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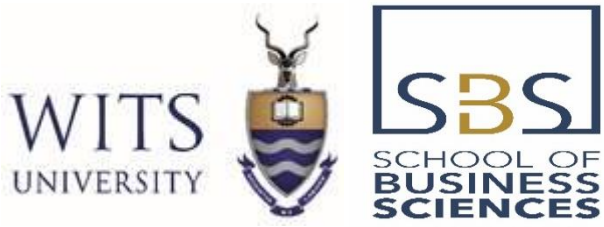
Sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity: a study towards a unified brand equity model in the South African grocery industry

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University of the Witwatersrand



Sources and Outcomes of Grocery Retailer Brand Equity: A Study Towards a Unified Brand Equity Model in the South African Grocery Industry

A thesis submitted.

by

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in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) in MARKETING

at the

School of Business Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

under the supervision of

Prof Helen Duh

2021

DECLARATION

I, Oliver Pwaka declare that the research thesis, entitled, Sources and Outcomes of Retailer Brand Equity in the South African Grocery Sector: A Study towards a Unified Retailer Brand Equity Model, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is my own original work. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted before for any other degree in any other institution.



Signature

Oliver Pwaka

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, the late Jona and Erisi Pwaka for their guidance during my early academic stages and for their encouragement that instilled the love for educational matters in my nerves. It was tough for them to accomplish this task of making learning a culture in me. I hope Jona Pwaka is happy in the graves as he notices his wishes being accomplished even without his presence.

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I would like to give full compliments and acknowledgment to various people who made this PHD journey a reality.

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I acknowledge the Marketing Department at the University of Witwatersrand for their assistance in academic subject, School of Business Sciences for arranging workshops and networking that facilitated discussion forums with other PHD Students.

I acknowledge my family for having patience with me throughout the course of my study. This acknowledgement is extended to my wife Priscillah for the moral support, Naledi for keeping order to my study desk, Takunda for helping with printing especially when the family printer is jammed and Tatenda for giving encouragement and holy prayers.

ABSTRACT

Globally, the top 250 grocery retailers' aggregate sales revenue reached US $4.53 trillion in 2018, making contributions to employment and GDP. In South Africa, about nine percent sector contribution to the overall GDP is made by the grocery retailer industry. Despite the micro, macro and international environmental challenges that businesses face, the South African grocery retailer industry is expanding its footprints into other African countries. Typically, Shoprite, which was one of the leading grocery retailer brands in 2016, had a massive network of 2276 outlets of which 316 of these outlets were located regionally outside the South African borders. An analysis of the SPAR brand similarly shows that it has 13,500 stores located in 35 counties across various continents. The Pick n Pay brand has 1 795 stores across the African Continent. Even though Woolworths South Africa has less stores - 712 stores in South Africa and in 10 African countries, it was the 2019 number 11 top South African most valuable brands and the number 1 most valuable grocery retailer brand in the country. Woolworths South Africa (SA) has therefore become a powerhouse brand. In 2019 for example, Woolworths' brand value was $1.1 trillion. This thus placed Woolworths SA as the number 1 most valued grocery retailer brand in South Africa. The sources and outcomes of Woolworths high brand value or brand equity needed examination.

The current generic brand equity models do not accommodate retailer industry specific characteristics. It is reported that the most commonly used customer-based brand equity (CBBE) models such as the Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE models measuring sources of brand equity are too abstract, simplistic, generic and fail to incorporate retail-specific dimensions. Furthermore, these CBBE models do not provide brand equity outcomes. To examine the underlying sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity, there was need to integrate both the retailer specific aspects or dimensions with the classical brand equity models.

Thus, the objectives of this study was to integrate elements of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, Yoo and Donthu's (2002) model, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE customer response model, and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity model to develop a unified grocery retailer equity model for the examination of the sources (brand awareness, brand image, retailer sincerity, retailer excitement, retailer competence, perceived quality, customer service, price, trust, distribution, brand loyalty), and customer-based outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intention) of Woolworths' brand equity in the South African grocery retailer sector. Data was

quantitatively collected from 480 South African consumers in all age (18-65 years old) and racial groups, financial and educational backgrounds. The data was analysed with the SMARTPLS-Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). After testing and confirming the measurement model (outer model), which assesses construct reliability, validity and model fit, the structural model (inner model) was used to test the hypotheses.

The results revealed that after brand awareness significantly impacts customer brand excitement, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty, and the loyalty is significantly impacted by price, trust and distribution, it in turn strongly and significantly drives brand equity. The sources that directly impacted Woolworths' brand equity were brand excitement, brand awareness and loyalty, while perceived quality and brand image did not. The significant outcomes of brand equity were the hypothesized brand preference and repurchase intention. A test of mediation revealed that brand equity mediated the relationships between brand awareness, customer brand excitement, brand loyalty and brand preference. Brand equity also mediated in the relationships between brand awareness, customer brand excitement, brand loyalty and repurchase intention. The unified model explained 60.3% of brand loyalty, 61.1% of brand equity, 71.7% of brand preference and 54.2% of repurchase intention. These are all strong explanatory powers, especially in in a consumer behaviour study. Theoretically, the developed and tested unified conceptual model can be used by other retailers to examine the sources and outcomes of their brand equity. Practically the identified brand equity sources and outcomes can guide grocery retailer brand management on ways to enhance both customer and retailer value.

Key Words: Customer-based brand equity, brand knowledge structure, brand personality, brand loyalty, retailer brand equity, grocery retailers, brand preference, repurchase intentions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BC	Before Christ
CBBE	Consumer Based Brand Equity
CB-SEM	Covariance-Based SEM
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CSI	Consumer Satisfaction Index
FBBE	Financial-Based Brand Equity
EBBE	Employee-Based Brand Equity
EDLP	Every-Day-Low-Price
FBIC	Fortis Benefits Insurance Company
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness-Of-Fit Index
H	Hypothesis
Hilo	High Low
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations
LSM	Living Standards Measure
NFI	Normed Fit Index
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares SEM

PWC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
Q^2	Cross-Validated Redundancy
R^2	Coefficient of Determination
RBE	Retailer Brand Equity
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
RMSR	Root Mean Square Residual
SA	South Africa
SBBE	Sales Based Brand Equity
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SOCO	Selling Orientation–Customer Orientation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
SV	Shared Variance
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USD	United State Dollar
X^2	Chi-Square

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Retailers' brands are increasing featuring in the list of top global brands. For example, retailers like Amazon, Zara, H&M and IKEA were rated amongst the top forty global brands in 2020 by Interbrand (2020). In South Africa, retailers such as Woolworths, Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Mr Price and Clicks were ranked in 2020 in the top 25 brands. Woolworths maintained its ranking in 2020 as the top retailer brand (Brandz, 2020). Being a top brand generates brand equity, which is "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service" (Baldauf et al., 2009: 439). Brand equity has strategic importance to brand owners (including retailers) because strong brand equity is associated with, or guarantees selective attention, brand preference, purchase, brand loyalty, profits, price premium, market share, shareholder value, and consumers are likely to include the brand in their buying consideration sets (Aaker, 1991; Anselmsson, Burt & Tunca, 2017; Datta, Ailawadi, & van Heerde, 2017). Considering these benefits, researchers measure the sources and outcomes of brand equity to manage it better. Managing brand equity is becoming difficult, especially as customer-value propositions are ever-changing, posing challenges to organisations' capacity to predict what are going to be the next emerging brand-equity drivers to command the most impact on consumer value and purchase-related consumer behaviour (Green & Harney, 2017).

In the grocery retailing sector, empirical studies note the prevalence of unpredictable circumstances, such as shifts in shopping behaviours and consumer sentiments, product and service expectations and needs, and the desire for personalisation (Kalscheur, 2020). For example, some consumers prefer retailer brands whose products, services and values align with their values or resemble them (Jara & Cliquet, 2012). These impact how consumers respond to the brand and complicate how retailer brand equity strategies are developed and implemented (Jara & Cliquet, 2012; O'Connell, 2012; Maruyama & Wu, 2014; Verbeke, Hung & de Kok, 2016). Nevertheless, effective brand equity strategies need to be developed and implemented, considering the expected flow of financial and non-financial benefits. This starts by measuring the sources and outcomes of brand equity (Keller, 2013).

Researchers have predominantly used Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE) models to measure the sources of brand equity. Both models postulate that brand equity emanates from brand knowledge structure which comprises brand awareness and brand image. Aaker's (1991) CBBE further suggest that brand equity is driven by perceived quality, brand loyalty and proprietary assets. However, because Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE models lack marketing factors and do not suggest the outcomes of CBBE, even though both authors agree that streams of benefits flow from CBBE, researchers like Yoo and Donthu (2002) and Buil and Martınez and Chernatony (2013) have provided marketing factors and CBBE outcomes respectively. While acknowledging the usefulness of these models, Jara and Cliquet (2012) and Anselmsson and (2017) worry that the models should be modified and enriched to be industry and product category-specific. For grocery retailers to understand the sources and outcomes of CBBE therefore, a unified model of the sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity needs to be developed and tested. This study, therefore, integrated aspects of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, Yoo and Donthu's (2002) model, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model, and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity model to develop a unified grocery retailer equity model for the examination of the sources (brand awareness, brand image, retailer brand sincerity, retailer brand excitement, retailer brad competence, perceived quality, customer service, price, trust, distribution, brand loyalty), and outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intention) of Woolworths' brand equity in the South African grocery retailer sector.

This chapter introduces the study by laying out the study's background, followed by the research problem, questions and objectives. Furthermore, the chapter provides significance, preliminary literature and research methodology of the study. The chapter ends with the organisation of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

The grocery retail industry has always been regarded as a central pillar for supporting world citizen life (PWC Report, 2016). This is evident by the fourteen percent sector contribution to the overall South African GDP in 2018 (SA Stat, 2019). The GDP contribution from the grocery retailer sector of South Africa in 2018 reached US $52.2 billion (USDA Report, 2019). Globally, the top 250 grocery retailers' aggregate sales revenue reached US $4.53 trillion in 2018 (Deloitte Report: Global Powers of Retailing 2019). The retail sector not only contributes to the GDP both locally and globally, but customers also rely heavily on the grocery retailer for their daily basic needs and satisfaction, thus making this sector a critical element in the

daily life of consumers (PWC Report, 2016). The high contribution of the grocery retail industry to the global GDP makes this sector an attractive unit of analysis by both academicians and practitioners. However, preliminary analysis shows that the grocery retail market structure both locally and globally is somehow complicated (Luca & Pegan, 2014; Saha, 2015) due to technological innovation, growing competition between online and offline retailers, dynamic consumer preferences and increasing networked global population that inflict uncertainty in predicting the future customer trading trends (Theodoridis, 2009; Chaturvedi, Martich, Ruwadi & Ulker, 2015).

Despite these challenges, the South African grocery retailer industry is aggressively expanding its footprints into other countries. For example, Shoprite, one of the leading grocery retailer brands in 2016, had a massive network of 2276 outlets, of which 316 of these outlets were located regionally outside the South African borders (Shoprite Report, 2017). An analysis of the SPAR brand similarly shows that it had 13,500 stores in 35 counties across various continents by 2018 (SPAR Annual Report, 2018). The Pick n Pay brand had 1 795 stores across the African continent by 2019 (Pick n Pay Integrated Annual Report, 2019). Even though Woolworths South Africa has only 712 stores in South Africa and 10 African countries (Woolworths Holdings Limited, 2019), it was according to BrandZ^{TM} (2019), the 2019 number 11 top South African most valuable brand and the number 1 most valuable grocery retail brand in the country. In 2020, Woolworths maintained its number one position as the best retail brand in South Africa (BrandZ^{TM}, 2020). From these performances, examining the sources and outcomes of Woolworths' high brand value or brand equity for effective and sustainable brand equity strategy development and implementation becomes important.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

Based on the research background, two main research problems categorically drive this study: Firstly, from a practical or contextual perspective, the applicability of the commonly used brand equity models, such as the Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE models to the retail industry sector is questionable. There are concerns that these two models are proposed for generic and may not accommodate retailer industry-specific characteristics (Jara & Cliquet, 2012; Christodoulides, Cadogan, & Veloutsou, 2015; Cifci et al., 2016). Specifically, Anselmsson et al. (2017) are concerned that the existing CBBE models are too abstract, simplistic, and generic and fail to incorporate retail-specific dimensions. Datta et al. (2017) also worry that not all dimensions of existing CBBE models may be applicable in other contexts. For example, Nam et al. (2011) found that the commonly used Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE models do not apply to

service-dominant brands because of the unique characteristics of services brands. In addition, the applications of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model produced low discriminant validity in the service and retailer sectors on some of the brand equity dimensions of brand awareness and brand association (Datta, Ailawadi, & van Heerde, 2017). These concerns create a need to develop or modify existing CBBE models that are not only applicable to the retailing sector but should also inform retailer brand owners of some of the outcomes they should expect from their brand-building efforts. The latter is particularly important because models delineating both the sources and outcomes of brand equity are limited (Jara & Cliquet, 2012; Buil et al., 2013).

From a theoretical perspective and because the retailer brand equity is an emerging concept, studies on its sources and outcomes have been fragmented (Dangi, 2016). To examine a range of underlying sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity, Anselmsson et al. (2017) suggest a need to integrate both the specific retailer brand equity aspects with the dimensions of classical brand equity models. Integrated retailer brand equity models are not only scant (Dangi, 2016), but they need to be unified to capture a broader range of brand equity sources and outcomes, and which can apply to various types of retailers, including grocery retailers. This approach is particularly important because some grocery retailers are becoming powerhouse brands with much brand value compared to other retailers and manufacturer brands (Swoboda et al., 2016). Identifying the sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity is also important because retailers' brand values are rising exponentially. For example, a grocery retailer, Woolworths South Africa (SA), has become a powerhouse brand. Its brand value was $1.1 trillion in 2019. This increase in brand value has placed Woolworths SA as the number 1 most valued grocery retail brand in South Africa, as aforementioned (BrandZ^{TM}, 2019).

1.4 Research Objectives

This section presents the primary, empirical and theoretical objectives as outlined below.

1.4.1 Primary Objective

This study integrates elements of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE model, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model, and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity to develop a unified model for the examination of the sources and outcomes of Woolworths' brand equity in the South African grocery retailer sector. From this primary objective, the following theoretical and empirical objectives are derived.

1.4.2 Theoretical Objectives

1. To review literature on the nature, number, market performances, and challenges of grocery retailers globally, in Africa and South Africa (Chapter 2).
2. To discuss literature on the conceptualisation, antecedents, and outcomes of retailer brand equity (chapter 3).
3. To review literature and report on the theories and models providing the sources and outcomes of CBBE in general and retail CBBE in particular (Chapter 4).
4. To identify models relevant to the current study and develop a unified retailer brand equity model with accompanying hypotheses (Chapter 5).
5. To review research methods literature and discuss the appropriate data collection and analysis methods for this study (Chapter 6).

1.4.3 Empirical Objectives

1. To examine the impact of retailer brand awareness on brand image, perceived quality, brand personality dimensions (brand competence, brand excitement, brand sincerity), brand loyalty and Woolworths' overall brand equity in the South African grocery industry (Chapter 7).
2. To determine the extent to which sources such as retailer brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand personality (brand competence, brand excitement, brand sincerity), and brand loyalty impact Woolworths' overall brand equity in the South African grocery industry (Chapter 7).
3. To examine the impact of customer service, price, brand trust, and distribution on Woolworth's overall brand loyalty (Chapter 7).
4. To assess the extent to which Woolworths' overall brand equity impact outcomes such as brand preference and repurchase intention (Chapter 7).
5. To test the mediating role of overall retailer brand equity in the relationships between the sources and the outcomes of retailer brand equity.
6. To develop and test a unified retailer brand equity model in the grocery retail industry (Chapter 7).

7. To discuss the results from testing the hypotheses in the unified model and make recommendations (Chapter 8).

1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer four core research questions:

1) Which sources (i.e., brand awareness, brand image, retailer brand sincerity, retailer brand excitement, retailer brand competence, perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty) make the most significant impact on Woolworths' overall brand equity?

2) How much do Woolworths' offerings (i.e., customer service, price, trust and distribution) influence brand loyalty, which is a direct predictor of brand equity?

3) Which are the strongest outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intention) from Woolworths' brand equity?

4) Does overall retailer brand equity mediate between its sources and outcomes?

1.6 Significance and Contribution of the study

The study contributes both practically and theoretically. Theoretically, research in the brand equity field focused much on brand equity sources and their interrelationships and rarely link the sources to overall brand equity and resultant outcomes (Amat & Valls, 2010; Jara & Cliquet, 2012). This study enriches literature in the field of brand management and consumer behaviour by developing a unified model whose empirical testing exposes varied sources, their predictive power on overall brand equity and the resultant outcomes of brand equity. It also theoretically contributes by empirically testing a grocery retailer model with a prominent grocery retail brand. By testing the model, it enriches and extends traditional brand equity models. Furthermore, the developed unified grocery retailer brand equity model can be applied and tested in the broader retailer context and for other product categories.

The study practically offers grocery retailer management insights into how much brand efforts and marketing mix offerings are required for generating brand loyalty and brand equity, especially in the current era of limited operating budgets and growing competition (Christodoulides et al., 2015). The practical guidelines assist the marketing managers to devise appropriate and new customer-based brand

equity strategies, especially after considering the myriads of financial and non-financial benefits to be gained. For example, retailer brand equity is an essential competitive advantage source and significantly improves customer sentiments towards grocery retailers (Anselmsson et al., 2017). Brand equity and loyalty (Buil et al., 2013) produce other benefits such as increased brand selection, brand inclusion in customer consideration set, increased brand preference, market share and profits. Considering these benefits, this study guides further brand-building efforts by informing brand managers of the most influential sources or drivers of brand loyalty, brand equity and any of the possible outcomes in terms of repurchase intentions and brand preference.

1.7 Preliminary Literature Review and Conceptual Model

The research process applied in this study followed a two-folded process. The first stage was the reviewing of literature on the sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity. The literature review was done to relate the current research study with previous studies on retail brand equity in general and grocery retail brand equity in particular. The second stage was the formulation of the research roadmap used to carry out the empirical investigations. This stage included a description of the research philosophy, research design, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis considerations. This section starts with a preliminary literature review, mainly on the underpinning models and theories useful to this study, followed by brief discussions on the research processes.

1.7.1 Models of Brand Equity Useful in this Study

The section discusses grounding theories and models pertinent to the sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity. Information was obtained from academic articles, journals, renowned books, conference material, and seminal work related to retailer brand equity sources and outcomes. The models that guided the conceptualisation of this study included Aaker's (1991) CBBE, Yoo and Donthu's (2002 brand equity model, the grocery retailer brand equity model by Jara and Cliquet (2012), brand equity model by Buil and Martınez and Chernatony (2013) and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity. These models delineate how aspects of brand-related (Aaker, 1991; Buil et al., 2013), marketing-related (Yoo & Donthu, 2002) and retailer-related (Jara & Cliquet, 2012; Anselmsson et al., 2017) CBBE sources impact overall CBBE and drive consumer responses or outcomes (Anselmsson et

al., 2017; Jara & Cliquet, 2012; Buil et al., 2013) of CBBE. The following sub-sections briefly discuss these models.

1.7.1.1 Aaker's (1991) Brand Equity Model

Aaker (1991) brand equity model is a multidimensional model that postulates that brand equity is made of five dimensions that may be assets or liabilities. The dimensions are perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association, and proprietary brand assets (Veloutsou, Christodoulides & de Charnatory, 2013). Aaker (991, p. 39, 61 and 109) defines brand awareness as "the ability of a potential buyer to recognise or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category", brand loyalty as "the attachment that a customer has to a brand" and brand associations as "anything linked in memory to a brand". Brand associations are appreciated when it links the brand with customers' unique lifestyle and self-concept. It emotionally attaches customers to a brand that portrays a unique character and have meaning in the customer's life (Alhaddad, 2014). Perceived quality is defined as "consumers' subjective perception of a product's attributes" (Calvo-Porral et al., 2015:99) and also as "the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority" (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 3). The superiority is based on how the customers view the actual performance relative to expectations.

