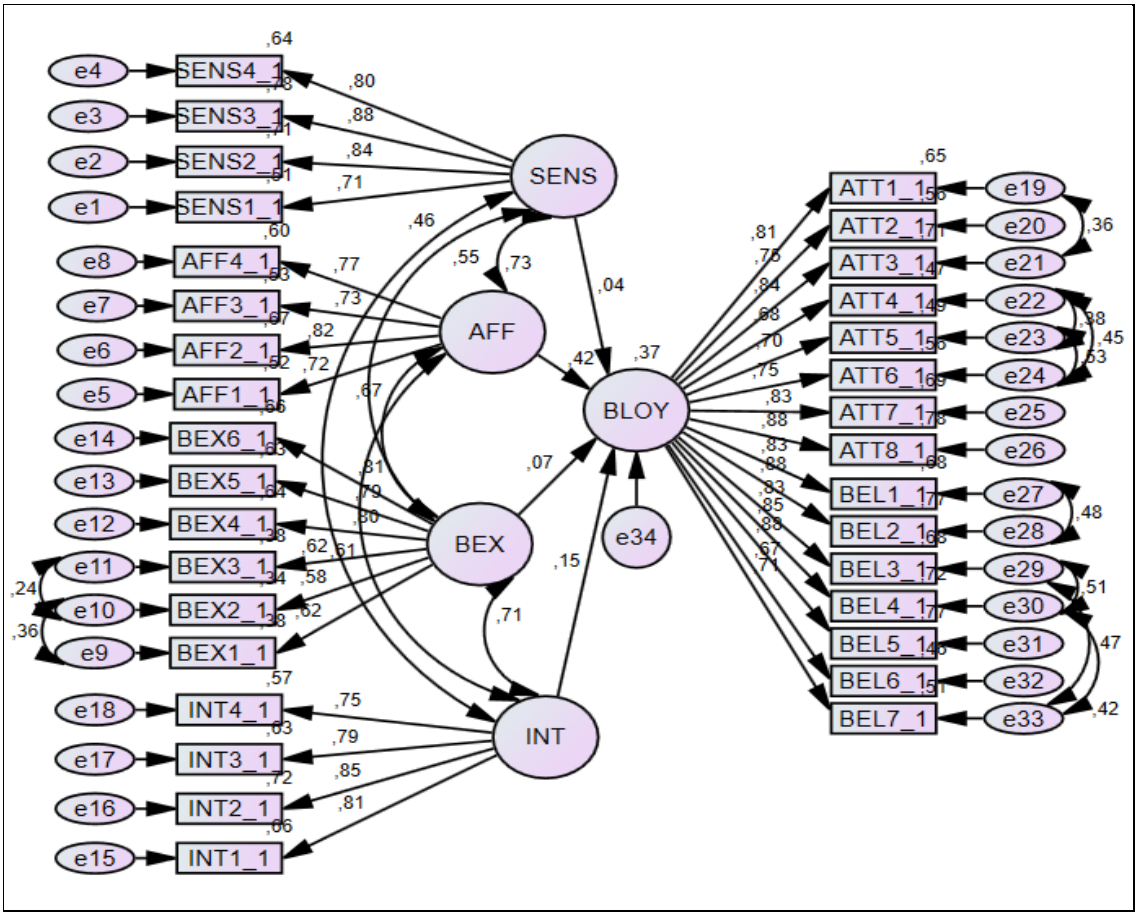


Figure 31: Structural Equation Model

An r-square value of 0.366 suggests that 36.6% of the variation in brand loyalty can be attributed to sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual experience. The coefficients in Table 19 were used to test the hypotheses.

Table 19: SEM Regression weights

Hypotheses / Path Analysis	**Standardized Estimates**	**T-value**	**P-Value**	**R-Square**
H1: Sensory Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	,040	,527	,598	0.366
H2: Affective Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	,420	4,356	***	
H3: Behavioural Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	,066	,803	,422	
H4: Intellectual Experience ⟶ Brand Loyalty	,149	1,973	,048	
SEM Fit Indices: x^2 = (1249.36); x^2/df = 2.630; RMSEA = .065; CFI = .924, TLI = .916; AGFI = .806; GFI = .836; NFI = .884, ***P < 0.001				

4.10.1. Results on Hypothesis 1 (H1):

H0: There is no relationship between *sensory experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H1: There is a positive relationship between *sensory experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

The findings presented in Table 19 indicate that sensory experience (β = 0.040, t-value = 0.527, p-value = 0.598) did not have a significant relationship with brand loyalty. The p-value of 0.598 was greater than 0.05, which means that there was insufficient evidence at a 5% significance level to suggest a positive relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (either attitudinal loyalty or behavioural loyalty).

Therefore, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, and it can be concluded that there is no relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (either attitudinal loyalty or behavioural loyalty).

4.10.2. Results on Hypothesis 2 (H2):

H0: There is no relationship between *affective experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H2: There is a positive relationship between *affective experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
Table 19 presents the results showing that affective experience (β = 0.420, t-value = 4.356, p-value < 0.001) has a significant and positive correlation with brand loyalty. The relationship is positive because the coefficient for affective experience (β = 0.420) is greater than zero. This relationship is significant because the p-value is less than 0.05.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty, which includes attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty. In summary, the results suggest that a positive emotional connection with a brand can lead to increased brand loyalty.