The model is highly comprehensive as it includes both perpetual factors (perceived quality and brand awareness) and customer behavioural factors (brand loyalty and brand association) (Beristain & Zorrilla, 2011; Veloutsou, Christodoulides & de Charnatory, 2013; Diallo et al., 2015; Rodrigues & Francisco, 2016). The proprietary brand assets factor is not related to a customer perspective; hence it is usually left out in this research study where the approach was customer-based. Thus, the proprietary brand assets factor was disregarded in the current study. Aaker (1991) see brand equity as the value and brand experience consumers gain from using brands. Brand value is usually a result of an intricate and complex interaction of composite factors related to brand awareness, brand associations/image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Based on the interaction of these sources of brand equity, a differential value is created in the customers' minds, which primarily determines the ability of brand owners to acquire and retain customers (Nyadzayo, Matanda & Ewing, 2011; Veloutsou, Christodoulides & de Charnatory, 2013). Considering these merits, the current study adapts Aaker's CBBE model and examines how and the extent to which its dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations or brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty constructs lead to overall brand equity.

1.7.1.2 Yoo and Donthu's (2002) brand equity model

Yoo and Donthu's (2002) brand equity model is one of the highly referenced CBBE models in the brand equity literature (Chen, Su & Lin, 2011; Buil, Martınez & Chernatony, 2013; Gurhan-Canli, Hayran & Sarial-Abi, 2016; Datta, Ailawadi & Heerde, 2017; Pham, 2019). Such extensive referencing acknowledges the model's contributions in brand equity studies and the acceptance of the model by academicians. The model's attraction stems from its inclusion of the marketing 4 Ps (price, store image, distribution, advertising spend, and price deals), which are regarded as the essential toolbox of any marketing strategy and are positioned in the model as having relationships with brand equity dimensions of brand awareness/associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (Datta, Ailawadi, & Heerde, 2017). These dimensions are from Aaker's (1991) CBBE model and are postulated by Yoo and Donthu (2002) to be having a direct effect on overall brand equity. Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE model puts into perspective the effects of traditional marketing strategies with reference to brand equity building processes, thereby expanding the traditional dimensions of brand equity. The current study borrows the idea of the marketing 4Ps from Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE model and hypothesises that they would lead to brand loyalty as suggested by Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) model.

1.7.1.3 Brand Equity Model of Buil and Martınez and Chernatony (2013)

Brand Equity Model of Buil and Martınez and Chernatony (2013) model is characterised by a hierarchical application of the traditional brand equity dimensions of Aaker (1991). It advocates that there is differential importance of Aaker's (1991) brand equity dimensions and that each dimension correlates with each other and contributes at different stages of brand equity building. The model concurs with Keller's (1993) brand equity model by emphasising that brand knowledge, comprising brand awareness and brand image, is the starting point of building brand equity. The process starts with brand awareness, and once it has been achieved, the brand equity building process moves to the next higher level where brand awareness is no longer a critical performance objective, but perceived quality and brand association are then regarded as the primary sources of brand equity (Alhaddad, 2014; Buil et al., 2013).

In tandem with the hierarchical structure, brand loyalty aspects take the next centre stage in developing brand equity (Alhaddad, 2014; Buil et al., 2013). At this brand equity level, what is valuable is the implementation of loyalty programs such as offering great discounts, rebate programs and classification of customers and the differential provision of services that ensure that customers are motivated to climb

up the customer loyalty ladder that starts from a mere brand supporter to the brand advocate level. This process has a direct influence on brand equity leveraging processes (Alhaddad, 2014). When brand equity is achieved, related outcomes of brand equity such as brand preference, purchase intentions, price premium, and brand extension are achieved in the customer purchasing disposition (Buil et al., 2013).

The model brings a critical and highly valuable contribution to brand equity literature. Firstly, it adopts a traditional hierarchical nature of analysing a brand equity model that simplifies evaluating the causal associations of brand equity dimensions (Balaji, 2012). Secondly, the model's analysis follows the cognitive, affective, and conative stages of brand adoption. Thus, it integrates smoothly with other robust contemporary brand theories (Hillyer, 2004). First, the model postulates that brand awareness brings brand knowledge and information to customers. Second, the perceived quality and brand associations give rise to brand loyalty, and finally, these processes can lead to brand preference, purchase intentions that will ultimately lead to action, the actual purchase (Kaufmann, Loureiro & Manarioti, 2016). The model's stages match well with consumer learning processes in which consumers brand awareness is the first action used to generate attitudes constructs such as perceived quality and brand associations. A favourable attitude towards the brand is a predictor of customers' propensity to invest their future time willingly, money, and commitment (Kaufmann, Loureiro & Manarioti, 2016). With the right attitude in place, brand loyalty is built that will impact brand equity. The current study follows this idea of first building brand equity with awareness and examining how the resultant brand equity dimensions lead to overall brand equity and its consequential outcomes, such as brand preference and repurchase intentions.

While the traditional brand equity models add enormous value in brand equity studies, gaps in explaining brand equity in specific domains such as the service and retailing are prevalent. For example, the typical nature of service brands due to their characteristics of intangibility and inseparability bring in uniqueness. Due to this gap, retailer brand equity models are being developed to fill up the various contextual gaps. Examples of such retailer-based brand equity models relevant to this study are Jara and Cliquet (2012) and Anselmsson et al. (2017). They were chosen because they considered the neglected idea of measuring both the sources and outcomes of brand equity and applied the retailer situational context in their studies.

1.7.1.4 Retailer Brand Equity Model by Jara and Cliquet (2012)

Buil et al. (2013), Jara and Cliquet (2012) conceptualised their model with the idea that brand equity building starts with brand awareness creation and examining how the awareness impacts brand equity

dimensions such as perceived quality and brand image was analysed. Jara and Cliquet (2012) added some retailers' dimensions, such as retailer brand personality, brand service and store service. They further examined how these dimensions lead to brand equity outcomes in terms of consumer responses. Unlike Buil et al. (2013) that examined the consumer responses multi-dimensionally in terms of brand preference, repurchase intention, willingness to pay a premium price and brand extensions, Jara and Cliquet (2012) examined the brand equity outcome of consumer responses uni-dimensionally. They tested their model in a French grocery retailer market. The principal value of Jara and Cliquet's (2012) model is the model's ability to consider and portray sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity. The current study borrows Jara and Cliquet's (2012) ideas of retailer customer services, brand personality and consumer responses. However, the current study examined consumer responses in terms of two dimensions of brand preference and repurchase intentions as provided by Buil et al. (2013).

1.7.1.5 Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) Retailer Brand Equity Model

Concerned that little is known about retailer brand equity and that the current brand equity models "are too abstract for understanding the uniqueness of the retail industry and too simplistic to understand the interrelationships among the dimensions in the retailer brand equity building process", Anselmsson et al. (2017: 39) developed a retailer brand equity model. Guided by Keller's (2013) brand resonance model, and also in line with Jara and Cliquet (2012), Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) model propose that retailer brand equity sources start with brand awareness. For retailers, the awareness is built around retailers' offerings or marketing mix in terms of product quality, pricing policy, physical store attributes and customer service. It is proposed that these factors are built from brand awareness creation, and the factors, in turn, lead to consumer responses such as brand trust, a proposed driver of brand loyalty. The current study adapts Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) model by adding distribution and integrating Buil et al.'s (2013) idea that brand loyalty leads to overall brand equity, which drives outcomes of brand preference and repurchase intention.

1.7.2 This Study's Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

From the integration of ideas from Aaker's (1991), Yoo and Donthu's (2002), Jara and Cliquet's (2012), Buil et al. (2013) and Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) models, a unified retailer brand equity model (Figure 5.1) was developed for this study. Figure 5.1 posits that when brand awareness is created, other sources of retailer brand equity such as brand image, brand personality (retailer brand sincerity, brand excitement and brand competence), perceived quality, customer service, price, trust, distribution and brand loyalty

will be generated. Thus, brand awareness will either impact overall brand equity directly or indirectly through these sources. The overall brand equity will, in turn, drive outcomes of repurchase intention and brand preference. Thus, the conceptual model has overall retailer brand equity playing a mediating role between the sources of and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity.

Overall, the proposed conceptual model, suggested five categories of hypotheses: 1) hypotheses that tested relationships among the sources of grocery retailer brand equity as Buil et al. (2013) did, 2) hypotheses that tested the extent to which sources of grocery retailer brand equity impact overall retailer brand equity, 3) hypotheses that tested how much the retailer offerings in terms of customer service, price, distribution and trust lead to brand loyalty, 4) hypotheses that tested the mediation role of overall brand equity in the relationship between sources (brand image, brand awareness, three brand personality dimensions, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity (repurchase intention and brand preference) and 5) hypotheses that examined the impact of overall brand equity on the outcomes of repurchase intention and brand preference. Thus, the hypotheses that were tested were as follows:

$H_{1:}$ Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand sincerity.

H_2: Retailer brand awareness has a positive influence on Woolworths' brand excitement.

H_3: Retailer brand awareness impacts Woolworths' brand competence positively.

H_4: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' customer perceived quality.

H_5: Woolworths' retailer brand image will be positively impacted by its brand awareness.

H_6: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths’ brand loyalty.

H_7: Customer service positively influences Woolworths' brand loyalty.

H_8: Woolworths' prices positively influence its brand loyalty.

H_9: Customers' trust in Woolworths’ brand positively influences its brand loyalty.

H_{10}: Woolworths' distribution network positively influences its brand loyalty.

H_{11}: Woolworths' brand image has a positive impact on its brand loyalty.

H_{12}: The brand awareness of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{13}: Woolworths' brand sincerity positively impacts its overall brand equity.

$H_{14:}$ Woolworths' brand excitement has a positive impact on its overall grocery brand equity.

$H_{15:}$ Woolworths' brand competence has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{16}: The perceived quality of Woolworths brand positively impacts its overall brand equity.

H_{17}: The brand image of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{18}: Woolworths grocery retailer's brand loyalty has a positive impact on overall grocery retailer brand equity.

H_{19}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact its brand preference.

H_{20}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact repurchase intention.

$H_{21a\text{-}g}$: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationships between its sources (brand awareness [a], brand sincerity [b], brand excitement [c], brand competence [d], perceived quality [e], brand image [f], brand loyalty [g]) and its outcome of brand preference.

$H_{22a\text{-}g}$: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationships between its sources (brand awareness [a], brand sincerity [b], brand excitement [c], brand competence [d]perceived quality [e], brand image [f], brand loyalty [g]) and its outcome of repurchase intention.

The following section an overview of the research methodology applied to test the hypotheses.

1.8 An Overview of the Research Methods Used to Test Hypotheses.

This section briefly discusses the research philosophy, the research design, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods.

1.8.1 Research Philosophy

Guided by the research problem and objectives, this study employed a positivist research philosophy in which scientific techniques were applied to uncover absolute facts about cause-and-effect relationships in

a physical world and human social contexts. The positivist philosophy allows for objectivism (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Positivism is anchored not only on objectivism alone, but it creates a situation whereby data is collected from many respondents, which can achieve a sample that closely represents the population (Creswell, 2013; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Over and above that, the positivist philosophy ensures that research is driven by theories and models that are tested deductively and quantitatively (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). With this possibility, this study's research objective of testing a model of the sources (independent variables) and outcomes (dependent variables) of grocery retailers overall brand equity (mediator) could be achieved.

1.8.2 Research Design and Sampling Techniques

Quantitative methods following the positivist philosophy applicable to this study were chosen to collect and analyse data. The quantitative research design used was descriptive, which can explain a phenomenon or a construct (Malhotra, 2012). Cross-sectional data were collected from Woolworths' customers, which consisted of both males and females, young adults (18-25) and adults (26-65+) who live within the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The cross-sectional design permits data to be collected from respondents once and at a single point in time (Sedgwick, 2014). To collect data that can represent the sample population, the correct sampling method should be used.

Saunders et al. (2016) thus describe sampling as a process of selecting a representative part of the total sample population economically. It also includes selecting the correct number of elements from a large population so that accurate or definite statements about the population can be generalised at large. Collecting data from a large number of respondents in a study is good but can be expensive and time-consuming (Suresh & Chandrashekara, 2012). On the other hand, if a study has few respondents, the results will be statistically inconclusive and may fail the whole research process (Suresh & Chandrashekara, 2012). Considering that a list of Woolworths' customers was not available for a random selection in a probability sampling method, non-probability convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were used. According to Maree (2015), convenience sampling enables the collection of a relatively large sample of respondents who can be easily contacted or reached and who are willing to participate in the study. Even though being a convenience sampling method, it enables the researcher to include anonymous individuals in the sample and thus, upholds vital ethical principles (Maree, 2015). Snowballing supported convenience sampling in that it allowed the researcher to select a small sample of

known persons and expands the sample by asking those initial respondents to identify other respondents who fit the sample frame characteristics (Crossman, 2020). Naderifar et al. (2017) noted that snowballing could quickly grow the sample sizes by getting referrals from the initial group of respondents. The research study selected the initial sample from online contacts and encouraged the initial sample to forward the survey monkey link to their online contacts and facilitated recruitment of respondents.

To determine the sample size, the rule of thumb method was used. With the rule of thumb, an analysis of the variables under study is done, and each variable is supposed to have at least ten observations or respondents (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). In this research, the total number of constructs of interest were fourteen. Therefore, with each construct having about four indicators, the estimated sample size will be 14x4x10 = 560. However, considering the cost and time constraints in collecting data, it is acceptable, especially for factor analysis, to use a sample size of 300 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Additionally, Kyriazos (2018) noted that in research circumstances where structural equation modelling (SEM) is used to analyse data, sample sizes of 50 are regarded as very poor, 100 is regarded as poor, 200 is regarded as fair, 300 is regarded as good, 500 is regarded as very good, and 1000 is regarded as excellent. Therefore, this study succeeded to use a sample size of 480 respondents, which is close to Kyriazos's (2018) recommended very good sample size when SEM is used for data analysis.

1.8.3 Data Collection Methods and Questionnaire Structure

This research study used a questionnaire to collect primary data. Saunders et al. (2016) define a questionnaire as a data collection tool in which respondents record their responses and may include face-to-face, telephonic or online engagements. The main advantage of using a questionnaire as a data collection tool is that it is easy to administer as it can also be sent to respondents electronically over long distances, hence making savings on travel costs and time. Furthermore, this presents the most efficient and effective way of collecting large samples' responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

The online survey was suitable for data collection during the COVID 19 pandemic period. The online questionnaires were posted on the researcher's Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn social media sites. Participants were asked to share the questionnaire link with other acquaintances in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, but voluntarily and not with any incentive. The distribution of the questionnaires was done after obtaining permission from the Wits Ethics Committee. The questionnaire had three sections covering general demographic information, constructs representing sources and outcomes of retailer brand

equity. Section A, the demographic information section, had items including age, race, gender, population group, family income, and family size. Section B consisted of questions related to sources of grocery retailer brand equity constructs such as perceived quality, brand image, three dimensions of brand personality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness, price, customer service, distribution, and trust, which were all adapted from various sources. Section C comprised questions soliciting information on overall brand equity, repurchase intention and brand preference.

1.8.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a two-folded process. Firstly, data were analysed using IBM SPSS 27 to compute descriptive statistics to determine sample characteristics, the mean that derive the data's general central tendency (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Considering the multidimensional nature of the study, structural equation modelling (SEM) was deemed appropriate for the main data analysis method. SEM analyses structural relationships between measured variables and latent constructs using a combination formula of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2017a). SEM was done in two phases. The first phase was the assessment of the measurement model, which determines constructs' reliability (Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability), validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and model fit. The second phase was the testing of the hypotheses in the conceptual model.

1.9 Chapter Organisation

The research study is composed of eight chapters. Chapter one introduced the study by providing the background, research problem and objectives. It then provided a preliminary literature review and introduced the research methods used to collect and analyse data.

Chapter two was literature on the grocery retail sector. It discussed the nature and performances of the retailing sector generally and the grocery retailing sector specifically and in both the national, regional and global perspectives.

Chapter three reviewed literature on brand equity generally and retailer brand equity specifically. It delved into the conceptualisation, antecedents, and outcomes of retailer brand equity provided by previous studies.

Chapter four focussed on the underpinning theories of sources and outcomes of brand equity. It discussed models such as Aaker Brand Equity Model (1991), Keller Brand Equity Model (1993), Yoo and Donthu brand equity model (2002), Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Model by Jara and Cliquet (2012) and Brand Equity and Consumer Behaviour Model by Satvati, Mahnaz Rabie and Rasoli (2016). The chapter concluded with the analysis of grocery retailer-specific models such as the Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Model by Jara and Cliquet (2012), the Grocery retailer brand equity model by Seong Ho Lee and Sun-Ho Lee (2018), and the Grocery retailer brand equity model by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Bogaa and Levy-Mangin (2013).

Chapter five discussed the selected relevant models of this study and used their ideas to develop this study's conceptual model. Finally, from the proposed conceptual model and guided by empirical literature, hypotheses were developed.

Chapter six discussed and defended the research methodology applicable for the testing of the hypotheses. It presented the research philosophy, research design, sampling methods and techniques, data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter seven provided the results, which comprised the descriptive statistics, measurement and structural model results.

Chapter eight discussed the results, made conclusions and recommendations.

1.10 Conclusion

The chapter introduced the study by explaining the purpose of the research study. It discussed the conceptual context of the study by way of defining important constructs and introduced the underpinning theories. The chapter started by explaining the research background, which, to a great extent, influenced the selection of the topic. It further articulated the purposes of the study by setting out the research objectives, research questions, and research significance. The chapter also presented an overview of the research processes by describing the research sequencing that started with reviewing pertinent literature of sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity, followed by describing the research methodology. The chapter culminated by explaining the broad structure of the research. The next chapter explains the general overview of the grocery industry sector from the retailer brand equity perspective.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE AND PERFORMANCES OF THE GROCERY RETAILER SECTOR

2.1 Introduction

Having introduced the contents of this thesis in chapter 1, this chapter discusses the nature and performances of the grocery retailing sector from the national, regional and global perspectives. The chapter starts with an overview of the nature and performances of players in the global retail industry. It then introduces South African grocery retailers and their performances. The chapter further provides grocery retailers' operating models or offerings and consumers' buying habits and responses. Finally, the chapter ends with challenges and trends in the grocery retailing sector.

2.2 Nature of Retailing and Performances of Players in the Global Grocery Retailer Industry

Retailers are an agent, agency, company, or organisation who sells products or services to the ultimate consumer (Amit & Kameshvari, 2012) and provides services such as breaking bulk consignment in small quantities that the consumers can use. In addition, a retailer is defined as any establishment selling merchandise for personal or household consumption. There are several types of retailers: general stores, speciality stores, department stores and convenience stores (Altunışık et al., 2012). From the definitions above, it is noted that retailers perform the intermediary role in the retailing supply chain. The retailers which are part of the grocery retailing are departmental, speciality and convenient stores. Grocery retailers operate in various formats such as supermarket chains, discount stores and hypermarkets and because the grocery sector consists of many forms of configuration, competition is rife.

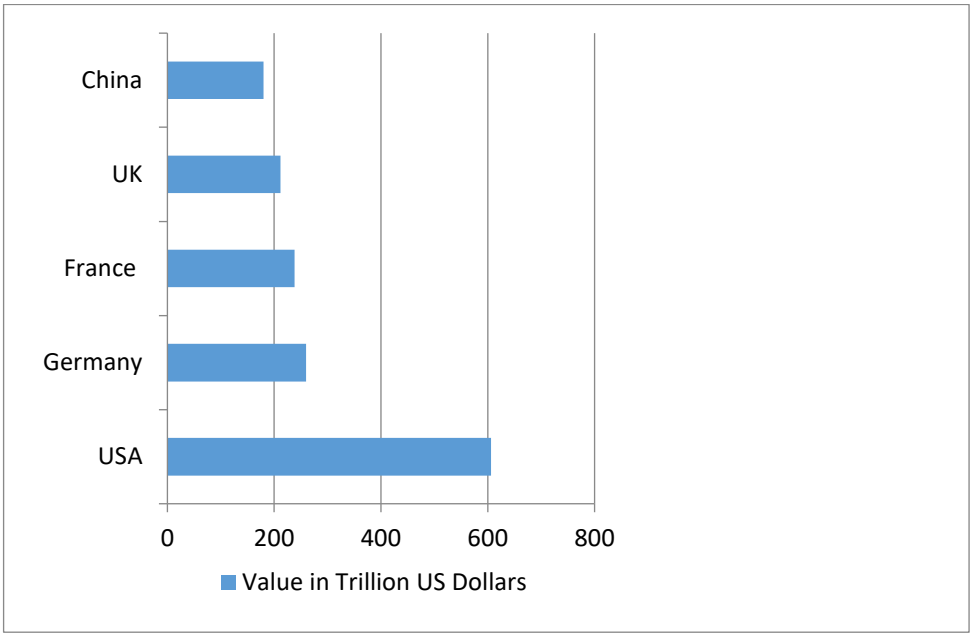
As competition increases in the retailing sectors, Dawson (2000, p. 119) outlines challenges retail managers face. They are: i) the need to grow continually and the consequent pressures associated with 'bigness', ii) the changing nature of brands in retailing, iii) impending over-capacity of retail space, iv) the turbulent nature of environmental, including consumer behaviour change, v) the need to balance between externalisation and internalisation of functions and vi) the unknown impact of e-retail. To find solutions to these challenges, Dawson (2000) suggests that researchers should move from descriptive studies to more theoretic and explanatory paradigms. However, the theoretic and explanatory studies would have to

start by understanding the players and their performances in the retailing industry, especially the grocery retailing sector that this study focuses on.

The global grocery retail industry is estimated to have a financial value of €5.7 trillion (Kuilpers, Simmons & Wamelen, 2018). While the global retailer growth rate has consistently achieved 4.5% annually over the past decade, there have been signs of declining growth in recent years. An analysis of intercontinental grocery retailer growth depicts a 2% sales growth during the current decade in North America and Western Europe (Deloitte Global Powers of Retailing, 2019). In other markets, such as the African continent, the sector has achieved an annual growth rate of 9.8% (FBIC, 2015) in the current decade. Eastern Europe and South America have consistently reached a sales growth rate of 8.4%, while the Asian grocery market has scored a growth rate of 8.4% in the past decade (Deloitte Global Powers of Retailing, 2019).

The traditional grocery retailers in both America and Western Europe have witnessed a slowdown in sales and margins (Kuilpers, Simmons & Wamelen, 2018). Various factors that include high costs, falling productivity, and the adoption of competitive bottom-level pricing models within this sector have caused grocery growth decline (Tarnanidis, Owusu-Primpong, Nwankwo & Omar, 2015). Despite the global growth slowdown, the retail grocery industry is still a critical sector that touches consumers' daily lives. Therefore, the imminent stifled growth of this sector could inflict ripple effects on the global economy.

However, in terms of value, the U.S. remains a powerhouse location for the largest grocery retail sector (FBIC Report, 2019).). It is followed by Germany, whose retailer value is U.S. $260 trillion (FBIC Report, 2015). The graph shows the representation of the grocery monetary value in the first five leading countries.



Source: FBIC Report (2019) **Figure 2.1: Grocery Sector Size per Country**

The third country with the highest grocery retailer value in France. France is followed by the U.K., which is ranked fourth. Finally, China is ranked fifth (FBIC Report, 2019) and is also rated the number one growing grocery retail country. This distribution of grocery retailers implies that high-income countries attract much retailer investment compared to medium and low-income countries.

2.2.1 The world's biggest grocery retailers

Wambugu and Daniel (2019) ranked the world grocery stores in September 2019 using economic scoring metrics. The grocery brands whose operating models consist of a combination of grocery-department stores were excluded from the assessment as their value has a portion that is mainly classified as non-grocery components. The evaluation included pure grocery stores whose assortment of stock is composed of household goods and services. The world ranking of the grocery retailer brands is listed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Global Grocery Retailer Ranking: The World's Largest Supermarket Chains

Rank	Company	Number of Locations/Outlets
1	7-Eleven	46,000
2	SPAR	13,500
3	Walmart	11,088
4	Aldi	10,366
5	Carrefour	10,103
6	Lidl	10,000
7	Tesco	6,784
8	Ahold Delhaize	6,556
9	BİM	6,122
10	CBA	5,200

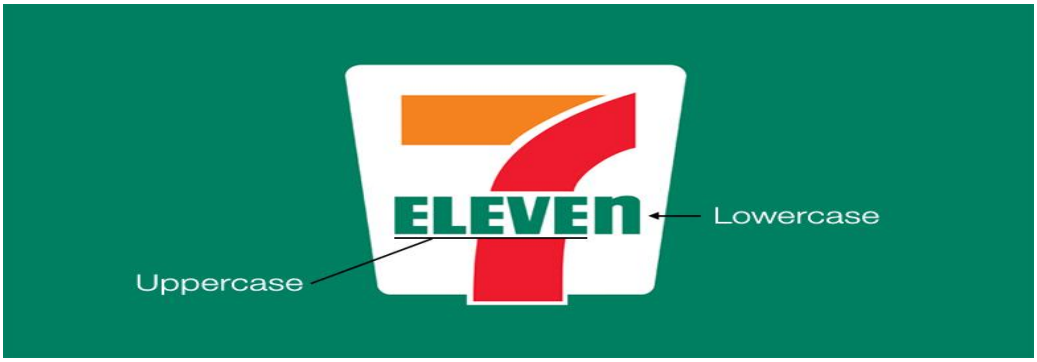
Source: Wambugu and Daniel (2019)

The table shows that leading grocery retailer brands based on their economic values, Various brands originate from various countries, with U.S. grocery retailers leading in numbers followed by European-based grocery retailers (Wambugu & Daniel, 2019). The following section describes each grocery retailer's operation model, brand and brand symbol, and the brand's reflective meaning to its customers.

2.2.1.1 7-Eleven

7-Eleven is ranked as the world's largest grocery store chain. This supermarket has its head offices in both Japan and the USA, and it has a total complement of 68,236 outlets in 18 countries as of June 2019 (FBIC Report, 2019). The 7-Eleven history dates to 1937, when the Southland Ice Company started trading in grocery staples and beer using its icehouses (7- Eleven Financial Report, 2020). As the business improved, the icehouses were converted into "convenience stores," formally known as Totem stores (FBIC Report,

2015). The store's logo and brand symbols were a large totem pole like the T. The store's brand was renamed in 1946 to 7-Eleven, a name reflecting on the seven (7) a.m. to eleven (11) p.m. operating hours. However, 7- Eleven has since changed its operating hours to the 24/7 principles that match the convenient shopping services (Wambugu & Daniel, 2019). This operating model has become the cornerstone of 7-Eleven's business structure. The new logo and brand symbol are powered with a large red "7" with "Eleven" in green. The brand symbol still shows the original totem pole, which looks like a T. All these symbols are set on a green background, which signifies good luck and fortune. The figures below illustrate the brand symbol and typical store corporate colours (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2020).



Source: 7-Eleven Financial Report (2018) Figure 2.2: The Brand Symbol for 7- Eleven Stores

An analysis of the brand symbol shows that it has a set of uppercase letters on the seven; however, the letter 'n' is lowercased, which serves as an extra method of categorically making a distinctive characteristic of the store brand (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2018). The convenience store sells its products and services at higher prices compared to discount store prices. 7-Eleven is a pioneer of the convenience store concept. It prides itself on providing tailor-made products and services that are critically aligned with the unique characteristics of specific areas. Figure 2.3 shows a typical store format of 7-Eleven stores.



Source: 7-Eleven Financial Report (2020) Figure 2.3: Typical Stores Corporate Colours

The vision of 7-Eleven is to be the best grocery retailer of convenience (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2020). The retailer brand targets busy shoppers who buy at their neighbourhood stores daily (Wambugu & Daniel,

2019). The products are exceptionally fresh, which serves as a clear-cut competitive advantage of 7-Eleven brands against competing brands. The 7-Eleven is a convenience store run on principles centred on redefining these stores as convenient neighbourhood stores, thus, making the brand consistent with customers' needs (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2020). This grocery brand's key retailing highlights are based on its corporate philosophy of modernisation and revitalisation of existing small- and medium-sized stores into a "World-class 7-Eleven brand" (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2020).

2.1.2.2 SPAR

Spar is a supermarket chain of Dutch origin, founded in 1932 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Its brand name was derived from DESPAR, a Dutch language acronym for "Door Eendrachtig Samenwerken Profiteren Allen Regelmatig" (Wambugu & Daniel, 2019). In English terms, it means 'Through united cooperation everyone profits.' The word 'spar' is a Dutch word that means 'spruce tree.' The fir tree has been part of the 'DESPAR' logo, and this has been shortened to SPAR to ensure instant recognition of the brand. The company's brand symbol or logo includes a little green spruce tree symbolising the original tree that spruces its branches everywhere, signifying the SPAR business strategy of expanding in all continents (Wambugu & Daniel, 2019).

It is ranked number two in the world ranking of grocery retailer brands using growth and value of revenue performance metrics. Its sales turnover shot to $34.5 billion globally in 2017, representing an annual increase of 5.3% (SPAR Integrated Report, 2019). Furthermore, its operations network is in 48 countries across different continents (SPAR Integrated Report, 2019). It is ranked number two in South Africa in the Deloitte Global Powers (Deloitte Global Powers of Retail survey, 2018). Figure 2.4 illustrates the SPAR brand name and symbol.



Figure 2.4: The Brand Symbol for SPAR Stores **Source: SPAR Integrated Report (2019)**

The SPAR brand symbol communicates the organisation's competence of expanding in various continental markets using the franchise model.

2.2.1.3 Walmart

Walmart Stores, Inc. is an American-based multinational retail corporation that was founded in 1962. It operates large discount superstores and warehouses. Walmart Inc.'s guiding corporate mission is "to save people money so that they can live better" (eMarketer, 2014). In the process of saving people's money, Walmart operates its grocery retail stores based on the every-day-low-price (EDLP) philosophy. This philosophy has catapulted its market share by significantly increasing its customer base.

Furthermore, Walmart follows a customer-centred business strategy that promotes customers as essential business stakeholders. Therefore, it promotes and focuses its retailing strategy on customer convenience (Walmart, 2020). This strategy has worked as a catalyst towards its customer growth achievements and brand popularity. In addition, the Walmart brand adopts the low-cost leadership strategy to fend off competition (Walmart, 2020). In support of this strategy, Walmart has built its primary competence around its pricing strategies, making it possible to accomplish a portion of its mission of saving people money (Walmart, 2020). This strategy is supported by its corporate motto of "Save money. Live better." which reinforces its endeavour to adopt a cost-effective model.

Walmart's primary trading highlights are summed up by its slogans of "Always Low Prices!" and "Every Day Low Prices" (Walmart, 2020). This trading format forms the heart of its trading fundamental core competencies. The retailer builds new distribution centres in any new area to that serve as its central location in order to achieve such low-cost goals. New stores are commissioned around the distribution centre to save on operating costs such as distribution, supply chain, and customisation costs of services and goods. In addition, promotional activities such as discounts, coupons, and free samples are consistently offered to its customers as part of its broad marketing strategy.

Walmart went through a transformation over its operating life. A critical facelift of its brand happened in 2008 when it changed from "WAL-MART" to "Walmart" All the letters used to be uppercase in the old brand name, but the new brand name has "W" in uppercase, and the rest of the letters are now in lowercase. The change from the old brand design to the new one was driven by the realisation that the old brand name was compromised and outdated as it emphasised cheap, lower quality products and services offerings. It was misaligned with the current Walmart products and services offerings, which now emphasised quality instead of its previous cost-based strategies (Kumar, 2018). Figure 2.5 shows the new brand name of Walmart.



Source: Kumar (2018) **Figure 2.5: The Brand Symbol for Walmart**

The new brand name was shortened to reduce the signboard's cost, ensuring that the basic principle of Walmart's low prices is achieved and effectively communicated (Kumar, 2018). The six yellow sparks signify different innovative and inspirational ideas that had made the retailer successful over its operating time (Kumar, 2018). In addition, the use of combined blue and yellow colours denotes a feeling of friendliness that inspires confidence in the brand. The colours further communicate a change from the old low-price poor-quality product and services offering approach to reflect the company's new effort of providing the best quality products and services (Kumar, 2018).

2.2.1.4 Aldi

Founded in 1946, Aldi is one of the leading global discount retail shops whose head office is stationed in Germany. It has its branded stores in 18 countries with 10,366 locations (Knudson & Vu, 2017). It adopts a focused approach strategy that concentrates on food trading, a trading niche in which it has excellent competencies. This approach helps the brand compete based on cost-effectiveness (Tackett, 2014). At one point in its operation, it spearheaded discount operation popularity to such an extent that the market named the wave of change in the grocery retailer landscape the "Aldi effect." The Aldi effect describes how it had captured a magnificent market in the British grocery retailing market by applying the unique hard discount business model (Knudson, & Vu, 2017). By 2017, due to the Aldi effect strategic concept, its brand quickly advanced and occupied the fifth largest retailer position in the British market by capturing 7.5% of the country's market share (Tackett, 2014). It charges 2-3% profit margins as its standard operating norm, beating could-be-competitors on cost basis. This pricing approach is in line with its operating motto of offering high-quality groceries at everyday low prices.

Aldi's operation principle of 'simplicity and efficiency' changed the retail landscape in most of the 18 countries; where it had established its operations (Tackett, 2014). Their whole supplier and customer value

chain is optimised for maximum efficiency achievement. Aldi grocery retailer is a typical 'hard discounter' retailer that pursues a cost leadership strategy (Bonn, 2010: 1). A set of specific cost-cutting strategies employed by Aldi include purchasing lowly priced land primarily located at the city outskirts, building cheap warehouses, employing a squarely rationalised staff compliment and displaying items on pallets rather than on shelves. Furthermore, the store deals with a limited range of products and services in which they have great competence; thus, it enjoys a territorial advantage over its competitors. Typically, it operates with about 700 products and services, ordinarily every day-use household items like milk, vegetables, fruits, and canned food.

In comparison, a typical supermarket usually deals with 25,000 to 30,000 products and services (Bonn, 2010:1). The Aldi stores require small space coverage which is in line with their limited product range philosophy. A typical supermarket's standard operating space coverage is around 5000 square meters, whereas Aldi's operating space is around 1200 square metres. (Bonn, 2010:2). Aldi stores have a standard employee complement of four to five members per store compared to 15 employees for standard supermarket requirements (Bonn, 2010: 2). They cut costs on various initiatives such as not providing free shopping bags to customers but encouraging customers to bring their own. Customers who require a shopping cart pay a deposit which is refunded when the cart is returned. Also, the lights in their stores are switched off when there is enough ambient daylight (Bonn, 2010: 4). All these initiatives culminate in a cost leadership strategy for the Aldi hard-core discount stores.



Source: Knudson and Vu (2017) **Figure 2.6: The Brand Symbol for Aldi Stores**

Aldi's brand name and symbol were designed to reflect its simplicity concept (Bonn, 2010). The brand symbol resembles an airline's symbolic feature, especially the slant lines in the "A" icon. It gives the impression of advancing, which aligns with the Aldi brand's mantra of moving forward (Knudson & Vu,

2017). The brand symbol transmits a message that reflects what the retailer brand offering expects customers to associate with the grocery retailer brand

2.1.2.5 Carrefour

Carrefour is the pioneer of hypermarket concepts (Carrefour, 2019; Singh, 2018). It is ranked the fifth largest supermarket chain worldwide. Its first store was established in 1958 in Boulogne Billancourt in France, where its headquarters is stationed. Carrefour uses multidimensional operating formats, comprising four main grocery store formats of hypermarket, supermarket, discount, and convenience stores (Carrefour, 2019).

Its primary trading highlights emphasise the ability to operate in multiple locations using multiple store formats, which offer benefits of convenience, price, and broad product and service under one roof (Carrefour, 2019). Its operating model emphasises capturing control of its supplier value chain in a way that optimises its resource usage through the maximisation of synergetic effects. Its pricing strategy employs promotional methods that include frequent sales, special discounts, and the provision of private label offerings which the store charges a fixed price throughout the year (eMarketer, 2014; Singh, 2018). In 2018, Carrefour adopted an open, integrated model that extensively produced a much more friendly ecosystem that connects producers, customers, and partners in a way that creates value for each stakeholder (Singh, 2018; Carrefour, 2019).

Its brand name means crossroads, and such meaning is operationalised into the core fabric of its branding strategy. In French, 'Carfax' or 'carrefour' means a place where four roads or streets usually meet. Figure 2.7 shows its brand name and symbol in great depth.



Source: Singh (2018) and Carrefour (2019) **Figure 2.7: The Brand Symbol for Carrefour Stores**

The arrows are made up of red and blue colours pointing in different directions, denoting a crossroads scenario in terms of multi-store locations and the multiple choices of products and services offered by its grocery chain (Singh, 2018). In conclusion, the brand logo uses colours from the French flag, the country where Carrefour was founded. These colours of its brand symbol signify the importance of its trading format, which is directly linked to its country of origin (Carrefour, 2019).

2.1.2.6 Lidl

Lidl is a German global discount supermarket chain with its headquarters in Neckarsulm. It was formed in 1930; however, it was in 1977 that Lidl entered the supermarket business. In the global grocery retailer ranking, it was placed as the sixth-largest grocery store, operating in 28 countries (Tackett, 2014). Lidl is an acronym that means 'least idle' (Knudson, & Vu, 2017). Therefore, the meaning of the brand reflects on its use of dynamic operations that reinforce the brand's least idle philosophy (Tackett, 2014).



Source: Knudson and Vu (2017) **Figure 2.8: The Brand Symbol for Lidl Stores**

The brand name and symbol of Lidl grocery stores depict a progressive brand that promptly responds to customers' demands (Knudson & Vu, 2017). Furthermore, the brand is known for using promotional strategies that often refresh and rejuvenate customer brand interests towards the brand (Lidl, 2019).

2.1.2.7 Tesco

Tesco is a highly rated grocery retailer which operates a chain of supermarkets in the U.K. grocery market. Globally, it is the number seven grocery rated brand. The brand name is a combination of the initials of its tea supplier, Thomas Edward Stockwell (TES), and the two first letters of the founder's surname, Jack Cohen (C.O.), to form the TESCO brand name (TESCO, 2019). The grocery retailer is hinged upon customer-oriented practices that make unique shopping experiences seamless and enjoyable to its

customers (TESCO, 2019). In addition, the grocery retailer has a long history of using cutting-edge technological applications that differentiate its brand offering from its competitors.

2.2.1.8 Ahold Delhaize

Ahold Delhaize is the number eight grocery global retailer whose headquarters is in the Netherlands. They operate supermarkets, hypermarkets, and convenience stores and deal with a massive assortment of products and services (Ahold Delhaize, 2019). Their brand offering is guided by their 2025 vision of inspiring customers to make healthier choices, increasing product transparency, and eliminating waste. Ahold Delhaize's major trading highlights focus on encouraging customers to eat healthy food, providing fresh, healthy inspiration for delicious, nutritious family meals every day (Ahold Delhaize, 2019). The brand value of the Ahold Delhaize is enhanced by its operating motto of "Eat well. Save time. Live better." (Ahold Delhaize, 2019). This aspiration was mainly achieved by offering "Guiding Stars." This is an industry-leading nutrition navigation program that helps shoppers select from thousands of products and services lined up in a star ranking system by categorising their brand offering into "good," "better," and "best" choices (Ahold Delhaize, 2019). The points system of ranking products and services allocates foods with more vitamins, minerals, fibre, omega-3s, and the whole grains portfolio high scores. As a result, the Ahold Delhaize grocery brand was rated the 2019 Grocery Business of the Year and the Winsight's 2019 Grocery Business of the Year in the USA (Ahold Delhaize, 2019).

2.2.1.9 BİM

BİM is a grocery brand, which is Turkey-based with extended operations in African countries such as Morocco and Egypt (BİM, 2019). It is rated the number nine global grocery retailer. It is a Turkish retail company that operates on a discount model basis by offering a limited range of basic food items, consumer goods and services at competitive prices (BİM, 2019). The BİM grocery retailer brand's main aim is to provide the healthiest and most appropriate selections from its extensive products and service lines (BİM, 2019). BİM's operating motto endeavours to make sure shopping is made as easy as "bim, bam, and boom" (BİM, 2019). Its operating model does not include franchises, but it owns all stores in its expansion drive (BİM, 2019).

2.2.1.10 CBA

In the tenth position of the global grocery brand ranking is CBA supermarket, whose headquarters is in Hungary. It operates in 5,200 locations using retailing operations two models of discount stores

and hypermarkets (CBA,2018). Its shops are categorised into CBA Prima label and soft discounters in order to cover a wide range of customer interests and purchasing powers. In addition, it has managed to grow outside the borders of Hungary by using a partnership with German grocery retailer EDEKA and has captured markets in more than seven countries, including Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Poland, Romania, Lithuania and the Czech Republic (CBA, 2018).