4.10.3. Results on Hypothesis 3 (H3):

H0: There is no relationship between *behavioural experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H3: There is a positive relationship between *behavioural experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

According to the findings presented in Table 19, there is no significant relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty. The results indicate a p-value of 0.422, which is greater than the 5% significance level.

Therefore, insufficient evidence suggests a positive relationship between behavioural experience and loyalty (attitudinal or behavioural). As a result, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and it is concluded that there is no relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty.

4.10.4. Results on Hypothesis 4 (H4):

H0: There is no relationship between *intellectual experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H4: There is a positive relationship between *intellectual experience and brand loyalty* (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

The findings presented in Table 19 indicate that intellectual experience had a positive and significant relationship with brand loyalty. The coefficient (β) for intellectual experience was 0.149, with a t-value of 1.973 and a p-value of less than 0.048. The positive relationship was indicated by the fact that the coefficient was greater than zero. The p-value is less than 0.05 which means that the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

Therefore, it was concluded that a positive correlation exists between intellectual experience and brand loyalty, which can be observed in the form of attitudinal loyalty or behavioural loyalty.

Table 20: Hypotheses Summary

Hypothesis		**Outcome**
H1	*There is a positive relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).*	Not Supported
H2	*There is a positive relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).*	Supported
H3	*There is a positive relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).*	Not Supported
H4	*There is a positive relationship between intellectual experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).*	Supported

4.11. Brand Experience Dimensions and Brand Loyalty by Smartphone Brand.

The study conducted an independent sample t-test to assess whether there were differences in sensory experience, affective experience, behavioural experience, intellectual experience, and Brand Loyalty between users of Brand A and Brand B smartphones. Table 21 displays the findings.

Table 21: Independent samples t-test of all constructs by brand owned.

Group Statistics					**t-test for Equality of Means**	
Smartphone brand you currently own?		*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*t*	*P-value (2-tailed)*
Sensory Experience	Brand A	237	3.99	.731	1.265	.206
	Brand B	152	3.89	.726		
Affective Experience	Brand A	237	3.74	.723	1.989	.047
	Brand B	152	3.59	.778		
Behavioural Experience	Brand A	237	3.70	.619	1.898	.059
	Brand B	152	3.55	.795		
Intellectual Experience	Brand A	237	3.58	.762	2.163	.031
	Brand B	152	3.40	.853		
Brand Loyalty	Brand A	237	4.04	.710	4.489	.000
	Brand B	152	3.63	.949		

In summary, the findings in Table 21 indicate no significant differences in sensory and behavioural experiences. However, there was a borderline significant difference in behavioural experience, implying that further investigation may be necessary.
On the other hand, there were statistically significant differences in affective and intellectual experiences, with Brand A smartphone users rating higher than Brand B users. Additionally, Brand A users exhibited significantly higher brand loyalty compared to Brand B users. Below are the detailed statistical results of the brand comparison:

- There was no statistically significant difference in Sensory Experience between Brand A and Brand B users ($p = 0.206$). The means are quite close, Brand A mean = 3.99±0.73; Brand B mean = 3.89±0.73), indicating similarity in how users perceive sensory aspects of the devices.

- There was also no statistically significant difference in Behavioural Experience between Brand A smartphone users mean = 3.7±0.62 and Brand B users mean = 3.55±0.79, p-value = 0.059). The p-value is slightly above the typical significance level of 0.05, indicating a borderline significance. This might suggest a potential difference, but further investigation could be warranted.

- There was however a statistically significant difference in Affective Experience between Brand A and Brand B users ($p = 0.047$). The difference suggests that Brand A users mean = 3.74 ± 0.72 rated the Affective Experience statistically higher than Brand B users mean = 3.59±0.78. The result was statistically significant because the p-value was less than 0.05.

- There was also a statistically significant difference in Intellectual Experience between Brand A users mean = 3.58 ± 0.76and Brand B users mean = 3.4±0.85, p-value = 0.031. This suggests that Brand A users perceive intellectual aspects better than Brand B users.

- On Brand Loyalty, there was a highly significant difference in Brand Loyalty between Brand A and Brand B users ($p < 0.001$). Brand A users exhibit

significantly higher brand loyalty mean = 4.04 ± 0.71 compared to Brand B users mean = 3.63±0.9.

4.12. Conclusion

The study's results indicate that affective experience and intellectual experience are important factors in predicting brand loyalty among South African smartphone users. However, sensory experience and behavioural experience did not show any significant relationship with brand loyalty.

The study also found that Brand A users were more loyal to their brand than Brand B users. In agreement with the finding that affective experience and intellectual experience are significant predictors of brand loyalty, Brand A users rated these factors significantly higher than Brand B users.

5. CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results outlined in Chapter 4, which are the outcomes of the research hypotheses made in Chapter 2. The results are based on the evaluation of data collected from a total of 389 respondents.

At this point in the study, it is appropriate to revisit the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 and compare them to the research outcomes. The research objectives were to determine whether sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual experiences influence attitudinal and behavioural loyalty among South African smartphone users. The study focused on users of two specific brands: Brand A and Brand B. A comparative analysis assessing brand loyalty levels between users of the two smartphone brands is also included.

The sample's demographic characteristics are discussed in detail in Chapter 4, so only a summary is provided in this chapter. Finally, this chapter concludes with details on each hypothesis and its corresponding findings.

5.2. Demographics Summary Discussion

The study predominantly consisted of women at 58% and men at 32%. A significant number of the participants hold full-time jobs, representing 57% of the sample. The income split compared between the lowest annual income bracket (R0 - R180,000) and highest income bracket (R950,001+) earned are 25% and 28%, respectively. Interestingly, those earning between R0 - R180,000 are well-represented in this sample (second highest). This is particularly noteworthy as the study focuses on the expensive smartphone brands, Brand A and Brand B, which have a superior brand image compared to other brands in the market.

Furthermore, 61% of the total sample owned Brand A, and 39% owned Brand B. With 46% indicating that they own "other brand models not mentioned" in the questionnaire, it is probable that this lower-income group of respondents own the less expensive models of these two brands. The survey found that a significant majority of

respondents (81%) had recently replaced their smartphones. Among the respondents, 57% had a contract plan, while 43% had a prepaid plan. This could be attributed to contract renewals, while a significant 43% of prepaid customers bought their smartphones through cash/card transactions. This finding highlights the purchasing power of the consumer, despite the tough economic climate of South Africa, thus indicating their ability to afford expensive brands.

5.3. Hypothesis Discussion

Tables 19 and 20, present the results of the hypothesis tests conducted in this study. This section (5.3.1 – 5.3.4) discusses each hypothesis and its corresponding findings.

5.3.1. Sensory Experience and Brand Loyalty

H0: There is no relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H1: There is a positive relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

In chapter two, it is suggested that brand experiences should engage the audience's senses and emotions while aligning with their beliefs, leading to long-term memory and behavioural patterns (Gilad, 2019). However, the findings of this study contradict this statement concerning sensory experiences. According to the current study, there is no significant correlation between sensory experiences and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.040$, t-value = 0.527, p-value = 0.598). Moreover, insufficient evidence at a 5% significance level supports the idea that there is a positive link between sensory experience and brand loyalty, whether attitudinal or behavioural. As a result, the study concluded that there is no relationship between sensory experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal or behavioural) among South African smartphone users, and the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

According to Mohan (2014), good brand engagement can help create brand loyalty behaviour. Sensory experiences are known to affect the consumer towards the brand and create positive engagement. Various studies such as Cuong (2020) and Brakus

et al. (2019) have confirmed the positive impact of sensory experience on brand loyalty. This study suggests that the South African smartphone audience is less interested in the smartphones' aesthetics and visual design; they're more interested in the brand's ability to connect with them emotionally and cognitively. This was particularly interesting considering both brands under study focus a lot of attention on the visual and aesthetic characteristics of their smartphones, particularly size and the vibrant colours in which they feature. Similarly, results from a study conducted in the motorcycle industry on brand experience effects on brand loyalty (Cuong, 2020) found that the impact of sensory experience on behavioural loyalty (brand loyalty) was weak ($\beta = 0.194$), and the same applied to its effect on attitudinal loyalty ($\beta = 0.189$).

However, three different studies in the hospitality industry are consistent in their findings that sensory brand experiences positively affect brand loyalty. More specifically, (Moreira et al., 2017), who investigate the influence of sensory stimuli on brand experience. They found a positive impact on customer senses was achieved in a restaurant setting through the décor, service, products offered, and the environment, which made for a memorable experience, thus contributing to satisfaction and possible loyalty.

The research conducted in Indonesia and Malaysia, both pertaining to the hospitality industry, revealed that the brand experience has a favourable impact on brand loyalty Ong et al., 2018). However, one study specifically highlights the role of sensory experiences in fostering brand loyalty (Hussein, 2018). The authors also suggest that a positive brand experience leads to customers being more willing to pay higher prices (WPM) and having stronger intentions to make repeat purchases (RI), especially in a restaurant setting where their senses are stimulated. These findings are not surprising given that the dining experience is largely determined by sensory attributes such as taste. On the other hand, industries like smartphones may benefit from exploring more innovative ways to appeal to the consumer's senses in order to foster loyalty, as suggested by these results.

According to a study conducted in the Indonesian smartphone industry, trust is a vital element for cultivating loyalty, and sensory and behavioural experiences play a significant role in establishing that trust (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Given the

subjective nature of brand experiences, it is conceivable that the findings of this study could differ if a qualitative approach were employed, as it would enable more profound and personalised engagement with the participants.

5.3.2. Affective Experience and Brand Loyalty

H0: There is no relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H2: There is a positive relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

Affective experiences pertain to a customer's emotional state, mood, and sentiments towards a brand. According to analysis, South African smartphone users exhibit a strong emotional inclination in their decision-making process. Respondents expressed robust positive feelings and sentiments towards the brand (mean = 3.86 ±0.82), while others reported experiencing intense positive emotions associated with the brand (mean = 3.83± 0.92). These findings suggest a deep-seated connection between the users and the brand.