2.3 The South African Grocery Retailer Industry

The South African grocery retail market is highly concentrated, with much of the market being occupied by five leading players (Deloitte, 2019). These five main players are commonly known as the Big Five because they claim about 60% of the retail grocery sales annually (Deloitte, 2019). The Big Five retailers consist of Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Spar, Woolworths, and Cambridge Foods. The profiling of key players of the South African grocery retailers is necessary to facilitate a deep understanding of the local grocery retailing industry. These retailers are ranked in terms of their yearly progressive turnover and their brand value as reflected in Table 2.2 (Deloitte report, 2017; BrandZ™,2019)

Table 2.2: South Africa's most prominent retailers

Group	**Countries of operation**	**Retail Revenue FY15 (US$m)**	**Retail Revenue FY16 Money value?**	**Brand Value 2019 (US$ m)**	**Ranking by Sales Revenue**	**BrandZ™ (2019) Brand Ranking**	**BrandZ™ (2019) Grocery Brand Ranking**
Shoprite	15	9 038	10 340	779	1	1	2
Spar Group	11	6 195	6 232	**Nil**	**2**	**Nil**	**Nil**
Pick n Pay	7	5 436	5 418	700	3	20	3
Woolworths	14	4 518	4 944	1130	4	11	1

Source: Deloitte report (2017); BrandZ™ (2019)

2.3.1 Shoprite

The Shoprite chain has a network of 2843 stores dotted throughout the Sub-Saharan region operating in fifteen countries. The annual number of customers patronising Shoprite exceeded the 35 million mark in 2018 (Shoprite Report, 2018). The shoprite brand operating model emphasises on providing the lowest possible prices on grocery products and services (Shoprite, 2018). The shoprite brand name comprises a circular logo containing a sunburst design, a grocery cart, and a banner bearing the term "**SHOPRITE**" (Shoprite, 2018).



Figure 2.9: The Brand Symbol for SHOPRITE Stores **Source: Shoprite (2018)**

The brand is known for its low-price provision which is aligned to its slogan of "Lower Prices You Can Trust Always"(Shoprite, 2018).

2.3.2 SPAR

Another grocery retailer in the South African grocery retailer industry is the SPAR group. It is the second-largest grocery retailer globally and has a trading speciality in foodstuffs and general merchandise (SPAR, 2015). It uses primarily a franchise model of operations that has enabled its brand to establish 1,711 stores in South Africa and 153 stores in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa by the end of 2014 (SPAR, 2019). SPAR holds an estimated 26% market share in the mass grocery retail in South Africa (Gauteng Provincial Treasury, 2012). Like Shoprite and Pick n Pay, SPAR expanded into four store formats designed to meet different customer groupings (SPAR International, 2019). The four brands operated by SPAR are Superspar, SPAR, Kwikspar, and SaveMor, which are modelled to serve the different market needs (SPAR Group Report, 2019). SPAR's traditional target consumer used to be the older population, but it has moved into the middle and younger customers' market segment and has entered the rural communities' market. SPAR operates as a core supermarket model that focuses mainly on neighbourhood retailing and

supermarket shopping support. The brand emphasises on locating itself close to its consumers while offering a comprehensive range of groceries (SPAR Group Report, 2019).

2.3.3 Pick n Pay.

On the other hand, in 1967, Raymond Ackerman purchased the first four Pick n Pay stores in Cape Town. From this humble start, Pick n Pay Grocery Retailer Group has expanded from these purchases into seven African countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland, and Lesotho. In 2017, Pick n Pay had managed to capture a 49% share of the Zimbabwean grocery market (Pick n Pay, 2020). It uses multi-format, multi-channel retailer formats which are targeted at middle-income consumers. The retailer uses four main store formats: Pick n Pay Hypermarkets, Pick n Pay Supermarkets, Pick n Pay Family Franchise stores, and Pick n Pay Express (Pick n Pay, 2020). The hypermarkets business model of Pick n Pay endeavours to offer a one-stop discount retailing outlet that comprises foods and general merchandise. The Pick n Pay supermarkets centre their competitiveness on high performance and convenience rather than price. The store structure is very small, making it possible to establish as many stores as possible and achieve the convenience shopping objective. Its operating model focuses on five performance metrics: range, quality, price, availability, and service (Pick n Pay, 2020). Pick n Pay targets the high-income earner market and has started encroaching on the low-income earner market.

The Pick n Pay brand symbol/name forms the key driver of its identity, which transmits to its customers an impression of fresh thinking through its use of stylish fonts on the brand symbol. Customers interpret such innovation on the design as representing its fresh product and service offerings (Pick n Pay, 2020). The colours on the brand symbol are the elegant dark blue for 'Pick,' and the warm cherry red for ‘n Pay,' The words are set in colour block frames surrounding the 'P.' These colours were designed to portray a warm and friendly reception to its visiting customers (Pick n Pay, 2020). Figure 2.10 illustrates the brand name.



Source: Pick n Pay (2020) **Figure 2.10: The Brand Symbol for Pick n Pay Stores**

The brand symbol includes the motto, 'Inspired by you', which denotes a more customer-focused brand approach. Nevertheless, equally, it shows Pick n Pay's deliberate emphasis on strengthening its relationships with its traditional and heartland customers, mainly in the LSMs 8 – 10 groups (Pick n Pay, 2020).

2.3.4 Woolworths

The next grocery retailer is the Woolworths brand. Its retailing strategy is hinged upon differentiation initiatives that focus on in-store design, customer experience, and packaging (Woolworths Integrated Financial Report, 2019). It offers high-quality organic food groceries to the wealthiest South African consumers; thus, making it is one of the most vibrant retailer brands. In addition, Woolworths grocery can influence the freshness of its food provision by managing the supply chain's downstream activities using contract farming. In terms of monetary value, it is rated the number four retailer grocery brand in South Africa but rated number one in terms of the SA-CSI score chart. This is a measure used to evaluate customer value and satisfaction within the retailer grocery sector (SA-SCI, 2019).

Woolworths' grocery brand has maintained the best overall customer experience from the service delivery perspective when SA-CSI components of quality, customer loyalty, customer services, brand image, and brand trust are considered. As a result, Woolworths grocery brand has consistently taken the first top spotlight in the South Africa Consumer Satisfaction Index from 2016 to the last survey, which was taken in 2018 (SA-SCI, 2019). The findings make the Woolworths grocery brand the leading South African grocery brand in building customer brand equity and value proposition processes (Woolworths Integrated Financial Report, 2019). The SA-CSI is a causal model that links customer expectations, perceived quality and perceived value to customer satisfaction. In turn, this is linked to customer complaints and customer loyalty intentions, which align effectively with grocery brand equity building and management processes (Woolworths Integrated Financial Report, 2019). In this regard, Woolworths grocery stores have outperformed their competitors in managing sources and outcomes of grocery brand equity; hence a reflection on this brand can bring best practices in the sector and the grocery brand equity domain.

The choice of the grocery stores' brand name came from Sonnenberg's friendship with Percy (P.R.) Lewis who was a director of Australasian Chain Stores, ACS, a London shipping and finance house. The American F.W. Woolworth Company had no desire to trade in Australia. Therefore "Father" Christmas

named his Australian new business, Woolworths. Lewis helped Sonnenberg by sending a Christmas order sheet in a scaled-down quantity of every item that succeeded in Australia to South Africa. As a result, Sonnenberg decided to adopt the same name, Woolworths, for his new venture.

From these developments, Woolworths grocery stores expanded rapidly to form a business that is customer value-based. The brand is centred on quality values that are embedded and reflected in Woolworths products and services, employees, and stakeholders. Woolworths' grocery stores' core values are centred on three aspects of "Care deeply. Always do the right thing. Learn and Listen." (Woolworths, 2020). The Woolworths brand is based on three fundamental principles: improving business offering, growth aspirations, and operation (Woolworths, 2019). In addition, the brand endeavours to strengthen its core offering by aligning it with the customers-first phenomenon (Woolworths, 2020). All these strategic tactics are intended to achieve the Woolworths motto, "We *create better experiences together for a better tomorrow."*

The brand name reflects the Woolworths grocery retailer's operational aspirations of achieving better offering, growth targets, and efficiency goals.



Figure 2.11: Woolworths Brand Name **Source: Woolworths Report (2020)**

The company uses the black and white colour scheme on its brand name and symbol. The black "W" is placed in a white square, and the word "Woolworths" is in white against a black background. The white colour implies openness and something good, while the black is associated with professionalism (Woolworths Report, 2020). This colour combination depicts Woolworths commitment towards quality and a balance on affordability (Woolworth Report, 2020).

In conclusion, the Woolworths' grocery stores brand is the leading South African retailer brand in the process of managing the SA-CSI scoring chart that covers classic brand equity dimensions such as

perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand image, and specific grocery brand equity that encompasses in-store design, experience retailing atmosphere, customer services and merchandise packaging (SA-SCI, 2019). For this reason, the current research study concentrates on analysing Woolworths' grocery branded retail stores as a proxy for developing a unified grocery retailer equity model in the South African grocery sector. The following section explains the prevalent grocery retailer operating models.

2.4 Retailer Grocery Operating Models

A business model is a profit formula (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010). The business model forms the fundamental activities that dictate the company processes of decisions and consequences. It organises resources and activities in varying degrees of detail and operational view, thus, determining the nature of business offering to its customer (Slavik, 2011). The retailer operations' foundation is centred on the wheel of retailing theory (Steeneken & Ackley, 2012). It is a phenomenon that explains the pattern of retailer development. It postulates that when new types of retailers generally enter the market, they usually configure themselves as low margin, low-status, low-price grocery retail stores, and then they build up over time and start to operate as a highly decorated facility by totally moving into the up-market retailer operations (Stefan & Richard, 2014). The theory predicts that new retailers start their operations at the lower end of the market in which low prices dictate how they operate (Esquivias, Ramos & Souza, 2010). Such upcoming retailers start more or less like discount stores and gradually improve themselves into well-established stores whose operations are no longer guided much by price dimensions but by a wide range of factors (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010).

As grocery retailers improve their operational models, they use the SPQR concept in the long term. This concept is hinged upon four aspects that form the acronym SPQR: service, price, quality and range (DeMarco & Anthony, 2011). Service encompasses various activities that consumers receive at grocery establishments, such as cleanliness and orderliness of the store, staff helpfulness, parking convenience, and geographic location (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010). Price is defined as the sacrifices that customers make to acquire goods and services (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010). Quality is defined as the brand's conformance to user specifications. Finally, range represents the assortment of products and services that form part of the grocery stores' products and services (De Marco & Anthony, 2011).

- **Services**

Customer service is a process of taking pastoral care of the customer's needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high-quality service and assistance before, during, and after the brand offerings (Baalbaki, 2012). Additionally, customer service is defined as the organisation's ability to meet its customers' needs and desires (Kunstner, Marsch & Steinkrauss, 2016). From a holistic view, customer service begins before a customer arrives and ends long after the customer leaves the enterprise. Customer services denote the activities undertaken by an organisation that affect the value of the products and services being offered and determine customer satisfaction. Kunstner, Marsch, and Steinkrauss (2016) expound that customer services leverage retailer differentiation and place retailers at a vantage point for improving their chances of making a profit. If customer services are applied positively, they can be an essential platform and avenue for engaging customers so that grocery retailers can gain customer insights than can help leverage their service propositions and improve sales revenue.

Kunstner, Marsch and Steinkrauss (2016) postulate that customer needs are always evolving and are demanding the next-generation customer services approaches to adopt a strategic value-generating service that acts as a strategic differentiator in the market. Additionally, research studies confirm that customer service is one of the most extensive untapped resources with great potential to give customer feedback and capture proprietary customer data (Kunstner, Marsch & Steinkrauss, 2016).

- **Pricing strategy**

Pricing strategy is one of the most critical drivers of grocery stores' sales revenue and can build critical selling propositions for the sector's customers. Two pricing strategies characterise the retail grocery sector: everyday low pricing (EDLP) and promotional or PROMO pricing (Ellickson, Misra & Nair, 2012). The EDLP grocery operating model is a low-cost business model that achieves high sales volumes (Holmes & Thomas, 2011). Typical grocery stores that adopt this strategy pursue cost reduction methods that can impact sales volume over time due to price differential applications. In the long run, EDLP oriented stores position themselves as part of the convenience stores category. Large basket shoppers are attracted to the EDLP pricing as they gain savings across a large set of products and services. However, such customers might not have a meaningful gain on occasional price deals on individual products and services offered by PROMO pricing.

In the everyday low pricing strategy, the grocery retailers offer stable prices across various products and services. At the global level, Walmart has used this strategy to drive its market development strategy, and this strategy helped it rise into the Fortune 500 categories of companies (Wal-Mart, 2014; University Alliance, 2014). In the South African market, Shoprite has used this pricing model in its mantra slogan of low prices for all (Shoprite, 2018). On the other hand, the promotional or PROMO pricing strategy emphasises deep and frequent discounts on a small set of goods and services while the rest of the products and services are kept at optimum price margins (Yglesias & Matthew, 2013). Hybrid pricing is a pricing system that combines both everyday low pricing (EDLP) and promotional or PROMO pricing. It is a pricing system in which, under normal circumstances, constant margins are charged across all products and services categories. In addition, frequent sales promotions on specific products and services are applied, depending on annual events like back-to-school promotions, Easter promotions, and Christmas promotions.

- **High–Low (HiLo) Operating Model**

The HiLo pricing model is characterised by charging low-level prices on a limited assortment of the stores' product-services portfolio while the rest is set at high prices. This setup works effectively with high-end customers who require high customer service levels, which are compensated with premium prices (Beneke, 2014). Therefore, the HiLo operating model is suitable in high-end suburbs with customers possessing high disposable income. This model's key characteristics are high prices all the time, with low prices on a few products being charged occasionally (Cantone, Basile & Testa, 2018).

In the HiLo grocery stores operating model, services and pricing levels are considered and weighted highly when formulating the customer value proposition (Cantone, Basile & Testa, 2018). The additional customer services in this model are fast cash registers, home delivery, and after-sales assistance and these types of services act as differentiating features that create customer value that sustains the HiLo grocery operating model.

The HiLo customer's purchasing behaviour is associated with constant monitoring of low flyer offers. Small basket shoppers are opportunists who are always on the lookout for variations in prices of individual products so that they can buy when there is a low-price deal. In this case, they frequently visit the stores to check price status, capitalise on low prices and gain advantages of low prices on specific products and services even though the stores' average prices are high.

- **Hybrid Grocery Stores Operating Model**

The hybrid grocery stores operating model applies both EDLP and HiLo operating models. In this setup**,** the HiLo approach creates traffic in the short term, while the EDLP builds the grocery retailer image in the long term (Hankinson, 2015). Thus, in the hybrid pricing model, the adoption of the combined models complements each other depending on the situation.

- **Quality**

The performance objectives emphasised by the grocery retailer can influence customer behaviour positively and can accordingly result in the high financial performance of the grocery retailers. Quality should be viewed from the behold of the ultimate customer (Torlak, Uzkurt, & Ozmen, 2010). Customer preferences have been evolving, thus requiring grocery stores to look for these customers constantly changes in order to capture customer value in this ever-changing operating modulus. In the grocery industry, the new demand for healthy food has disrupted the old customer preference trends (du Plooy, de Jager & van Zyl, 2012) and is a typical example of quality dynamics.

- **Range**

Range describes the assortment of products and services that grocery enterprises offer to their target market (du Plooy, de Jager & van Zyl, 2012). A long-range describes a broad base of products and services offerings, while a short-range describes few assortments of grocery retailers' products and services (du Plooy, de Jager & van Zyl, 2012). The grocery stores can increase their product-services breadth by reviewing their products and services assortments and by lowering overall prices.

The old retailer theories, such as the law of retail gravitation, are the foundational theory of retailer stores operations. It suggests that the probability of customers choosing a retail outlet is positively related to the size of such a store but inversely associated with the distance from the shopper's home (Hamilton & Chernev, 2013; Biswas et al., 2013). The stores' size is a proxy for products and services that can be part of the customers' selection set, and it relates to the products and services categories offered and the depth of each category (Levy & Weitz, 2004). The theories imply that shoppers prefer larger grocery retailers that offer broad assortments of products and services. According to Bauer, Kotouc and Rudolph (2012), customers are willing to visit more distant stores with broader assortments of products and services and

are not willing to visit retailer stores with a low product and services range even if they are located in their neighbourhood.

2.4.1 Association of Grocery Retailers Operating Models with Branding

The chosen operating models of grocery retailer stores significantly impact retail branding (Lichtenstein, 2014). Research has shown that the operating models give valuable insights into customer contextual and perceptual mindset of store brand (Chen et al., 2012; Hamilton & Chernev, 2013; Miniard et al., 2013). The operating model can determine how consumers resonate between enchantment, disenchantment and re-enchantment of the grocery retailer brand. Empirical evidence shows that a retailer operating model can leave a lasting shopping experience. Customer experience can help customers build either negative or positive perceptions of the retailer brand. Customers will always reflect on such brand experience to create brand associations with what the retailer opts to excel.

Hamilton and Chernev (2013) explored retailer operational excellence using price and customer service and their impact on customer stores perception. On the other hand, Biswas et al. (2013) studied promotional pricing and its effects on store brand perception. In these research streams, a common theme of trading-off between prices and service levels is concluded. The adopted price-service level trade-off largely determines customers' perception and behaviour towards the brand (Bauer, Kotouc, & Rudolph, 2012). For retailers intending to offer their products and services to up-markets, the level of service is a critical performance objective; hence the grocery retailer operating models in such markets should upsize their performance on delivering excellent services while prices tend to be marked at high levels to compensate for the extra costs (Heckler, Keller, Houston, & Avery, 2014). On the contrary, in low-medium markets, the retailer stores tend to reduce prices so that price-sensitive customers can be attracted in numbers and the stores capitalise on the economies of scale. As a result, the stores can compromise on customer services by reducing it drastically.

According to Lichtenstein (2014), customers infer the grocery store's brand value based on the adopted operating model by a specific store's brand. In support of the above, Miniard et al. (2013) postulate that grocery retailer customers judge store brands based on their adopted pricing and operating models. Such conclusions have a bearing on the customer grocery retailer perception, ultimate purchase behaviour, and brand customer choices. Pincott (2011) confirmed that the pricing strategy could be used to harness customers' favourable perception of grocery retailers. In the research studies above, it can be noted that

price is an essential constituent of brand equity. From the customer viewpoint, grocery retailer stores' operating models act as sources of meaning and identity for a brand (Krystallis & Chrysochou, 2014).

Previous researchers have also studied the relationship between grocery retailer operating models and branding strategies. For example, Gupta, Foroudi, Yu, and Foroudi (2018) examined the effects of retailer brand image on grocery store brands' perceived quality and risk. Their study concluded that brand image, a proxy of the grocery operating model, significantly impacts customers' buying decisions. The most crucial component in the relationship between grocery operating models and branding is the magnificent influence that brand image has on consumers. Additionally, research studies commissioned by Hansen, Sørensen, and Eriksen (2018), Johe, and Bhullar (2016) and Kumar, Manrai, and Manrai (2017) concur that aspects of grocery operating models such as physical attributes, pricing, operating facilities, size, and advertising have a bearing on brand positioning and can influence customer preference of specific brands. To fully understand the grocery retailer operating models and reasons for the retailer choices, the section below analyses the challenges of grocery retailers and new trends within the sector.

2.5 Grocery Retailer Challenges and Trends

The biggest challenge that has befallen grocery retailers in this internet era is the new development of virtual stores driven by emerging electronic applications and internet-based handheld mobile devices. This trend affects the brick-and-mortar stores negatively as they have been doing massive investments into their traditional retailing setup. In addition, the emergence of virtual stores affects profitability of the traditional retailers. These changes in the grocery industry have of recent triggered changes in the brick-and-mortar stores' trading strategies. The section on challenges of grocery stores is structured into two parts that explain the global and local challenges of the grocery industry.

2.5.1 Global Grocery Retailer Challenges and Trends

According to Kuijpers, Simmons, and Wamelen (2018), global grocery retailers face the challenges of falling sales and margins. Such fall in sales revenue functions as an early warning of the global retailing challenges and trends that might require responding intervention. The section below discusses the global challenges of grocery retailers.

2.5.1.1 Changing consumer habits and preferences

Due to technological advancements related to internet-based synchronous and asynchronous communication, today's present crop of customers expects to buy anything, anywhere, and at any time (Kuijpers, Simmons & van Wamelen, 2018). Furthermore, these customer purchase habits and preferences are changing dynamically, especially in the grocery food sector, where a new genesis of demanding healthy foodstuffs has increased and is regarded as the new customer lifestyle (Lewis, 2019). Food consumption trends are moving favourably towards socially and environmentally handled supply chain processes that can be tracked from manufacturing until the foodstuff is consumed. To align with this trend, the grocery retailers are cornered to change their brand offering to meet the new customers' expectations without being given a chance to increase prices (Accenture, 2020).

Furthermore, the grocery retailers' customers are made up of a group of people falling in the millennial category whose taste and interest in products and services are highly dynamic and unpredictable (Lewis, 2019). These young shoppers demand grocery stores to deliver exceptional customer experience by engaging them on the grocery brand objectives so that retailers can align their brand offerings to their lifestyle dynamics.