According to this study, Brand A and Brand B smartphone users in South Africa tend to form emotional connections with brands, rather than sensory ones. This emotional connection is responsible for creating long-lasting memories and behavioural patterns. Research suggests that brands can establish trust and capture customer attention by appealing to their senses and emotions (Punniyamoorthy & Raj, 2007). The same holds true for the South African smartphone market. The research found a significant and positive relationship between affective experience and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.420$, t-value = 4.356, p-value < 0.001), meaning that customers tend to display both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty towards the brands they feel emotionally connected to. These findings align with a similar study conducted in the Malaysian hospitality industry, which showed that affective experience positively impacts brand loyalty, particularly word-of-mouth (Ong et al., 2018). Additionally, the study found that affective experience plays a crucial role in determining a customer's disposition towards showing attitudinal and behavioural loyalty (word-of-mouth and repeat intentions) in a restaurant setting.

Consumer behaviour that is driven by affective experiences is influenced by consumers' moods, emotions, feelings, and sentiments towards a brand. This behaviour can be likened to brand love, which is described as a passionate affection that consumers have towards a brand (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). Brand love is a significant element in consumer-brand relationships, as highlighted by (Bagozzi et al. (2017) and Hegner et al. (2017). These emotions can have implications on behaviour, such as repurchase intentions (Sebopa, 2017)., and can effectively drive brand loyalty. Emotional engagement can play a crucial role in creating consumer affinity towards brands, according to (Batat, 2019). In particular, Brand A and Brand B have successfully targeted the South African audience with their marketing campaigns, capturing their emotions and affection towards their respective brands. To further cement loyalty among their respective customers, these companies should continue to focus on this aspect of their branding efforts. However, a study on brand loyalty among mobile phone users has shown that affective experience can have a negative impact on attitudinal loyalty (Ghimire & Karki, 2022).

5.3.3. Behavioural Experience and Brand Loyalty

H0: There is no relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H3: There is a positive relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

This study found that efforts by smartphone brands in South Africa to encourage physical activity among users through brand-related stimuli like exercise, singing, or dancing have not had a significant impact. Despite offering accessories like smartwatches and music gadgets, Brand A and Brand B have not been successful in motivating users to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. The study found that the lowest-rated scale item was "this brand results in bodily experiences," scoring a mean of 3.10 ±0.99. Some respondents expressed confusion regarding the meaning of this statement, which could be the explanation for such a result. This may require further investigation.

This study found no noteworthy correlation between behavioural experience and brand loyalty. The outcome showed a p-value of 0.422, which exceeded the significance level of 0.05. Hence, there was inadequate evidence to imply a favourable relationship between behavioural experience and brand loyalty, be it attitudinal or behavioural. Consequently, the null hypothesis could not be refuted, ultimately concluding that there is no association between behavioural experience and brand loyalty.

The music feature on Brand A smartphones is a perfect solution for music enthusiasts who prefer carrying their music library wherever they go. This feature is compatible across all Brand A products, including the smartphone, Brand A smart watch, iPad, and Mac, providing users with a seamless music experience. It's a testament to the versatility of the smartphone, which can do more than just make phone calls. With Brand A music app's vast collection of over 90 million songs and 30,000 playlists (Newsroom, 2022), it's no surprise that many South African Brand A smartphone users prefer it. However, the study's results on the "bodily experience" indicator may have been different if the indicator/scale had been clearer. A qualitative study on brand experience and its impact on brand loyalty could be a worthwhile pursuit.

Based on the research conducted by (Cuong, 2020) it appears that the impact of behavioural experience on attitudinal loyalty in a hospitality dining environment is not very strong, resulting in a medium impact. Interestingly, the study did find that behavioural experience has a positive impact on behavioural loyalty, which is in contrast to the findings of (Ong et al., 2018), who focused on the Asian hospitality industry. Their research indicated that behavioural experience does not lead to increased behavioural loyalty (i.e. repeat business), potentially due to the short-term excitement induced by dining experiences.

When it comes to comparing the behavioural experience of Brand A and Brand B users, the statistical analysis shows no significant difference. While the p-value is slightly higher than the typical significance level of 0.05, suggesting borderline significance, further investigation may be needed to determine if there a potential difference between the two groups exists.

5.3.4. Intellectual and Brand Loyalty

H0: There is no relationship between intellectual experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).
H4: There is a positive relationship between intellectual experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal loyalty / behavioural loyalty).

The study by Ong et al.(2018) has revealed that in the hospitality industry, affective experience is the driving force behind word of mouth (WoM) and repurchase intention (RI), rather than willingness to pay more (WPM). However, behavioural experience has been found to encourage WPM and WoM, but not RI. Interestingly, the study also found that all three dimensions of brand loyalty (WPM, WoM, and RI) are driven by intellectual experience. These findings are consistent with the findings of the current study which suggests intellectual experience positively influences brand loyalty among SA smartphone users.

The study found that there is a strong and positive relationship between intellectual experience and brand loyalty. The coefficient for intellectual experience ($\beta = 0.149$) was greater than zero, and the p-value (0.048) was less than 0.05, which confirms this relationship. This means that intellectual experience and brand loyalty (attitudinal and behavioural) among SA smartphone users are positively related, as the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

However, Cuong's study in 2020 found the opposite to be true in the motorcycle industry, where there was a low impact of intellectual experience on attitudinal loyalty ($\beta=0.181$). Additionally, the effect size of the relationship between intellectual experience and attitudinal loyalty was small (0.046).

It has been discovered, however, that an intellectual experience has a favourable effect on WPM and WoM (attitudinal loyalty) (Ong et al., 2018). The reason for this is said to be due to consumers' curiosity about the recipes utilised in the preparation of meals in a restaurant setting. This particular discovery is consistent with the present study, which indicates that South African smartphone users favour brands that provide them with a mentally stimulating experience. This is presumably due to the technical

nature of smartphones and the fact that brands which encourage cognitive responses and creativity are highly favoured among those surveyed.

According to the survey's descriptive statistics, the highest-rated item among intellectual experiences was "This brand prioritizes experience through positive thoughts," followed closely by "This brand inspires my curiosity and problem-solving skills." Given that smartphones are intricate devices that encourage creativity and problem-solving, it's no surprise that smartphone brands are vying to captivate and challenge their customers with experiences that stimulate the mind. Brand A and Brand B appear to have hit the mark in delivering intellectual experiences to South African smartphone users, potentially cultivating long-term brand loyalty within the South African smartphone market.

As outlined in Chapter 2, obtaining a new model of smartphone necessitates becoming familiar with its latest features, which entails a type of problem-solving. South African smartphone purchasers value cognitive-stimulating attributes associated with the brand. Additionally, the research revealed a statistically significant divergence in intellectual engagement between users of Brand A smartphones (mean = 3.58 ± 0.76) and Brand B devices (mean = 3.4±0.85), with a p-value of 0.031. This indicates that Brand A users generally exhibit a greater appreciation for intellectual aspects compared to Brand B users.

5.4. Chapter Summary / Conclusion

This study has shown that emotional connections and engagement with brands are of high importance to South African smartphone users. Additionally, users seek cognitive stimulation from their smartphone experiences. The study found a correlation between affective and intellectual experiences and brand loyalty in the South African smartphone industry, specifically supporting hypotheses H2 and H4. This suggests that smartphone brands like Brand A and Brand B could strengthen customer relationships by focusing on these areas. Interestingly, the study also revealed that sensory and behavioural experiences do not impact brand loyalty among South African smartphone users, which is strange, despite efforts made by these smartphone

brands to enhance these aspects in marketing campaigns and in-store displays. This would be an interesting area of consideration for future research.

H1 and H3 hypotheses were not supported by the findings, indicating that neither has a significant relationship with brand loyalty.

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty among smartphone users in South Africa, which is especially significant given the intense competition among smartphone manufacturers in the country. Chapter 2 of the study formulated hypotheses based on prior empirical research by other scholars. The research problem focused on the decline of brand loyalty among South African consumers, as well as the competition among different smartphone manufacturers due to the emergence of new market entrants that pose threats, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to make informed brand choices.

The study found that only two out of the four hypotheses were supported, while the other two were not. These results differ from previous research, where all four brand experience dimensions were found to positively influence brand loyalty. This may be due to the specific context of the study, namely the South African smartphone market. Prior studies cited in this research come from various industries worldwide, including hospitality, motorcycles, smartphones, and motor vehicles, but none from South Africa.

The results showed that emotional and intellectual experiences have a positive and significant impact on brand loyalty. The study, carried out by Brakus et al. in 2009, developed a scale to measure the different dimensions and levels of brand experience evoked by different brands. Interestingly, the study found that Brand A was associated with a feeling of being part of a 'smarter' community, indicating an intellectual brand experience. The study also showed that intellectual experience is more valued by Brand A smartphone users compared to Brand B users. This was evident in the statistically significant difference in intellectual experience between Brand A and Brand B smartphone users. Therefore, the findings of the Brakus et. al (2009) study is relevant to the results of the current study, which shows that intellectual experience is more appreciated among Brand A smartphone users.

The results also revealed that sensory and behavioural experiences had negligible influence on brand loyalty among South African smartphone users. Therefore, it is suggested that both Brand A and Brand B smartphone brands should continue to engage the South African consumer through affective and intellectual brand experiences to foster brand loyalty. However, it is necessary to study the sensory and behavioural aspects of brand experience to better understand how they can be leveraged to achieve brand loyalty.

Interestingly, the study found that despite the efforts made by Brand A and Brand B to promote sensory brand experience through product displays in their stores nationwide, this did not significantly impact brand loyalty among South African smartphone consumers. This suggests that while South African consumers appreciate a sensory brand experience, they do not consider it an important factor in influencing brand loyalty. However, further qualitative research may be necessary to investigate this finding and confirm it.