2.5.1.2 Shifting of grocery retailer revenue to the new virtual format of grocery e-retailing.

Millennial customers are interested in applying technology and have a well-documented reputation for viewing the world through the digital lens. According to Accenture (2020), the millennial purchasing power of grocery products and services is estimated at $600 billion each year. Furthermore, the millennials mostly use e-retailing, resulting in a shift of a significant share of the revenue from traditional grocery retailers to other emerging formats and channels. This trend disrupts traditional retailers' sales productivity and can cause underutilisation of space for brick-and-mortar stores (Accenture, 2020).

Furthermore, the millennials' use of internet-based shopping affects their shopping preference and purchase intentions, but their influence is also becoming all-encompassing, changing the behaviours of their parents, who in turn copy the digital capabilities of their children. As a result, the parents have joined the bandwagon of using seamless grocery e-retailing to use internet transactions. (Vader, 2020). As a result, the internet wave has increased digital usage uptake, leaving many grocery retailers on the other side of the digital divide, still struggling to meet the market digital requirements. In the end, sales migrate from the traditional grocery format to the new grocery e-tailing setup (Lewis, 2019).

2.5.1.3 The organic trend

The purchase of organic products is rising. In the USA alone, Statista polls (2016, 2017) show that the number of people who buy organic products has increased from 52.6 million in 2016 to 55 million by the spring season of 2017. According to Barry Callebaut's consumer research (2018), 43% of Western European consumers prefer organic products and services considered as natural and healthy foods. The millennials have driven these changes in customer taste and interests. It is argued that 25% of millennials are currently parents, and in 10-15 years, 80% of the current millennials will be parents (Callebaut, 2018). These changes in family profiles will increase the influence of the current millennials towards organic products trends. The growing influence of millennials depicts that today's organic grocery demand and the future use will increase drastically.

2.5.1.4 Quatrro (2017) Top-5 grocery retailer challenges

According to Quatrro (2017), grocery retailers are faced with five top challenges. These include lack of access to accurate and timely financial information, escalating labour costs, low-profit margins, problems of managing cash flows, and problems related to existing store systems technology. These challenges are explained in greater depth in this section.

Business operations require accurate and timely financial information to make financially sound decisions **(**Quatrro, 2017). For grocery retailers to achieve this, technology-driven methods are needed to drive their systems. Such technology can unpack business details to the finer details by providing high-level strategic analysis of sales and margins. In addition to the above, the grocery retailers operate on low margins that require excellent efficiency; otherwise, they will incur high costs that render their operations unprofitable (Quatrro, 2017). Th**e** low-profit margins associated with grocery margins threaten the grocery industry's sustainable performance. Grocery retailers usually struggle to survive due to combined factors of intense price competition, low margins, and failure to implement cost-effective ways in their operations, thus threatening their profitability.

2.5.1.5 Vader's (2020) COVID 19 grocery retailer management challenges

According to Vader (2020), the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic has placed worldwide restrictions on human contact, free movement of customers and customer mobility. It threatens customer requirements

of self-services and has given grocery retailers little time to respond. As a result, retailers have struggled to adapt to the new reality. Without doubt, the fast spread of COVID 19 has far-reaching effects. There are long-term and short-term shocks to the grocery retailers' ability to operate freely in a way that leverages customer value and improves customer shopping experiences. The COVID 19 pandemic has brought new challenges to the grocery retailers' operations**,** including challenges of managing demand fluctuations, the increasing need for cash reserves, challenges of protecting customer safety, the longer-term supply challenges, and restrictions on customer engagements (Vader, 2020). Grocery retailers struggled to manage the increased demand for basic commodities during lockdown restrictions. While the basic stuff witnessed increasing demand, the suppliers and manufacturers were closed during the same period, impacting their capacity to have a consistent supply of products and services.

On another note, the grocery retailers with physical footprints had to reconsider how they could generate cash flow for rental payment, staff salaries and stock replenishment under the constrained conditions of the COVID 19 lockdown (Vader, 2020). This situation has encouraged grocery retailers to closely analyse their current situations and predict their liquidity profile in order for them to understand their working capital dynamics (Vader, 2020). Furthermore, the grocery retailer management is obligated to safeguard their employees and their customers' safety and health (Vader, 2020). Moreover, the COVID 19 period restricted grocery retailers' ability to enhance customer experiences using interactive selling. Such customer-service provision through close interactions with customers was restricted due to social distancing practices regulations. While grocery retailers strived to ensure their brands were on top of the customer priority consideration, the direct customer contact that grocery retailers usually use to develop personal relationships between service providers and customers had been made impossible due to the current pandemic nature and conditions (Vader, 2020). The COVID 19 pandemic changed many trading conditions and threatened grocery retailer operations by restricting customer mobility and customer-service interactions.

2.5.2 Local Grocery Retailer Challenges and Trends

This section discusses the challenges faced by South African grocery retailers. It covers Kanya's (2018) local grocery retailer challenges, Hinton's (2020) five critical issues for South African retailers in 2020, and Wright's (2018) local grocery retailer challenges. The sections that follow describe the challenges faced by local grocery retailers in detail.

2.5.2.1 Kanya's (2018) local grocery retailer challenges

According to Kanya (2018), the grocery retail industry is fraught with a myriad of challenges. Among these are the need to balance retailer operations with ever-changing customer expectations, maintain plummeting customer loyalty levels, manage internal communication, retain and engage employees, keep abreast with the global game of digital disruption, and find and adopt the best technology solutions for the retail grocery organisations.

Managing the ever-changing customer expectations has kept grocery retailers evolving their brand names, products, and services to invigorate their market position and win their customers hearts. However, the ever-changing customer needs are a common challenge for grocery retailers. For example, the rate at which customers change their tastes and interests is always ahead of the grocery retailers' ability to adapt their brand offering to match the new market requirements. Furthermore, the new crop of grocery retailers' customers comprises millennials who do not value brand loyalty at all (Kanya, 2018). This change in customer profile is against the backdrop of grocery retailer brand management programs that intend to build brand loyalty and brand equity.

Another challenge faced by South African grocery retailers is the need to harmonise communication across stores operating in different locations and countries so that their brand transmits a consistent message across the grocery retailer operations (Kanya, 2018). The main challenge is that the stores are operating in multiple areas with different cultures, backgrounds, and operating environments, making it virtually impossible to craft a communication strategy that is one-size-fits-all in nature. Communication helps to build engaged employees and increases the way employees value their job. Multifaceted communication can help grocery retailers achieve customer brand equity, primarily through their employees' acts and behaviour.

Lastly, technology has revitalised the retailer processes towards online transactions, threatening the brick-and-mortar stores as sales have surged towards e-tailing and online transactions (Kanya, 2018). Furthermore, technology has ensured that information is symmetrically available across various market strata. This has enhanced the access of information to customers. However, while information accessibility brings in positive effect in branding, the grocery retailers have lost control of information that can be at the disposal of their customers, thus, affecting the grocery retailers' influence on their customers' decision processes.

2.5.2.2 Hilton's (2020) five critical issues for South African retailers

According to Hilton (2020), the grocery retail sector has reached the maturity stage of market development and is characterised by flattened demand. On the other hand, the grocery market has witnessed very fast-changing customer demands, which are determined to replace unevolved legacy brands with new and vibrant grocery retail brands. Hilton (2020) attributed the grocery retailer challenges to the deadly combination of consumer demand and supply saturation changes. Furthermore, consumers have various choices and excellent access to information that make them less inclined to buy if they do not fully understand the grocery retailers' typical brand offerings (Hilton, 2020).

Additionally, the grocery retailer brands are currently experiencing a shortened product-service lifecycle that gives retailers little time to recoup their investment and sustain their relevance long enough to grow and operate profitably (Hilton, 2020). Furthermore, the sector is becoming unpredictable as competition is rife, resulting in many competitive tactics that disrupt the grocery retailer landscape (Hilton, 2020)**.** Finally, the emergence of hard discounters in the sector has evolved the grocery market into a market where customers are demanding exceptional value at significantly low prices, a situation that curtails grocery retailer sales margins and growth prospects.

2.5.2.3 Wright's (2018) Grocery Store Challenges

According to Wright (2018), the South Africa grocery retail market is characterised by short-term cycles of growth and decline circumstances. The South African economy's economic cycle is driven by prices of international markets of commodities that fluctuate and flatten dynamically. During the growth periods, shoppers enjoy the excellent market conditions, and during decline periods, shoppers get affected drastically as prices of basic commodities increase. The unpredictable rise and decline of the grocery retailer markets are not unique. Therefore, it remains a challenge that grocery retailer operators and customers must live with (Wright, 2018).

Various local research studies support the idea that the current South African retailer situation might require local solutions for the local grocery problems and questions. This is against the traditional trend where grocery retailers emulate strategies and protocols tested at international operations. These approaches might not work in an afro-centric environment (Wright, 2018). Wright (2018) further confirms that the grocery retailers in South Africa might not follow the development pattern experienced in European and American mature markets but are likely to adopt a unique development pattern driven by

urbanisation and digitalisation processes. The rate of urbanisation and movement of people in developing countries defines the market structure. In understanding the customer dynamics of these local markets, local knowledge and adaptability are increasingly becoming critical for grocery retailers to build lasting customer value that is flexible and ever-changing within a short time in rhythm with the changing market dynamics (Wright, 2018).

In today's world, local grocery stores should take time to comprehend and discover their customers' demands in order for them to be able to provide product-services combinations that fulfil their customer needs and satisfaction (Wright, 2018). In addition to the alignment of brand offering, the grocery retailers have to manage their processes and operations in order to deliver the expected brand image to the market and transmit their real core competencies to the market. The process of aligning customer requirements with grocery retailer capacity requires an integrated communication of the right message at the right time and place (Wright, 2018).

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter analysed the grocery industry sector's general overview. The chapter further explained the global players in the retailer industry and detailed the meaning of their brand names to their adopted business strategy. Next, the South African grocery retailer context was assessed by analysing the first four big grocery retailers. In this regard, the chapter provided a better understanding of the operating models that explain the grocery sector's prominent pricing and service strategy. Finally, the challenges and trends in grocery retailing were analysed from both global and local perspectives. The next chapter analyses literature on retailer brand equity outcomes with particular interest to the grocery retailer industry.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS, ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF GROCERY RETAILER BRAND EQUITY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 covered the context of the study by explaining retailers in general and grocery retailers specifically. The chapter described the nature and performances of leading grocery retailer brands at both global and local levels, especially in terms of operating models or offerings that are granting them brand equity. The current chapter provides the various conceptualisations of brands and brand equity, the essence of branding, the reported antecedents and outcomes of retailer brand equity. The chapter end with literature on brand preference and repurchase intentions as important outcomes of outcomes of brand equity in general and grocery retailer brand equity in particular.

3.2. Brands and Brand Equity

The section defines a brand, brand equity and discusses the essence of branding in general and fundamental branding concepts.

3.2.1 What is a brand and why branding?

The American Marketing Association (2015) defines a brand as a "name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them that is used as a form of an identification mechanism of goods or services." Sammut-Bonnici (2015: 1) defines a brand as a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity that build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organisation. Historically, a brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol that can be a logo, trademark, or package design used to identify the goods or services and differentiate those goods or services from competitors. (Aaker, 1991)

A brand benefits both the company and the consumer. For a company, a brand is a differentiator from competitors and for a consumer, it is an identifier from the many other products and services offered in the market. Brands and branding are valuable because they are capable of creating and maintaining a firm’s earnings over and above the earnings generated by tangible assets (Basgoze, Yildiz & Camgoz, 2016). Another essence of branding is to capture the benefits of brand equity and to uniquely and

favourable position the attributes and benefits of products and services in the minds of consumers. Customers' brand knowledge structure comprising of brand awareness and brand image is at the heart of building brand equity and act as the core source from which the benefits of branding are enjoyed (Keller, 2013). For example, from brand equity, brand owners enjoy benefits like brand preference, repurchase intentions, possibility of brand extensions, customers' willingness to pay a premium price (Buil et al., 2013), increased profits and market share, lower advertising cost and reduce the possibility to switch to competitors' brands (Keller, 2013). Customers tend to consider high powered brands with high brand equity for purchase in the current and future times (Buil et al., 2013). Brand equity is defined as a set of five categories of brand assets and liabilities which directly or indirectly influence brand value (Aaker, 1992; Huang, Zhuowei, Cai, & Liping 2015).

3.2.2 Various conceptualisations, types/perspectives of brand equity

Brand equity has been defined and conceptualised by various authors over the years. While Keller (1993, p. 2) defines brand equity as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand", Aaker (1991, p. 15) describes it as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand, its name and symbol, which add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". The five categories of brand equity include brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand association, perceived quality and proprietary components (Zhuowei & Liping, 2015). According to Siu, Kwan and Zeng (2016, p. 246), brand equity is the "the incremental utility or value added to a product or service by its association with a brand name and/or symbol". Kapferer (2004) see brand equity as the overall net cash flow attributable to the brand after the cost of capital invested in marketing and operations. These definitions suggest that brand equity can be a valuable asset or liability stemming from a brand's name, symbol and knowledge. From this, the conceptualisation of brand equity will be based on Aaker's (1991) definition because his definition is considered comprehensive and very inclusive of components of brand equity (Pappu & Quester, 2017). These concepts are discussed to unleash a broad meaning of brand equity and to map its historic development.

There are three major perspectives of brand equity: financial-based brand equity (FBBE), customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and employee-based brand equity (EBBE). While Kerin and Sethuraman (1998, p. 262) define FBBE as "the tangible wealth emanating from the incremental capitalised earnings and cash

flows achieved by linking a successful, established brand name to a product or service", Basgoze, Yildiz and Camgoz (2016, p. 1254) report it to be "the difference between net present value of future cash flows from a branded product's revenue and the revenue of an unbranded product". FBBE is also defined as the incremental cash flows that accrue to branded products over and above the cash flows resulting from the sale of unbranded products (Basgoze, Yildiz, & Camgoz, 2016). The FBBE is measured using financial metrics such as cash flow, liquidity, and profitability to quantify financial worth. Thus, the measurement of FBBE is based on the economic and financial metrics.

The second perspective of brand equity is employee-based brand equity. King et al. (2012, p. 269) define EBBE as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on an employee's response to internal brand management". The employee-based brand equity assesses the internal dimension of the brand equity while consumer-based brand equity analyses the external dimensions. The concept of employee-based brand equity aligns with the aspects of internal brand management in which the employees are the focus of attention. The notion of employee-based brand equity was based on brand knowledge and the effort of employees towards internal brand-building efforts (King et al., 2012). For building concrete effort of brand knowledge, Piehler et al. (2015) emphasised that internal communication, external communication and employees' effort should be prioritised.

The third and common perspective of brand equity is the CBBE which have been defined by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). Compared with CBBE, which is externally oriented, the FBBE and EBBE are more internally oriented or generated. However, the FBBE and EBBE will depend on how customers ultimately respond to the brand. Consequently, Lehmann, Keller and Farley (2008) identified strong correlations between FBBE and consumers' attitudes and satisfaction. Furthermore, Stahl, Heitmann, Lehmann, and Neslin (2012) summed up that CBBE impacts customer relationship management and FBBE dimensions of cash flow, liquidity and profitability.

Contemporary research studies are extending the study of brand equity. For example, Severo de et al. (2020) has extended the brand equity field by articulating sales-based brand equity. According to Datta et al. (2017), sales-based brand equity (SBBE) is defined as a branch of brand equity that measures the effectiveness of sales initiative in the target market. Datta et al. (2017) summed up the meaning of sales-based measures of brand equity by stating that it is a measure of marketplace manifestations of consumer

perceptions. They recognise that SBBE is measured using the market sales data, which measures the share of a brand in the marketplace. It can be concluded that the SBBE approach is operationalised through modelling of purchase and sales data to derive brand value. Datta et al. (2017) used 'choice-based measures' of brand equity to compute brand equity while the consumer brand equity used attitudinal measures. Their model emphasised using actual brand choices, sales data and self-reported choices by customers. The essence of SBBE is to capture brand attraction of consumers by computing the strength of the brand by using sales information.

Another area of brand equity study is the retailer-based brand equity. Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009, p. 487) define retailer brand equity as "the incremental utility or value added to a retailer by its brand name." The retailer-based brand equity describes the assets and values owned by retailers in terms of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association. Jara and Cliquet (2012) reinforced that retail-based brand equity intends to assess where retail brand value comes from and how it is measured. According to Jara and Cliquet (2012, retailer-based brand equity is part of service brand equity in which both traditional brand equity dimensions of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association and retailer-specific dimensions are essential**.** The section further defines and provides the types and benefits that retailers can achieve if they build their brand equity.

3.3. Definitions, Types and Benefits of Retailer Brand Equity

The section defines retailer brand equity, the benefits of retailer brand equity and explored the various type of retailer brand equity.

3.3.1 What is Retailer Brand Equity?

The origin of the word 'Retail' was derived from a French verb, 'tailer,' which means "to cut again." Accordingly, retail trading processes involve cutting off bulk consignments into small portions. A retailer is defined as a merchant or an agent, or a business enterprise that buys in bulk from wholesalers and breaks the bulk consignment into small portions that are then marketed and sold to the ultimate consumers for consumption (Balaji, 2011). If these two words are combined, they form "retailer brand," a joint term that gives a holistic representation of branding at the level of the stores or retailer rather than at the product level. A retail brand is the unique name, logo, or symbol representing a group of the retailer's outlets. Retail brand represents the functional value of the retailers and relays the working chemistry of the brand

(Rashmi & Dangi 2016). It can be noted that retail brands concentrate their value propositions at the retailer level, which influence retailer image (Balaji, 2011; Rashmi & Dangi 2016).

Keller (2016) defined retailer brand equity as "the differential effect of retailer knowledge of customers' responses to the retailer's marketing." In the grocery industry, brand equity is the outcome of the retailer's total brand-building initiatives that involve the daily socialisation and implementation of the marketing message by tapping services, products, price, and promotion decisions initiatives (Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple, & Ellinger, 2011). Brand equity refers to the incremental utility or value derived directly from a product or service brand name. It is often believed to contribute to a company's long-term profitability. Aaker (1991) defined retailer equity as a "set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a store brand, name, and symbol, which can add to or subtract brand value based on how the customers perceive the store brand." According to Aaker (1991), brand value emanates from retailer brand awareness, retailer brand associations, retailer perceived quality, and retailer brand loyalty. Jinfeng and Zhilong (2009) described retailer brand equity as the incremental utility or value added to a retailer by its brand name.

The definitions above show that retailer brand equity is consumer-based because it is derived from customer perceptions and experiences. It is further stated that retailer brand equity is the value added by the brand name, implying that it is the value of unbranded products and services subtracted from the value of branded products or services (Davcik, da Silva & Hair, 2015; Davcik & Sharma, 2015). The value of the retail brand equity is derived from previous customer shopping experiences that can build a positive brand mindset that, in turn, facilitate brand recall during critical buying situations. From the definitions above, it can be concluded that retailer brand equity is derived more from the consumers' subjective perceptions than from objective indicators (Sharma, 2015).

3.3.2 What Benefits Do Retailers Get from Brand Equity?

Brand equity is intended to offer both functional and emotional benefits to its consumers in the retailer context by ensuring that retailers provide unique brand offerings that give symbolic value and experience. For grocery retailers, brand equity is one of their core strategic resources and most powerful invaluable assets. The retailer brand equity communicates the total image of the whole store establishment. Furthermore, Ismail (2012) retaliated that brand equity can instil consumer familiarity with the grocery retailer brand that can develop favourable and unique brand associations in consumer memory.

Consumers often make pre-shopping decision of the likely groups of grocery retailers they think can satisfy their requirements. The pre-existing conceptions' bases are guided by past experiences and interactions with the specific retailer brands (Handley, 2013). Using previous service encounters with the brand, customers can evaluate their experiences and build up some perceptions. The customer perceptions can influence the customer lifetime interaction with the specific retailer brand. Handley (2013) noted that a retailer with substantial brand equity is likely to leave positive live customer experiences that can motivate customers to purchase the same offerings.

Empirical research on retailer brand equity has shown that grocery retailers can create an image or reputation in consumers' minds (Troiville, 2016). In all the empirical studies, the retailer store equity represents a crucial and unique aspect of retailer branding (Seong Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee, 2018). Customers remember the retailer brand as a place where they experience the retailer offerings, which can help customers relate with the retailer brand holistically (Pappu, & Quester, 2017). This setup ensures that the retailer brands have control over communication channels to enable them to create a powerful source of grocery retailer long-term value for customers. Additionally, Sarjana, Kartini and Rufaidah, (2018) reaffirmed that customer decision-making is taken at the point of purchase, making retailer brand and their equity a vital communication channel for customers to understand the brand and their characteristics.