According to the descriptive statistics related to the participants' sensory experience, the item "this brand appeals to my senses" received the highest rating, followed by "this brand makes a strong positive impression on my visual sense or other senses." These findings suggest that the brand has a significant impact on multiple sensory levels. However, it is important to note that these ratings are solely based on sensory experience and do not necessarily indicate brand loyalty. While sensory brand experiences may influence other consumer behaviours, they may not necessarily lead to brand loyalty in this case.

6.2. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

This study has displayed important managerial implications. Firstly, it suggests that managers should focus on providing memorable brand experiences that are skewed toward intellectual and emotive brand experiences. It further highlights the importance of brand experience in its contribution to marketing success.

Within the context of the SA smartphone market, the rampant competitive nature of the industry necessitates that brands provide unique and memorable brand experiences that will set them apart from their competitors while building trust and cultivating brand loyalty as an eventual outcome.

This study indicates that intellectual and affective brand experiences are the most preferred experiences for SA smartphone users. Therefore, marketers of smartphones should make efforts to better understand why these two types of experiences are preferred more than sensory and behavioural experiences; and should consider approaching their marketing initiatives with the intent of appealing to the smartphone customer through cognitive and emotively stimulating activities, whilst considering more creative ways of leveraging sensory and behavioural brand experiences to positively influence brand loyalty.

Consumers appreciate it when brands appeal to their senses, this is revealed in this study. They want to experience positive feelings, sensations, and good memories about brands, and thus, brands that deliver memorable brand experiences are attractive to them. However, this does not seem to influence their levels of loyalty. The marketing professionals of Brand A and Brand B should discover effective methods to transform favourable sensory encounters into long-term customer loyalty. This involves careful consideration of brand design, packaging, communication, and store environment. By comprehending the subtleties of brand experience, managers can refine their marketing tactics and achieve greater success (Bapat & Thanigan, 2016).

Affective and intellectual experiences being revealed as the preferred and most appreciated types of brand experiences should motivate the organisations of Brand A & B to conceptualise campaigns and brand experiences that resonate with their intended audience on an emotional and intellectual level. Continued efforts towards mentally stimulating brand activities that contribute towards creative thinking and

marketing campaigns that are meaningful and emotionally appealing to the consumer should be maintained as a means to foster brand loyalty.

6.3. Limitations of the study

The scope of the study was limited to South African consumers and focused exclusively on the smartphone industry, specifically Brand A and Brand B. As such, the results cannot be presumed to apply to other smartphone brands. These outcomes should be interpreted solely within the context of this specific industry and brand. However, future studies can replicate this methodology for other brands.

It has been noted by other researchers that study findings cannot be generalised to all industries and brands (Cuong, 2020) (Madeline & Sihombing, 2019). To address this, different samples representative of various countries and industries should be considered. This supports the objective of this study, which is unique in its context and industry.

Although quantitative methods were used in this study, there is an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of respondents' emotions by employing qualitative methods. This is especially important when exploring brand experience and loyalty. By utilising qualitative techniques, misunderstandings can be avoided, and respondents can provide more detailed responses.

6.4. Suggestions for further research

It is widely recognized that brand experience is a subjective concept, as noted by (Brakus et al., 2009). Thus, a qualitative research approach is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the connection between brand experience and brand loyalty.

While this study focused on brand loyalty as the outcome of brand experience among South African smartphone users, there is room for future research to explore other related outcomes of brand experience, such as brand love, trust, or customer satisfaction. In addition, researchers might consider using satisfaction and/or brand trust as a mediator between brand experience and loyalty, as several research findings

indicate that satisfied consumers repeatedly purchase products from the company that provides satisfaction (Başer et al., 2016). Baser (2016) also suggests that consumer satisfaction is a fundamental element of trust, and trust forms a connection between consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Furthermore, future research could investigate the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty for a variety of other smartphone brands, without limiting the scope to only Brand A and Brand B. Huawei was a popular choice that most respondents alluded to. According to SA Stats, Samsung is the leading player in South Africa, with a market share of 49.36%, followed by Brand A and Huawei, with market shares of 17.35% and 16.56%, respectively (StatCounter, 2022). This study can also be replicated to assess brand experience in a service-related sector since it focuses on a tangible product.

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APPENDIX A – Research Cover Letter

Good day,

My name is Rabia Metedad, and I am currently pursuing a Masters in Strategic Marketing at Wits Business School under the supervision of Dr Yvonne K. Saini. As part of my academic requirements, I am conducting a research project on the topic "The influence of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty among smartphone users in South Africa."

The objective of my research is to explore whether brand experience has an impact on brand loyalty among smartphone users in South Africa. I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in an anonymous and confidential survey. This survey will comprise of questions that require you to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with certain statements and will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time.

By completing this questionnaire, you are consenting to participate in this study and confirm being 18 years of age, and above. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Your participation or non-participation in this study will not pose any risk or loss to you.

Please note that the Likert scale has been adopted for this questionnaire. This means that you will be asked to choose from a set of pre-existing ranked scale response options. You will have to rank your response based on the degree to which you agree with the statement, i.e., "Strongly Disagree, Disagree, neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree."

Kindly be assured that all data collected will be kept confidential, stored in a password protected laptop, and will be used solely for academic purposes. Your responses will not be shared with any third party. Thank you for your time and interest in participating in this study.

Should you have any queries, feel free to contact me on 952401@students.wits.ac.za or my supervisor Dr Yvonne K. Saini on yvonne.saini@wits.ac.za

- Yes I give consent
- No I do not give consent

APPENDIX B: Questionnaire for Pilot Study

SECTION A:

Do you consent to participate in this study?

- Yes, I consent.
- No, I do not consent.

Q1: How old are you?

18-24 years old	1
25-34 years old	2
35-44 years old	3
45-54 years old	4
55-64 years old	5
65-70 years old	6

Q2: What gender do you identify as?

Male	1
Female	2
Non-binary/third gender	3
Other	4

Q3: Do you reside in South Africa? Qualifier Question. If the respondent selects no, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey.

Yes	1
No	2

Q4: Which province do you reside in?

Eastern Cape	1
Free State	2
Gauteng	3
KwaZulu Natal	4
Limpopo	5
Mpumalanga	6
Northern Cape	7
North West	8
Western Cape	9

Q5: Which best describes your employment status over the last 6 months?

Working full-time	1
Working part-time	2
Self-employed	3
Unemployed	4
Student	5
Retired	6
Other	7

Q6: Please select which best describes your annual gross income bracket.

R0-R100,000	1
R100,001-R300,000	2
R300,001-R500,000	3
R500,001-R700,000	4
R700,001-R900,000	5
R900,001-R1,200,000	6
R1,200,001 and above	7

Q7: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Primary school	1
Secondary/High school	2
Diploma	3
University degree	4

Postgraduate degree	5

Q8: Do you own a smartphone? Qualifier question. (If the respondent selects no, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey)

Yes	1
No	2

Q9: Select the smartphone brand that you currently own. Qualifier question. (If the respondent selects none of the above, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey)

Apple iPhone	1
Samsung	2
None of the above	3

Q10: For how long have you owned your smartphone brand?

0-1 year	1
1-2 years	2
2-3 years	3
3-5 years	4
More than 5 years	5

SECTION B:

Likert scale questions are observed to be the most common among ranking scale questions and will be used for the questionnaire, with the options "Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree" to choose from. The responses are coded from 1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, where the valuation of the statement increases from 1 to 5 depending on the participant's response.

Q11: Sensory Experience Questions: [involves human senses of touch, smell, taste, vision, and hearing.]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My smartphone makes a strong positive impression on my visual senses.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
When I hold my smartphone, I enjoy the way it feels in my hand.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
My smartphone ringtone has a pleasant sound when it rings.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
My smartphone is not visually attractive.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
My smartphone is the perfect size for me.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q12: Affective Experience Questions: [relates to the customer's emotions, mood, and feeling toward the brand]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have a positive emotional connection with the brand of my smartphone.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. My mood improves when I'm using my smartphone.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. I am emotionally attached to my smartphone brand.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. My smartphone's operating system makes for an enjoyable user experience.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q13: Behavioural Experience Questions:

[impacts the intentions and physical actions of the customer, and integrates behavioural reactions triggered by brand-related stimuli]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My smartphone reminds me of the importance of healthy lifestyle activities such as exercise.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. My smartphone inspires/has inspired me to invest in its accessories.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. I chose my smartphone brand because it is a popular brand choice.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. I would change my smartphone brand if it were to receive negative product reviews.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q14: Intellectual Experience Questions:

[appeals to the customer's intellect with the objective of creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively.]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I engage in a lot of thinking when I use my smartphone.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. My smartphone's technical features are helpful in stimulating my problem-solving ability.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. My smartphone creatively stimulates my thinking.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. It is important to me that my smartphone engages my thinking.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

SECTION C:

Q15: Attitudinal Loyalty Questions:

[relates to how people think about/identify with a brand or company and their preference thereof, over alternatives]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would choose the same smartphone brand again.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. I chose this brand because it is the best choice for me.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would still choose it over other brands.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. I strongly relate to what my smartphone brand stands for.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. I feel a stronger connection to my smartphone brand than to its competitors.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q16: Behavioural Loyalty Questions:

[Also known as purchase loyalty, it reflects what people intend to or actually do (action) with a brand. Behavioural Loyalty entails repeated purchases of a brand.]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I always choose this brand of smartphone over similar alternatives.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. If the price of my smartphone brand increases, I would be willing to switch to a different brand.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. I would happily recommend my smartphone brand to my friends.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

4. Upon my next smartphone purchase, I plan on selecting a different smartphone brand.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

APPENDIX C: Research Instrument - Questionnaire for Main Study

SECTION A:

Do you consent to participate in this study?

- Yes, I consent.
- No, I do not consent.

Q1: How old are you?

18-24 years old	1
25-34 years old	2
35-44 years old	3
45-54 years old	4
55-64 years old	5
65 and older	6

Q2: What gender do you identify as?

Male	1
Female	2
Non-binary/third gender	3
Other	4

Q3: Do you reside in South Africa? Qualifier Question. If the respondent selects no, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey.