Pappu and Quester (2017) illustrated that retailer brand equity has shifted from a micro-level of concentrating at the product or service to the company's level by using the retailer brands that represent the total image of the store name. The retailer brand equity can achieve a holistic representation of the total retailer offering in several ways. The retailer brand equity can manage different products and services lines where each line is different in aspects of price and quality, and all these differences are whipped into a single, synchronised branding equity model with a single image that adds value to the total product and services offering (Foxall, 2017; Pappu & Quester, 2017). The retailer brand equity can also represent many stores in different areas and shopping environments operated by a multi-culturally diverse workforce where the retailer brands and equity are the only unifying denominator among them. In conclusion, the retailer brands and their value can place many manufacturer brands into one unifying brand strategy (Handley, 2013; Pappu & Quester, 2017).

The retailer brand equity can further unify the different manufacturers' brand characteristics into a harmonised and single brand offering that equally tells one story to customers about the grocery retailer's

operation. Through their brands, the grocery retailers assume facilitation roles by managing conflicting needs, priorities, and expectations of their network of stakeholders (Weindel, 2016). Store brand enables grocery retailers to express themselves in a way that does not tie them to a specific brand of products and services. The supermarkets, through brand equity, can build consumers retailer dependence which is solely aligned to their brands and can shift from the previous arrangement where dependence was centred on manufacturers' brands (Samu, Krishnan, Lyndem, Reginald & Litz, 2016). The retailer brand equity can enable grocery retailers to have much control and autonomy in selecting suppliers, arranging the distribution and warehousing network, designing and formulating display strategies, and have an autonomous decision on sales margins. These developments can typically enhance grocery retailer's growth and can broaden the extent at which grocery retailers can make decisions about their store and their corporate dimensions of the retailer brand (Burt & Davies, 2010)

In retailer brand equity, customers can embrace learning using their experiences with the brands (Iglesias et al., 2011). Tapping customer learning processes bridge the gap brought about by the unique service brand characteristics such as intangible, heterogeneous, inseparable, and perishable (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). Furthermore, the retailer brand equity can incorporate multi-sensory dimensions that facilitate brand awareness and brand choices. It is argued that the grocery brands deal with fast-moving products and services such as food products and a large and diverse range of consumers with conflicting interests. These circumstances require much control of the selling processes at the point of action, which is at the retailer premises (Wileman, 2010). Decentralised decision-making and control of the retailer brand down to the store level is highly recommended in these situations. This set up can ensure that grocery retail brands create "shopping experiences" in their operations (Allaway, Huddleston, Whipple, & Ellinger, 2011).

Castro et al. (2011) predicted that retailer brands have a symbolic and functional value that can satisfy customer utilities and customer self-concept-brand relationships. Usually, personality concepts are the customers' reasons for making real choices to buy specific retailer brands. In this sense, the retailer brand equity and related brand characteristics can bring more incredible comparative social-economic benefits (Foxall, 2017) and have a high likelihood of satisfying customer social status, fulfilment, accomplishment, sophistication, and exclusivity that increase social approval of brand by customers (Castro et al., 2011). According to Semeijn et al. (2004), consumer buying judgments are influenced by store brand

characteristics. The store brands play a significant role in building store image and enhancing retail store differentiation. Swoboda (2013) confirmed that the value of retailer branding increases brand association that in turn influences consumer buying processes.

Additionally, it is widely acknowledged that grocery retailer brands' economic prominences are continually increasing (Sharma, 2017). The brand ranking by BrandZ (2016) and Interbrand (2016) showed that retailer's brands such as Alibaba Group, Home Depot, Zara, and Walmart are commanding much value and respect in the market. Grocery retailer brands guarantee that the brands will deliver consistently on quality, convenience promises and thrive on beating the promised quality thresholds (Davcik, da Silva & Hair, 2015; Davcik & Sharma, 2017). The section below examines the antecedents of retailer brand equity.

3.4. Studied Antecedents of Retailer Brand Equity

Empirical evidence elucidates that retail brand equity comprises similar elements of other brands (manufacturer brand) and additional service-related components (Burt & Sparks, 2012). The literature on retailer brand equity can be inferred from the brand equity theories of Keller (2013) and Aaker (1991). In terms of the above theories, consumers with high brand awareness and familiarity have "strong, favourable and unique brand associations in memory with the brand," which creates high brand equity (Calvo-Portal, Martínez-Fernandez1, Juanatey-Boga & Levy-Mangín, 2013). The literature further reaffirms that the cornerstones of creating retailer brand equity are anchored on consumers' experiences and encounters gained from the brand's previous usage (Diniso & Duh, 2016). Retailer brand equity is an expression of value gained in the customer value chain (Datta, 2011)

As discovered by Jinfeng and Zhilong (2010), there are unique retailer service-related components of brand equity that include brand retailer image, retailer physical attributes, customer experiences, and other characteristics associated with a service brand such as intangibility, non-durability and the inability to separate the processes of service manufacturing and service delivery. Jinfeng and Zhilong (2010) concluded that the leading factors affecting retailer equity consist of aspects unique to the retailer brand equity, such as store image construct, which comprises convenience, interactive stores, and physical facilities perceived price, and employee service. According to their research, retailer-specific characteristics scored higher positive impact on retailer brand equity than the classical brand equity drivers.

Das et al. (2013) studied the impact of retail stores' personalities on customer-based retailer equity. These studies concluded that factors such as sophistication, dependability, and empathy showed a positive and considerable impact on retailer customer-based retailer equity. Also, Gil-Saura et al. (2015) concluded that the retail image's composite factors of perceived value, trust, and retail store prices are essential aspects in building retail store brand assets and can lead to traditional brand equity dimensions such as customer loyalty.

Ruta and Juozas (2010) performed a study that proposed a model for assessing brand equity using customer-oriented approaches. Their results emphasised that brand equity dimensions of brand awareness, brand image, quality, price, and brand loyalty were valuable indicators of grocery retailer brand equity. Their research study further concluded that retail brands enable retailers to ultimately construct customer value and brand equity that helps customers endow a unique position for retailer brands in customer minds (Rohde, 2018). However, Pan, Yue, Simon Sheng, and Xie (2012) cautioned that some of these criteria are only drivers of customers' store choice, not brand equity dimensions, hence the need to analyse them through empirical means critically.

From the literature above, the antecedents of retailer brand equity that were studied are based on the cognitive measures and these studied factors encompass customer satisfaction and loyalty (Azzawi & Anthony, 2012), retailer associations (Londono, Elms, & Davies, 2017), brand awareness (Aaker 1996, Keller, 2013), differentiation (Anderson, 2011), personal relevance (Truong, Simmons, Mccoll, & Kitchen, 2010) and retailer innovativeness (Porral, Levy-Mangín, & Bourgault, 2013).

Table 3.1 below shows the research that has been done on retailer brand equity in the last decade.

Table 3.1: Research on Antecedents and Outcomes of Brand Equity

Empirical Study	**Country where the study conducted**	**Antecedents of Brand Equity Studied**	**Outcome of Brand Equity Studied**	**Important Findings**
Keller (2010)	Research study done in the USA	Access, in store atmosphere, Price	Retailer Brand Equity	Both direct and indirect channels

	soft drink brands (Coke and Pepsi) Studied master brands and sub brands	and promotion, brand attitudes, Brand Attachment and brand knowledge		significantly impacted retailer brand equity
Jara and Cliquet (2012)	Samples from three French retailers (Carrefour, E-Leclerc, and Intermarche).	Perceived quality, price image, personalities of the brand retailer, brand service and store service	Retailer brand equity	Retail brand awareness has an enormous impact on retail brand image
Wang and Finn (2013)	Master brands such as Coca-Cola and sub-brands such as Diet Coke and Coke Zero in the USA	Current brand awareness, current brand association, current perceived value, current perceived quality	Future brand loyalty and future price premium	Both cognitive and non-cognitive factors had positive and significant effects on future outcomes of brand equity such as future price premium and future brand loyalty
Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga and Levy-Mangín (2013)	Five Spanish store brands	Store reputation, store commercial image, Store Brand Price Image, stores brand awareness, stores perceived quality, store brand loyalty.	Retailer brand equity	Store reputation, store commercial image, which is most critical in determining customer patronage in the retailer context

Nazarpoori, Mousavi and Mohammadian (2016)	Used clients of bank branches are the nation Khorramabad	Perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty with brand preference as a mediator	Brand Image and brand attitude	Brand equity through brand preference impacted brand image and brand attitude.
Satvati, Mahnaz Rabie and Rasoli (2016	Iranian motor industry	Perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty	Retailer brand equity	Store brand equity could predict 53% of the changes in brand preference
Swoboda at el (2016)	Consumer evaluations of retail firms in the grocery, fashion, electronics, and DIY sectors in Germany	RBE attributes of assortment, prices, layout, communication and service	Retailer brand equity	a strong and stable link between RBE and consumers' intentional loyalty is evident across retail sectors
Londono at el (2017)	Studied Boots Hair Retailer	Awareness, Quality and Loyalty	Retailer brand equity and intentions	Supported that CBBRCE is explained by Awareness/Associations, Loyalty and Quality
Anselmsson et al. (2017)	Sample drawn from well-known retailer brands in Sweden	Awareness, Product quality, service quality, physical	Loyalty	Brand trust had a high beta coefficient with loyalty.

		store, loyalty and perceived value		
Akbarov (2018)	In Turkey, State of Azerbaijan.	Perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty	Retailer brand equity	The relationship between brand awareness perceived quality, brand loyalty and overall brand equity was significant.
Butt, Mohd-Any, Mutum, Ting & Khong (2018).	Used Chinese online shoppers	Web design, customer services, privacy and reliability	Retailer brand equity	Trust and satisfaction were significant influencers of consumer-based e-retail brand equity.
Seong Ho Lee and Sun-Ho Lee (2018)	South Korean consumers from six Korean retailer categories: discount stores, online shopping malls, convenience stores, traditional markets, department stores, and factory outlets	Retailer awareness, retailer associations, perceived retailer quality, retailer loyalty, and retailer reputation	Retailer brand equity	Dimensions of retailer awareness, retailer associations, perceived retailer quality, retailer loyalty, and retailer reputation scored significant relationship with customers' retail usage intention
Dewi, Anandya, and Honantha (2018)	Used a sample from full-time students at various universities in Surabaya city, Indonesia	Brand association, brand loyalty, brand	Retailer brand equity	Brand association affects brand equity

		awareness, brand image and perceived quality		
Troiville, Hair and Cliquet (2019)	FMCG sector and retailing in general in France	Access, assortment, atmosphere, convenience, employees, product quality, product value and private brands	Retailer brand equity, Attitude, Loyalty and word of mouth	In-store atmosphere (path coefficient: .23) and the quality (.22) and value of the products (.20) offer the greatest potential for marketing activities and brand equity. For attitude, R^2= 0.5; loyalty= R^2 and WOM, R^2=0,40
Selina and Pratomo (2019)	Used social media users and have bought. Zara, Pull and Bear, H&M, and Uniqlo brands	Brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and country -Of-Origin	Retailer brand equity	Brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and country-Of-Origin image influenced brand equity.
Pham (2019)	Used consumer goods retailers in Vietnam	Brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality	Retailer brand equity	Brand loyalty has the most substantial influence on retailer brand equity

Cristina and Wilson (2019)	Students from a Spanish university	Brand love traditional Word of Mouth and electronic communication	Repurchase Intentions and Retailer brand equity	brand love influenced WOM.
Badenhop and Frasquet (2021)	Customers of a leading multichannel supermarket in Germany	Retailer awareness, retailer associations, retailer perceived quality, perceived usefulness and retailer loyalty	Intentions to shop online at multichannel supermarkets and retailer brand equity	Retailer awareness, retailer associations, retailer perceived quality, and retailer loyalty contribute, together with perceived usefulness, explained intentions to shop online at multichannel supermarkets.

The summary of the research streams above noted that much research was done on antecedents of brand equity, and few examined outcomes of brand equity. Researchers such as Pham (2019) studied the impact of brand loyalty, brand awareness and perceived quality on retailer brand equity. Selina and Pratomo (2019) examined the influence of brand association, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image and country of origin on retailer brand equity, Londono et al (2017) studied the relationship of awareness, quality and loyalty with retailer brand equity. In the above-mentioned research, the writers are analysing same antecedents of retailer brand equity giving assurance that there is at least agreement of the important drivers of brand equity. However, the researchers above differ much on the resultant outcomes of retailer brand equity as there is still little commonality.

This situation calls for the need for research studies to incorporate outcomes of retailer brand equity in research undertakings. The current research examined sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity to inform the noted gaps in the retailer research undertakings. The below section explains the outcomes of retailer brand equity.

3.5. Studied Outcomes of Retailer Brand Equity

Kotler and Keller (2016) noted that brand equity research should focus on the likely brand equity outcome against their much emphasis on antecedents of brand equity. The main reasons for encouraging much attention to brand equity outcomes are centred on the fact that the outcome perspectives describe the consumer actions in the cognitive-affective –action cycle of brand equity. Using this notion, brand equity outcomes manifest in wide ranges of actions that result in the consumers' experiences, feelings, attitudes, preferences, and customer intentions. These tenets of brand equity outcomes determine the customer purchase action. According to Romero and Yague (2016), brand equity's outcomes connect the retailer brand in the consumers' minds through the powerful influence of customer referral and purchase actions. In line with the above, Moradi and Zerai (2011), in a study that evaluated the effects of brand equity, concluded that brand equity drivers increase the probability of consumer brand choices, brand preference, and purchase intent.

The outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity are categorised into financial market outcomes, customer outcomes, and market-related outcomes. The section explains the components of grocery retail brand equity outcomes by detailing both the benefits and downsides of adopting a specific outcome category when measuring brand equity.

3.5.1. Financial Market Outcomes

The financial outcomes of the retailer brand equity emphasise the need for measuring the financial value of brands. One financial outcome is the opportunity of a brand to charge a premium price. Branded retailer establishments command higher prices than an unbranded retailer store (Porral et al., 2013). As noted by Porral et al. (2013), a premium price can be achievable when the number of customers willing to buy branded products and services outnumbers the customers willing to pay similar prices to equivalent unbranded products and services. It can be concluded that retailer brands create loyal customers who can easily accept to pay high prices for their preferred brands and are not willing to switch to other brands (Basgoze, Yildiz, & Camgoz, 2016). Brand equity value can be calculated using the revenue premium formula (Kotler & Keller, 2016), which uses differential revenue calculated from the difference between revenue from branded retailer stores and revenue from unbranded retailer stores. According to Basgoze, Yildiz, and Camgoz (2016)**,** the mathematical formula for calculating revenue premium is shown below.

Revenue Premium = (Volumeb)(Priceb) - (Volumepl)(Pricepl)

Source: Basgoze, Yildiz and Camgoz (2016)

This formula shows that revenue premium is the difference between revenue from net price multiplied by sales volume of a branded store minus a corresponding net price multiplied by the sales volume from unbranded stores. The comparison between revenue from a branded retailer stores and the revenue of an unbranded retailer store gives the marginal revenue increase attributed to brand equity (Basgoze, Yildiz & Camgoz, 2016).

Other financial market outcomes of brand equity are liquidity measures. Liquidity outcomes measure a company's ability to generate enough cash to satisfy the grocery retailers' credit obligations as and when they arise. The greater the brand equity value of the retailer stores, the better the liquidity financial risk. This means that grocery retailers with optimum liquidity standing are better positioned to pay their creditors without straining their financial standing (Ukaegbu & Oino, 2012). The main aim of the financial liquidity outcomes is to trade-off between profitability and operational ability. If a firm is highly geared, meaning a very low liquidity ratio, it signifies that the retailer is highly illiquid and can consequently fail to meet its current credit obligations, thus exposing the retailer to a significant risk of bankruptcy (Anuara & Chin, 2015). On the contrary, if the liquidity ratios are too high, profitability is negatively affected because funds are left idle without adding value to the organisation; hence, an optimum liquidity level is recommended.

However, it is argued that the financial outcomes give historical evidence of performance and lack a deliberate attempt to predict future earnings (Voleti & Sethuraman, 2016). Furthermore, these measures are short-lived as they are not linked to customer behaviour, which shows whether customers are still and will still patronise the retailer products and services in the present and future time frames. In this regard, these financial methods of measuring brand equity outcomes do not predict the future ability of grocery retailers to generate future earnings. The future ability to generate cash flow is regarded as a proxy of customer behaviour that can be used to depict the actual processes of how specific grocery retailers gain preference in the eyes of customers (Anuara & Chin, 2015).

3. 5.2. Market Share Outcome

Market share outcomes of brand equity measure the success of marketing initiatives in building customer alliance with the brand and can be measured by the number of sales as a proxy of brand performance. Market share outcomes are driven by cost reduction mechanisms that can be implemented in the brand's marketing value chain (Ozcifci, 2017). As customers acquire enough brand knowledge, corresponding favourable opinions and attitudes about the brand are equally nurtured through brand awareness programs (Reed & Martens, 2011).

The market share outcomes of brand equity are classified into sales growth, market share, and market penetration (Stah, Heitmann, Lehmann & Neslin, 2011). Didia and Nwokah (2015) emphasised that sales growth, customer retention, return on investment, market share are proxies of brand equity outcomes. Furthermore, Horsfall and Mac-Kingsley (2018) found out that market outcomes of brand equity use current and prevailing market conditions, making these brand equity outcomes helpful in measuring the direction and magnitude of specific brand value.

Sales growth is the differential changes in sales revenue relative to the baseline sales levels (Machek, 2014). The sales growth is mainly regarded as the market measure of brand acceptance by the market. In this regard, sales growth is an essential stage of the lifecycle for all profit-based organisations. Brand equity initiatives such as brand familiarity programs, perceived quality, building a solid brand image and managing customer brand loyalty can leverage the products and services potentials (Bagheri & Arabi, 2013; Odalo, Njuguna, Achoki, 2016). In conclusion, brand equity has a positive impact on sales growth.

Edeling and Himme (2018) defined market share as a percentage of the target market a specific organisation has captured and is currently serving. In terms of the market power theory, the larger the market share, the greater the market power advantages, meaning the organisation in a monopoly position enables it to charge high selling prices to customers and negotiate lower purchase prices with suppliers (Edeling & Himme, 2018). An organisation with high brand equity has the capabilities of building a high market share that can develop a bandwagon effect in the market (Sheth, 2011). The bandwagon effect describes a wave of brand acceptance whereby customers imitate each other when buying grocery retailers' products and services. As a result, an increase in the number of customers using a specific brand has a

magnetic effect of attracting customers of similar profiles to adopt the brand offering in substantial numbers.

Market penetration refers to the successful selling of a product or service in a specific market gauged by the ratio between the amounts of sales volume of existing goods or services of a specific brand compared to the total target market (Bigley, 2019). Market penetration is a function of brand equity. Brand equity dimensions are often used to drive market penetration initiatives (Haag & Cummings, 2013). According to Khalid, Lewis, Inder and Rajiv (2011), the application of perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand awareness and brand personality are commonly used to propel market penetration strategies that can either pull or push the brand offering. If grocery retailer embraces a strongly relational approach with customers an incremental effect on customers' purchasing frequency and purchase amount can effectively result (Sener & Behdioglu, 2013). The resultant increase in market penetration is caused by inter-customer referrals, which effect customer acquisition at no cost (Sener & Behdioglu, 2013:167). In conclusion, market penetration is an outcome of brand equity implementation.

The analysis of retailer brand equity outcomes above noted that these is no single measure that describes all the grocery retailer's circumstances. The revenue or price premium outcome has limited diagnostic ability as it does not provide insights into the customer sources of equity, thus affecting its effectiveness as a measure of retailer brand equity outcome (Reed, & Martens, 2011). Furthermore, it does not consider the future brand potential and the ability to extent brand lines. On the other hand, Ozcifci (2017) emphasised that customer retailer brand outcomes are still the first-choice method of measuring brand equity because, in their computation of retailer brand equity, they apply observable customer actions that brand managers can see and witness.

3.5.3. Customer Outcomes

The retailer grocery brand equity has a differential effect on customer responses. These responses to branding programs by customers are called the customer outcome of brand equity. Branding programs affect customers' emotional, social, and intellectual orientation in varying degrees (Keller, 2016). Keller (2013) postulates that retailer brand equity affects customer intention to buy, customer preference, and customer loyalty. These tenets of brand equity outcomes fall under the consumer perspective in which

attitude, awareness, liking, or credibility are used to measure customers' brand responses and reactions (Kumar & Paul, 2018).