Yes	1
No	2

Q4: Which best describes your employment status over the last 6 months?

Working full-time	1
Working part-time	2
Self-employed	3
Unemployed	4
Student	5
Retired	6
Other	7

Q5: Please select which best describes your annual gross income bracket.

R0-R60,000	1
R60,001-R120,000	2
R120,001-R180,000	3
R180,001-R250,000	4
R250,001-R500,000	5
R500,001-R750,000	6
R750,001-R950,000	7
R950,001 and above	8

Q6: What is your highest level of education obtained?

Primary school	1
Grade 12 (Matric)	2
Undergraduate degree or diploma	3
Postgraduate 1 (honours or post-graduate diploma)	4
Postgraduate 2 (Masters)	5
Postgraduate 3 (Doctorate)	

Q7: Do you own a smartphone? Qualifier question. (If the respondent selects no, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey)

Yes	1

No	2

Q8: Select the smartphone brand that you currently own. Qualifier question. (If the respondent selects none of the above, they will be automatically dropped out of the survey)

Apple iPhone	1
Samsung	2
None of the above	3

Q9: Which smartphone model do you own?

Samsung Galaxy S23	1
Samsung Galaxy S22	2
Samsung Galaxy Z-fold	3
Apple iPhone 15	4
Apple iPhone 14	5
Apple iPhone 13	6
Other not mentioned here.	7

Q10: Are you a contract or prepaid customer?

Contract customer	1
Prepaid customer	2

Q11: How often do you change your smartphone?

Yearly	1
After 2 years	2
After 3 years	3
After 4 years	4
After 5 years or longer	5

Q12: Have you changed your smartphone in the past 3 months? (reasons can include a new purchase or contract upgrade)

Yes	1
No	2

Q13: For how long have you owned your smartphone *brand?

Yearly	1
1-2 years	2
2- 3 years	3
3-5 years	4
More than 5 years	5

SECTION B:

Likert scale questions are observed to be the most common among ranking scale questions and will be used for the questionnaire, with the options "Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree" to choose from. The responses are coded from 1 to 5, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, where the valuation of the statement increases from 1 to 5 depending on the participant's response. (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree)

Q14: Sensory Experience Indicators:

[relates to the five human senses]

Observed Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. (Brakus et al., 2009) (Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way. (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020; Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. This brand appeals (does not appeal) to my senses. (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. This brand focuses on experience through positive senses. (Ong et al., 2018)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q15: Affective Experience Indicators: [relates to the customer's emotions, mood, and feeling toward the brand]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. This brand induces positive feelings and sentiments. (Brakus et al., 2009) (Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

2. I have strong positive emotions for this brand (Brakus et al., 2009) (Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. This brand is an emotional brand. (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. This brand focuses on experience through positive emotions. (Ong et al., 2018)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q16: Behavioural Experience Indicators:

[impacts the intentions and physical actions of the customer, and integrates behavioural reactions triggered by brand-related stimuli]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand. (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. This brand results in bodily experiences. (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. This brand is action oriented (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. This brand tries to remind me of activities I can do. (Ong et al., 2018) (Choi et al., 2011)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. This brand tries to make me think of my lifestyle (Ong et al., 2018)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. This brand focuses on experience through positive activities. (Ong et al., 2018)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q17: Intellectual Experience Indicators:

[appeals to the customer's intellect with the objective of creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customers creatively.]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I engage in a lot of positive thinking when I encounter this brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. This brand makes me think (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem-solving (Brakus et al., 2009; Cuong, 2020) (Ong et al., 2018) (Walter et al., 2013) (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. This brand focuses on experience through positive thoughts (Ong et al., 2018).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

SECTION C:

Q18: Attitudinal Loyalty Indicators:
[relates to how people think about/identify with a brand or company and their preference thereof, over alternatives]

Observed Variables	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. I commit not to change this brand though there are many other options (Cuong, 2020).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. I am willing to pay more over other brands to get this particular brand (Cuong, 2020).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. I will always use this brand (Cuong, 2020).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. I encourage friends and relatives to use this brand (Zeng et al., 2019).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. I say positive things about my brand to others (Zeng et al., 2019).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. I recommend this brand to anyone who seeks advice (Zeng et al., 2019).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7. I use this brand because it is the best choice for me (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
8. I consider myself to be a loyal user of this smartphone brand (Choi et al., 2011).	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q19: Behavioural Loyalty Indicators:
[known as purchase loyalty, it reflects what people intend to or actually do (action) with a brand. Behavioural Loyalty entails repeated purchases of a brand.]

Observed Variables	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I will use this brand in the future. (Cuong, 2020)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
2. I intend to continue purchasing this brand. (Cuong, 2020)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
3. I do not buy other brands If this brand is available. (Cuong, 2020)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
4. I always buy this brand instead of other brands that offer similar products.(Cuong, 2020)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
5. I consider this brand to be my first choice for a smartphone. (Zeng et al., 2019)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
6. I would try new products that are provided by this brand. (Zeng et al., 2019)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
7. I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available at the store (Zeng et al., 2019)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**