In many cases, the grocery retailer brand influences the customer mindset by building good perceptions that influence customers' decisions to buy. From the customer perspective, retailer brand equity can improve the customer views of the retailer brand and nurture brand preference and repurchase intentions (Kourovskaia & Meenaghan, 2013). The customer outcomes of retailer brand equity can be categorised into brand preference, purchase intention, and brand loyalty (Kumar & Paul, 2018). According to Voleti and Nelson (2012), customer-related brand equity outcomes are regarded as first-class measurement methods of brand equity. This is mainly because they analyse the individual customer, which is the unit at which brand-related choices are implemented. Brand equity is the aggregate value derived by the customers from the use of specific brands. If consumers perceive high brand equity, then a positive attitude towards the products or services is developed in the customer mindset. The positive mindset has a high bearing on customer future purchase intentions and future brand choices (Puaschunder, 2017). A common denominator among the customer outcomes is that they relate to behavioural action usually driven by customer perception (Kumar & Paul, 2018).

One of the customers brand equity outcomes is brand preference. According to the utility theory, consumer brand preference is governed by the marginal increase of consumer utility of products or services on consumer satisfaction (Farmer, 2014). The lower the marginal utility related to a brand, the lesser is the consumers' willingness to select the equivalent brand in their buying proposition.

Brand preference is the consumer's biasness toward a particular brand (Chang & Liu, 2009). Additionally, brand preference is one of the indicators of a brand's strength. Predicting consumer preference is very demanding and challenging; however, this process remains fundamental in understanding consumer choices. Empirical studies confirm that consumer preferences are consistent over time, giving a robust and accurate way of predicting consumer choices compared with attitude methods which are short-lived in nature (Ozcifci, 2017).

Another outcome of brand equity is the repurchase intention, which is defined as the probability of customers buying an item from a similar class of brands (Crosno, Freling & Skinner, 2009). Repurchase intention refers to the extent to which customers consistently buy a brand and at the same time refuse to shift to other brands (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000). Research studies have pointed out that the best predictor

of customers' behaviour is their intention to perform specific behaviour (Heodarzadeh, Hambiz; Alvani, Mahdi, Ghalandai & Kamal, 2010), thus making this measure an essential tenet of forecasting purchase behaviour. Consumer intentions are influenced by attitude and behavioural norms (Puaschunder, 2017). The attitude factors determine consumer choices and behaviour, which in turn affect brand preferences.

The third customer outcome of retailer brand equity is brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is defined as the level of consumer faithfulness to a brand as measured by usage rate and repetitive purchases (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). From the literature above, two basic dimensions of brand loyalty are noted. One dimension of brand loyalty is behavioural loyalty or purchase loyalty, which is the customer commitment to buying specific brands despite alternative brands' competitive actions. The second dimension of brand loyalty is attitudinal loyalty, which defines the psychological commitment towards the brand by consumers (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). According to Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje, and Asiamah (2016), consumers progress through four stages of brand loyalty: cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty, conative loyalty, and action loyalty. The first phase of brand loyalty is characterised by consumers who show a rational and focused evaluation approach towards the brand attributes and other brand-related features. This is followed by an emotional attachment nurtured by a positive experience related to exceptional brand performance. At the affective loyalty level, behavioural intentions to buy brands, such as dedication to a brand and associated brand love, are the key characteristics (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). The final level of brand loyalty called action loyalty and involves loyal customers buying a specific brand, repeating a brand's purchase, and overcoming brand barriers (Oliver, 1999).

While the customer brand equity outcomes are the preferred indicators of retailer brand equity, their data collection methods are very costly because data must be collected from individual customers. Furthermore, individual customers' responses may be regarded as subjective (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). There is a well-confirmed mismatch between stated preference and revealed preference in customer research, which might challenge the quality of direct information from individuals in a research environment (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). Another drawback of using customer brand equity outcomes is that the constructs of brand preference, brand loyalty, and customer purchase intentions are perceptual, meaning converting these factors into figures such as monetary values, which can give a straightforward meaning to managers, is somehow cumbersome. Additionally, the term brand equity is a bit misleading because the word "equity" has its origin in the realm

of finance (Chen & Zhang, 2013), giving the impression that financial brand equity outcomes are very appropriate indicators of brand equity. However, research studies are on record that the core aspects of brand equity are highly aligned to the customers' subjective views that represent the customers' intangible brand equity effects (Chen & Zhang, 2013). For the purpose of getting an in-depth understanding of the outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity, empirical literature of repurchase intention and brand preference were analysed in the below sections.

3.6. Repurchase Intentions as an Outcome of Retailer Brand Equity

Repurchase intention refers to a multi-stage process in which consumers intentionally collect information on attributes of specific brands, which they can use to evaluate and compare their perceived satisfaction among similar brands (Long-Yi & Jui-chi, 2012). Such results from customer evaluation can manifest in customer cognitive dissonance that determines the future customers repurchase intentions of a specific brand. In such evaluation processes, repurchase intention is regarded as a proxy of purchase behaviour (Long-Yi & Jui-chi, 2012). A positive cognitive dissonance can result in positive repurchase intentions of products and services. It is, therefore, that repurchase intention is defined as a process where consumers deliberately make plans to buy a particular brand in the future (Wu, Hsiao & Yeh, 2011).

Additionally, repurchase intention is defined as the consumers' decision-making processes taken by customers before making repeated purchase transactions of products and services (Reed, & Martens, 2011). In terms of the definitions above, repurchase intention includes consumers' processes of searching for services and products so that they can buy them. Empirically, repurchase intention is strongly influenced by customer attitude and preference toward a brand (Kim, Kim & Johnson, 2010; Lloyd & Luk, 2010). According to Bischof and Airoldi (2012), repurchase intention depicts the consumers' willingness to buy a specific brand. Febrian and Vinahapsari (2020) argued that purchasing interest can be realised when the products and services criteria are aligned with the customers' wants. The value of repurchase intention is based on its ability to induce customers' propensity to buy more from specific retailer brands (Jing et al., 2015). In this context, customer behaviour is a set of actions and processes that consumers adopt in search of need-satisfying products and services.

Accordingly, Kim and Ko (2012) emphasised that repurchase intention is one element of attitudinal variables that enhances retailer brand equity effects. In this case, it is crucial to evaluate consumer repurchase intentions factors that can influence customers' motivation to purchase products and services

(Diallo, 2012). The consumers' positive feelings and attitudes toward brands are predictors of repurchase intention (Das, 2014) as they increase purchase persistence in customer behaviour. Previous research studies reaffirm that customers buy brands that they hold positive attitudes. Additionally, repurchase intentions to buy from a grocery retail store is affected by external factors. The external factors, such as physical location, colour, store arrangement, and staff compliments have enormous effects on customer retailer brand choices (Das, 2014).

On the other hand, intrinsic factors such as brand-customer personality, lifestyle, and customer self-beliefs and values determine the customer's intentions to buy from retailer brands (Luo, Tang, & Xiao, 2011). In conclusion, purchase intention drivers are broad, as they cover aspects of customer experience and retailer brand-building initiatives. The value of customer experience is seen in actions that instil positive memory (internal and external) of a specific brand in customers' minds. The main difference between internal and external memory is that customers gather information about the brand from their own experience with the specific brand under internal memory. In contrast, under external memory, customers gather information about the brand from external sources such as publicity and colleagues.

Various research investigations were carried out on the relationship between brand equity and consumers repurchase intentions in order to explain the working chemistry between the two constructs. Azizi and Ajini (2012) concluded a significant relationship between brand equity and the willingness to recommend similar purchases to other customers. While these studies did not study a direct relationship between brand equity and consumers repurchase intention, an implied relationship can be concluded as the willingness to recommend the brand purchase to others is a proxy of repurchase intentions (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). Tariq, Nawaz, Butt and Nawaz, (2013) studied the relationships between the brand image, which is a dimension of brand equity, and consumers repurchase intention and, in their study, a moderate positive relationship between these variables was concluded. Hernandez and Kuster's (2012) research study on customer attitude proved a significant impact on repurchase intention.

Furthermore, Kawa, Rahmadiani and Kumar (2013), in their study on the effects of brand name, concluded a significant impact of a brand name on the customer repurchase decision. In much of the research studies cited above, the brand evaluative processes sought to get a deep understanding of the purpose of brand equity in customer choices. It is conclusive that the brand equity-purchase intention relationships were

studied from the customer perspective (de Oliveira et al., 2015), and several research streams concluded a high impact of brand equity on consumer behaviour.

According to Read, Frederick, and Airoldi (2012), repurchase motives are driven by various reasons. The first motive is the customers' desire to buy products and services to satisfy various basic needs and wants (Diallo, 2012). The second motive is the preferential interest of individual customers towards a specific retailer brand (Bischof & Airoldi, 2012). Customers are adventurous in their search for products and services; hence, they constantly seek options and new products and services. The random search of products and services are done to satisfy customer exploratory interest as they try and test brands by pilot buying products and services from a specific retailer brand (Bischof & Airoldi, 2012). The customer purchase motives are mostly linked to some predictors of consumer intention (Das, 2014). The transactional motive can be driven by the monetary cost of the general grocery merchandise (Bischof & Airoldi, 2012). According to Goeltom, Kristiana, Pramono and Agus (2019), there is a significant positive relationship between price and consumers' buying motives of brands. The consumers' attitude influences the customer transitional, preferential, and exploratory purchase motives; thus, price plays a significant part in determining brand choices and engagement. In tandem with both the transactional and preferential motive, Chaniotakis, Lymperopoulos, and Soureli (2010) concluded that the economic situation has a bearing on repurchase intentions. Conroy (2019) confirmed that the dynamism of customer intentions is in line with the economic cycles. During times of economic downturn, customers tend to turn towards low-valued brands, and as the economic fortunes improve, they shift their preferences and repurchase intentions towards highly valued or familiar brands (Luo et al., 2011).

3.7. Brand Preference as an Outcome of Retailer Brand Equity

Brand preference is the level at which the customers tend to like a specific brand compared to other brands, which form part of the customers' consideration set of products and services portfolio (Schultz, & Block, 2012). Similarly, brand preference is the biasness customers hold toward a particular brand (Viswanathan, Schultz. & Block, 2014). Brand attributes that keep an ever-lasting experience in the customer's mind play a significant role in building customer cognitive behaviour that lead to affective behaviour such as brand preference (Bronnenberg, & Dube, 2016). Brand preference means that customers are likely to choose a particular brand, even in circumstances where equivalent brands match prices and performance equally.

Empirical studies confirmed a significant and positive correlation between brand preference and consumers' decision to buy (Tolba & Hassan, 2009).

The consumer preference for brands is categorised into three cognitive, affective and conative or behavioural (Aulia & Brilian, 2017). In the cognitive stage, brand awareness plays a vital role in instilling brand knowledge of the brand's functional and psychological capabilities. In this stage, the main goal includes marketing activities that reinforce the utilitarian beliefs of brands (Larkin, 2013). The affective stage involves activities that enhance the customer processes of liking or favouring a brand and improve customer attitude towards it (Londono et al., 2017). The conative or behavioural stage involves consumers' action of buying the preferred brands. In this stage, the action represents the repurchase intentions, which may have progressed through the cognitive and affective stages (Van Kerckhove, Geuens, & Vermeir, 2012). To understand brand preference, an analysis of its underpinning theories is vital. Therefore, the below section discusses theories that have a bearing on brand preference and repurchase intentions.

Several theories explain brand preference (Ben-Othmen, Asma & Mariia, 2019). The Lancaster theory states that customer demand is based on both necessity and emotional needs, such as the need to satisfy hunger and comfort needs (Ben-Othmen, Asma & Mariia, 2019). In terms of this theory, customers buy a product and service like a car for its comfort and the related services it offers, not the car itself. Consumers buy certain brands because of the sets of attributes, such as freshness in fast-moving food products, taste in purchasing flavoured meat, flavours in purchasing perfumes, and convenience in buying a standard car. The desire to buy is derived from the brand's characteristics, which are composed of a bundle of brand attributes rather than the nature of the products or services themselves (Ben-Othmen, Asma & Mariia, 2019). In conclusion, customers buy bundles of attributes in specific brands. This theory explains consumers' preference towards store brands by translating grocery retailer brands' characteristics into customer need-satisfying characteristics.

A utility is a measure used to predict the customers' relative satisfaction from various goods and services. Utility is defined as the characteristics of products and services that ensure that human wants, and needs are satisfied (Hackel, Pfosser & Trankler, 2017). The more a customer uses a specific product or service, the more the customer gain total utility (TU) or satisfaction. However, marginal utility, which is the extra utility gained by customers after consuming one extra unit of a product or service, diminishes as the same customer repeatedly consumes the same product or service (Schwartenbeck, FitzGerald, Mathys, Dolan,

Kronbichler & Friston, 2015). In general terms, the world is composed of individuals who are primarily rational and intend to maximise their wealth. This theory influences customer preferences of the products and services they buy because customer intent to maximise their total utility. As they continuously use the products and services, the marginal utility affects customer preference and intentions. In practical terms, buying decisions take a multi-dimensional process in which a diversity of factors such as rational, emotional, and psychological determinants are combined to decide, and these aspects can result in unpredictable or irrational decisions that do not conform to bounded rationality principles on product and services purchases which is a crucial assumption of the utility theory (Wasserman, 2015).

The second theory is the expected utility theorem, or expected utility hypothesis, which is a theory that explains the process that customers face when buying a multiplicity of products and services (Schwartenbeck, FitzGerald, Mathys, Dolan, Kronbichler & Friston, 2015). In this situation, the customers juggle around their preferences of the composite products and services set by using mathematical relations which take into account the size of a pay-out, the probability of occurrence, risk aversion, and the different utility of the same pay-out in relationship to personal customer preferences (Wasserman, 2015).

The utility theory explained how customers make choices and brand judgment (MacLean & Ziemba, 2015). Customer brand preferences are a function of utility theories when customers face a simple selection of products and services. In complex products and services selection situations, the expected utility theorem gives guidance towards product selection and preference processes.

The economic theory states that the world is composed of logically thinking consumers with a multiplicity of needs and wants with which they intend to satisfy with scarce resources (Hackel, Pfosser & Trankler, 2017). As a result, individual customers try to maximise their acquisition of need-satisfying products and services with the idea of saving on scarce resources (MacLean & Ziemba, 2015). This classical theory is elementary, but it allows easy predicting of purchasing behaviour through price variation of products and services. The price differential can cause equivalent changes in quantities of products and services that customers are willing to buy (Wasserman, 2015). In this prediction process, the power of the environment, combined with the assumptions of perfect rationality, is highly considered in determining human buying behaviour. In this scenario, the rationality approach towards brand preferences takes the first preference in decision making. The theory is very progressive in that it strives to capture the usual customer mentality of pursuing and acquiring as many products and services as possible using the least number of resources.

However, the approach is criticised for providing a narrow focus that emphasises rationality without considering other psychological factors that are part of the matrix of brand choices and preference.

The expectancy-value theory can explain the relationship between consumers' preferences and choices. According to the expectancy-value model, consumers' attitude towards a brand is dependent on the strength and value of the expected consequences of customer actions (Palvia & Grover, 2011). The expectancy-value theory links performance, persistence behaviour, and choices to individual customers' expectancies and task value preference (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). The model states that consumers brand preference is a function of consumer cognitive beliefs of the brand's weighted attributes (Muthitcharoen, Palvia, & Grover, 2011). In this theory, expectancies mean specific beliefs that individuals hold on successfully performing a particular task. These customers' expectancies shape up behaviours and choices. If applied in brand preference modelling, it can be noted that customers have many expectancies on brand performance, and these performance beliefs mould the customer brand preference (Hinson, Nimako, VanZyl, Chinje & Asiamah, 2016). Typical expectancies on the brand are quality, functional and psychological characteristics. A low price-quality performance ratio of a brand can result in high brand preference because, in such situations, customers conceive some impressions of gaining. This perception is supported by Larkin, O'Keefe, McLachlan, Gough and Mander (2016), who postulates that the weaker the 'price-quality association, the more favourable the customer attitude towards store brands. In addition to that, Lakshmi (2011), Hsiao, Wang and Chen (2011), in their studies that investigated the role played by store brands in moderating the relationship between perceptual variables and store brand attitude, found out that products and services characteristics played a significant role in matching brand performance and customer expectancies.

Brand preference is a function of previous customer experiences with the brand. Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) deconstructed consumers' brand experiences into four dimensions: affective, intellectual, sensory, and behavioural. Brand experience is a group of experiential marketing initiatives that incorporates a holistic set of conditions created by a grocery retailer to influence customers' feelings about a particular brand (Xie, Poon & Zhang, 2017). Affective brand experiences refer to experiences that appeal to customers' feelings and emotions and create positive moods that link brands to strong customer emotions of joy and pride (Xu & Chan, 2010). The intellectual brand experiences include the brand's ability to engage with the consumer's convergent and divergent dialogue, thus, increase the brand awareness effect (A-Qade, Omar & Rubel, 2017). A sensory brand experience is a type of marketing that

appeals to all five human senses to develop customers' emotional appeal. As a result of multi-sensory brand experience, certain beliefs, feelings, thoughts, and opinions are generated that moulds a specific brand image in the consumer's mind (A-Qade, Omar & Rubel, 2017). Lastly, behavioural brand experiences refer to experimental marketing initiatives that involve buying the brand (Rajagopal, 2019). A brand that appeals across the four components of customer experiences wins the heart of the customers, thus resulting in high customer preferences. Brand equity determines utility value that can be built due to the brands' successful customer interactions and can match brand personality with customer self-concept (Kumar & Narayana, 2018). In this case, brand loyalty and brand equity are taken as antecedents of brand preference (Keller, 1996). In conclusion, Muqaddas and Ahmad (2016) reaffirm that brand equity builds consumer brand preference and consumer repurchase intentions.

The concept of brand preference operates in six modes. Firstly, customers are driven by the need to associate with the brands that satisfy their basic needs of hunger and survival (Chang & Ming, 2013). A diabetic patient builds association needs with a diabetic medicine brand. A hungry person builds association needs with fast food brands. Secondly, customers buy a brand to satisfy their mood association (Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani & Fan, 2016). A coffee addicted customer buys coffee to satisfy the fresh feeling brought about by the act of drinking coffee. Customers associate with classic products and services to satisfy their prestige needs. Thirdly, customers prefer a brand that satisfies their subconscious motivation; that is, certain brand symbols excite the customer in a way that drives the customer to prefer these particular brands over alternatives (Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani & Fan, 2016). There is no meaningful reason that drives the subconscious mood motives of brand preference. Fourthly, customers prefer a specific brand due to the behavioural effects it has on customers (Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani & Fan, 2016). A customer builds an association with a suite brand because it brings in a gentleman character.

From the above literature, it can be concluded that the traditional models of brand preferences focused on consumers' cognitive judgment of brand attributes using rational thinking methods. However, the cornerstone of brand choices has shifted from brand attributes to high considerations of customer experiences (Palvia, & Grover, 2011). Both the rational and irrational aspects are collectively used to enhance positive consumer behaviour towards a brand (Schmitt et al., 2009). The integration of cognitive information processing and experience-based information captures most consumer preference dynamics.

3.8. Conclusion

The chapter examined branding concepts, grocery retailer brand equity and various outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity. The outcomes of brand equity were analysed from the financial, market, and customer orientations. The antecedents and theories affecting grocery retailer brand equity's outcomes were discussed. After examining the baseline literature of grocery retailer brand equity outcomes, the specific empirical literature on brand preference and repurchase intentions was presented. The next chapter discusses the literature on the traditional, contemporary, and retailer-specific models of sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity.

CHAPTER IV

THEORIES AND MODELS ON SOURCES AND OUTCOMES OF BRAND EQUITY

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three provided the definitions, types, sources and outcomes of brand equity with a particular focus on retailer brand equity. This chapter discusses theories and models that explain brand equity in general and retailer brand equity particularly. The discussions start with the theories that were useful in explaining brand equity building and maintenance. The chapter then appreciates and critiques models related to brand equity, retailer brand equity and grocery retailer brand equity to borrow ideas for developing this study's unified grocery retailers' brand equity model.

4.2 Theories of Brand Equity

Although brand equity has been studied for more than three decades, there are limited theories that suggest its sources and outcomes compared to the current studied brand equity models. The first theory found helpful in understanding brand equity is the theory of equity. As reported by Nasse (2021), the theory stipulates that equity, including brand equity, would emanate from individuals' comparison between what they perceive in an exchange "output, profit" and their contribution to the exchange "input, investment" for them to achieve satisfaction, and loyalty. As postulated by Nasse (2021, p. 4), equity can take the "form of perceived fairness in products offerings that can induce customers' satisfaction, customers' retention, customers' loyalty and also customers' repurchase. According to Chaudhuri's (1995) double jeopardy and brand equity theory, these repurchase and loyalty outcomes, additional profits and market share are enjoyed by high market share or high brand equity brand owners who have created high brand awareness and product distribution. The double jeopardy and brand equity theory further stipulates that awareness and distribution can lead to habitual buying, which will directly or indirectly impact brand equity through brand loyalty. According to Chaudhuri's (1995) double jeopardy and brand equity theory, brands with a high market share can enjoy brand equity from favourable brand attitudes.

To further build, maintain and sustainably enjoy the benefits of brand equity, M’zungu, Merrilees and Miller’s brand management theory (2010, p. 605) posits that the brand owner should do and follow three stages: (1) adopt a brand orientation mindset (creating, developing, and protecting brand identity through

continuous interaction with target customers), (2) developing internal branding capabilities (and inside-out whereby brands are positioned and communicated in the minds of employees to embed a ' brand spirit ' that lends support towards organisational brand strategy), and (3) consistent delivery of the brand (delivery of brand promises generates positive brand reputation or image with customers which is one of the brand's major intangible assets and a sustainable source of brand equity. Out of these three theories and like many brand equity models, only one theory (the double jeopardy and brand equity theory) considers outcomes (customer-based and market-based outcomes) of brand equity. Before considering the outcomes, it is essential first to review the models that provide brand equity sources.

4.3 Models Suggesting Sources of Brand Equity

One of the fundamental models of brand equity is Aaker's (1991) customer-based brand equity model. This model is considered one of the first models to give a comprehensive account of brand equity sources. Another fundamental model is Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity (CBBE). The centre of analysis of Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) CBBE models is the customer, who make the ultimate purchase decisions. Customers' decisions are based on what they think, perceive and feel about the value of branded products and services, and that will ultimately drive brand equity (Keller, 2013). Other models that would be discussed in this section are Yoo and Donthu's (2002) brand equity model, Wang and Finn's (2013) customer-based brand equity model, Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín's (2013) brand image Model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE and customer response model and other models that will be specifically related to retailer or grocery retailer brand equity.

4.3.1 Aaker's (1991) CBBE Model

Kwon (2013) considers Aaker's (1991) CBBE model as one of the most comprehensive brand equity models providing easily measurable sources. The model provides a set of five categories of sources or brand assets and liabilities (i.e., brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty and propriety assets) which directly or indirectly influence brand value/brand equity (Aaker, 1992; Huang, Zhuowei, Cai, & Liping 2015). According to Aaker (1991), the five sources of brand equity are used to model brand perception in customers' minds in a way that determines brand value. The collective effect of these sources of brand equity determines the imaginary picture instilled in the customers' minds. If the collective effects of the sources give a positive impression, it means that the brand will remain on the top

of customers' minds and become an asset. On the other hand, if these five sources of brand equity are not developed in a consistent, mutual, and common purposeful approach, they may negatively impact brand equity and result in liability. Figure 4.1 shows the dimensions/sources of Aaker's (1991) brand equity model.

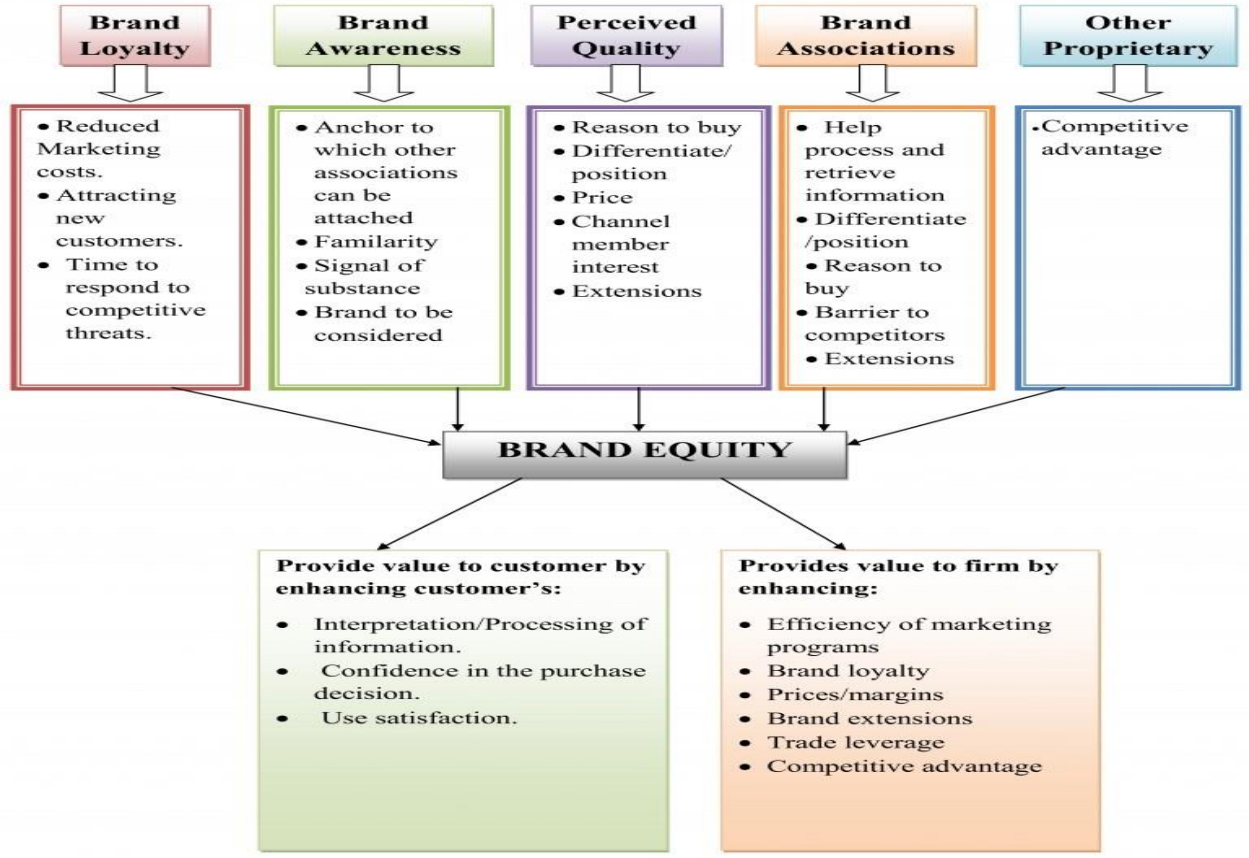


Figure 4.1: Aaker's (1991) Brand Equity Model Source: Aaker (1991, p 28)

Figure 4.1 illustrates that brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and other proprietary CBBE sources directly drive brand equity. The figure also suggests various benefits of brand equity from the perspectives of customers and the firm. However, how much brand equity leads to these benefits or outcomes are rarely examined. The five sources are described and discussed next.

- **Brand loyalty**

Oliver (1999, p. 34) defines brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronise preferred products or services consistently in the future". Cant and Toit (2012) define brand loyalty as an emotional

attachment developed by customers towards brands. Brand loyalty is a form of consumers' brand acceptance that facilitates customers' continuous consideration of brands and their use (Moon, Park & Choi, 2010). Brand loyalty can positively enhance customers' views and attitudes toward a specific brand and cause them to buy the brand over a certain period repeatedly. In addition to being a strong source of overall brand equity (Buil et al., 2013), brand loyalty can enable positive referrals from customers when they recommend the brand to other customers. Aaker (1991) asserts brand loyalty as a unique dimension of brand equity because it is formed due to differential customer brand experience developed by comparing the customer brand usage experiences with the customers' expectation of the brand offering. This makes brand loyalty a vital tenet in driving brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Buil et al., 2013), creating the need to investigate the drivers of brand loyalty (Anselmsson et al., 2017) which this current study did.

- **Brand Awareness**

Aaker (1996) and Calvo-Porral et al. (2015) describe brand awareness as the salience component of the brand, which is made up of customers' recognition of the brand and ability to recall a specific brand during critical buying decisions**.** Lu et al. (2015) affirm that brand awareness ensures that brands are consistently placed at the top-of-the-customers-mind. Kwon (2013) also views brand awareness in terms of how it affects brand presence in consumers' minds by propagating information using different platforms. According to Aaker (1996), once brand awareness has propagated a consistent message, such messages will, in turn, impact customer brand perception, attitudes, and can be used to drive perceived quality, association, and loyalty. From these effects, brand equity can be gained (Wu et al., 2020). Literature, even in the area of retailing (e.g., Jara & Cliquet, 2012), depicts brand awareness as an essential starting point for driving customers' choices, behaviour and brand equity building. With brand awareness placing brands at the ‘top-of-the-mind’ of customers, this can be very useful during critical buying and competitive market situations thus driving brand equity **(**Anselmsson et al., 2017). Considering the initial role that brand awareness creates in brand equity development, the current study started developing the unified conceptual model with brand awareness.

- **Perceived Quality**

Perceived quality is the customer's perception of the overall superiority of products or services when actual products and service performance is compared with the intended purpose and use (Calvo-Porral et al.,

2015). In the context of a brand, perceived quality is the consumer's subjective judgment about the brand's overall excellence or superiority (Anselmsson et al., 2017; Londono et al., 2017) or "an intangible overall evaluation of a brand, usually based on some underlying dimensions, such as the products' characteristics attached to a brand like reliability and performance" (Calvo-Porral et al., 2015, p. 99). Aaker (1996) contend that perceived quality is "the core construct" of brand equity, generated by the messages from brand awareness (Aaker, 1996). The perception instilled about the brand offering through perceived quality can provide a significant competitive edge towards leveraging brand equity than the effects of the actual products and services features. Furthermore, perceived quality forms part of why customers buy products and why they are motivated to forge specific brand relationships (Anselmsson et al., 2017; Londono et al., 2017). Perceived quality is part of the selling proposition of a brand, especially when brand capabilities are used to differentiate certain brands from other competing brands (Nel et al., 2009). While Buil et al. (2013) suggest that perceived quality and brand associations indirectly impact overall brand equity through brand loyalty, Kumar, Dash and Puwar (2013) found a direct relationship between perceived quality and brand equity.

- **Brand Associations**

Brand association, or brand image as Keller (1993) terms it, is defined by Wu et al. (2020, p. 372) as "a set of perceptions about a brand as reflected by brand association held in the consumers' memory". Keller (2013) stipulates that the associations should be strong, favourable, and unique to promise brand equity. According to Buil et al. (2013), the associations should have links with the brand name, especially each time the name is mentioned. For example, the mention of a brand name should exude associations such as fast, competent, reliable, and many other product-related and non-product-related attributes (Keller, 2013). Brand associations spearhead differentiation and good market positioning, which can be a catalyst for building customers emotional attachment to a brand that motivate customers to buy (Bick, 2011). A well-positioned brand with a unique image deters could-be competitors from mounting frontal assault due to the bond created by the brand association that will act as a significant barrier (Keller, 2013). Brand associations also encourage positive attitudes and feelings towards a store's brand (Bick, 2011), all of which may lead to brand attachment and customers' preparedness in advance to choose a specific brand against an alternative brand (Keller, 2013). However, for grocery retailer brands, Londono, Elms, and Davies (2016) stated that brand associations play little to no effect as a driver of grocery retailer brand equity because of the small monetary value of grocery purchases.

- **Other proprietary assets**

Proprietary assets refer to patents, trademarks and channel relationships that can be used to provide a strong competitive advantage to a brand (Ovidiu, 2018). A trademark acts as a defence mechanism for brands from competitors' brands that intend to imitate closely patented formulas, which might confuse customers. Through push strategies, distribution channels can be forced to keep specific brands to meet customer expectations. The distributors are forced to push such high-powered brands to keep themselves in touch with client requirements. The proprietary assets dimension is from a manufacturer's point of view; hence, it was not used in this research that analysed retailer brand equity from the customer perspective.

The strength of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model is on its provision of comprehensive sources of brand equity using both perceptual and market behaviour measures (Aaker, 1996; Hsu, 2011, Kwon, 2013). The model's perceived quality and brand awareness are perceptual measures deduced from the brand's customer perceptions and play significant roles in guiding purchase behaviour (Rodrigues & Martins, 2016). Under the behavioural measures, the model has brand association and brand loyalty as major constituents that can influence the customers' propensity to like a specific brand, a process that intensifies customers' purchase intentions (Rodrigues & Martins, 2016). Compared with other brand equity models, this model is much referenced and is much used in brand equity research studies as it forms the foundation of brand equity, and it serves as the primary guiding model in many brand equity studies.

Despite the overarching importance of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, some critics have pointed out some shortcomings. Firstly, it does not consider the interrelationship between the CBBE sources before brand equity is achieved. Contrary to Aaker's (1991) model that shows that each of the brand equity sources does not relate but directly impacts brand equity, Buil et al. (2013) have shown that sources are interrelated to lead to brand loyalty, a direct and strong driver of brand equity. The second weakness is that although Aaker (1991) suggests that brand equity has benefits for consumers and the firm, the benefits are assumed and rarely measured (Buil et al., 2013).

Other critics worry that the model treats perceived quality as a uni-dimensional factor. Nam et al. (2011) illustrate that quality is formed by two dimensions of physical quality and service quality. Aaker's (1991) CBBE model is also criticised for an over-focus on functional aspects of brands and disregarding brands

symbolic consumption aspects that play a significant role in building brand equity from the customer perspective. Nam et al. (2011) recommend that symbolic consumption dimensions such as self-congruence and lifestyle congruence be included as essential brand equity sources to address these gaps. Following the strength of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, and considering the absence of a symbolic factor, the current study used Aaker's (1991) model as a foundational model to obtain sources of grocery retailer brand equity and borrowed a symbolic aspect (brand personality) from Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retailer brand equity model. This was particularly important because Keller's (1993) CBBE model suggest that symbolic benefits are also essential sources of CBBE.

4.3.2 Keller's (1993) customer-based brand equity model

As did Aaker (1991), Keller (1993) approaches brand equity from a consumer's perspective. Keller's (1993) CBBE model considers brand knowledge structure (BKS), comprising brand awareness and brand image, to be at the heart of the brand equity building process. Keller (1993 and 2013) contend that BKS is the power of a brand that lies in what the customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand due to their exposure and experiences with the brand. The main leverage of brand knowledge is hinged on its ability to create a differential effect in customers' minds that helps build brand equity (Keller, 2013). While brand awareness enables brand recall and recognition during brand purchase by consumers (Keller, 2013), a brand image builds up a set of consumer-brand relationships. Brand recognition is the consumers' ability to remember a brand based on previous experience, which serves as a brand cue whenever the consumer is faced with a similar purchase (Taghipourian, & Noormohammadan, 2017). This implies that consumers need to identify the brand from competing ones based on critical touching points of their previous brand experiences. On the other hand, brand recall explains the customer's ability to store and retrieve brand-related information during critical purchases. Figure 4.2 shows Keller’s (1993) consumer brand equity model.

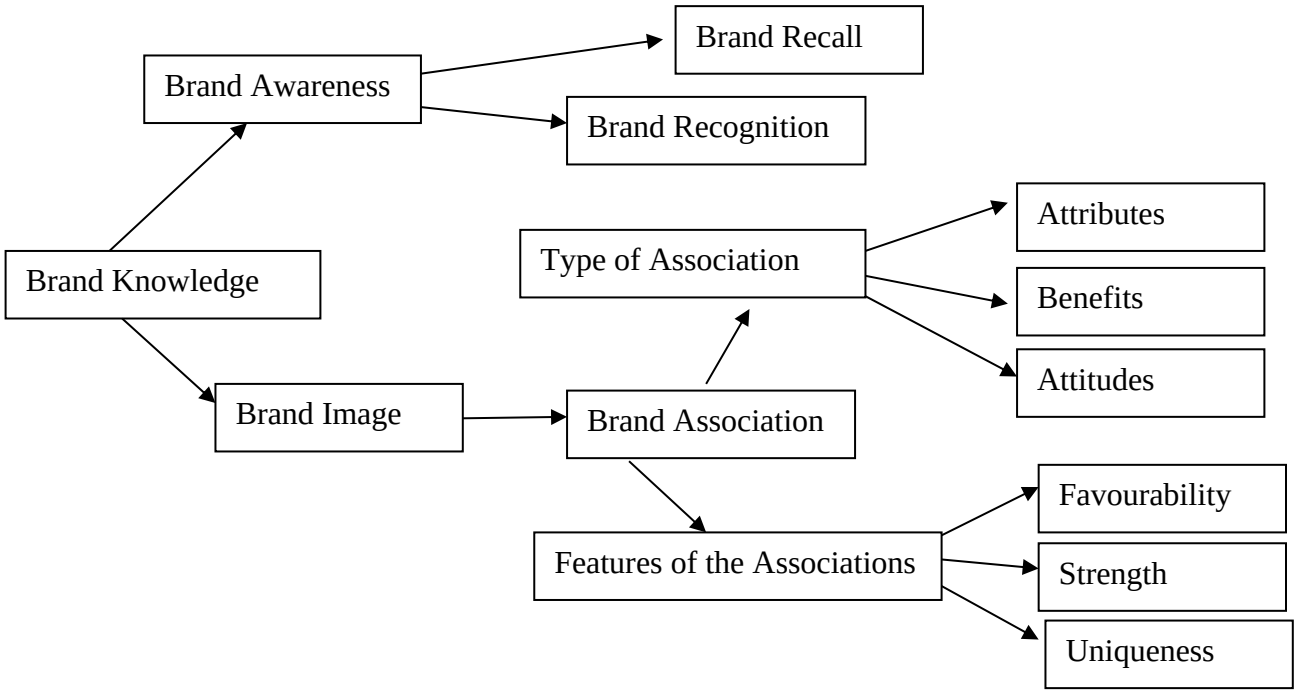


Figure 4.2: Keller's (1993) CBBE Model **Source: Keller (1993, p.7)**

The process of recalling a brand in the customer memory concurs with the influential model of associative network memory, which views memory as a network of nodes and links, in which nodes represent stored information or concepts and links represent the strength of association between this information and concepts (Kim & Hyun, 2011). According to the associative network memory theory, consumer memory is composed of nodes that store a set of information. These nodes are linked together by a set of associations. In agreement with the associative network memory model, brand knowledge is viewed as composed of a brand node in memory with various associations linked to it (Keller, 2016). Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or traces in memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions, while brand image refers to the impression created in the customer mind that can give either a positive or negative attitude towards a brand (Jeon, 2017).

The value of Keller's (1993) brand equity model is centred on its ability to express information that is stored in the node, which is then linked through associations that help the consumer to apply an integrated cognitive thinking approach in the processes of brand recalling and recognition (Keller, 2016; Jeon, 2017). When Keller's (1993) CBBE model (1993) is applied in the retailer context, it predicts three store

brand image building sources that encompass the product, the store, and the retailer characteristics. First, the store-brand image can relate to store characteristics such as store employees' sociability, accessibility of store location, and reliability in stock availability (Calvo-Porral et al., 2013). Second, the store image can be subdivided into product associations and the brand store image in which the retailer image is viewed at a concrete level. Third, the store associations explain the intermediate level of store image, and lastly, the retailer associations represent the store's brand image's abstract level. Like Aaker (1991) model, Keller (1993) provided valuable sources of brand equity but assumed benefits that were neither highlighted nor measured. In addition, Keller (1993) model explains the brand knowledge structure in detail, but it did not explain how brand equity can be developed. Keller's (2013) Resonance Model or Pyramid explains each stage of brand equity building and the actions required to achieve each stage. These actions and processes are explained below.

4.3.3 Keller's (2013) Resonance Model or Pyramid

Keller's (2013) brand equity pyramid presents how brand equity can be built. It articulated six building blocks that show the stages of brand equity building. The six blocks include brand salience, performance and imagery, judgment and feelings, and brand resonance.

- **Brand salience**

The brand salience stage of building customer brand equity involves developing the brand identity, which has a significant association with the customers (Hutt & Speh 2014). Brand identity relates to how the customers look up to a brand and distinguish each brand from one another (Schultz et al., 2011). Brand identity is built when customers are aware of the brand. Then, the brand can build a great brand identity that is beneficial to the customer, which helps attract the customers. Brand identity is the first step in Keller's brand equity resonance model (1992), making brand identity the base of Keller's brand equity pyramid (1992). When the pyramid is strong at the base, it will result in high brand equity. The Figure below shows the stages in a diagrammatic form.

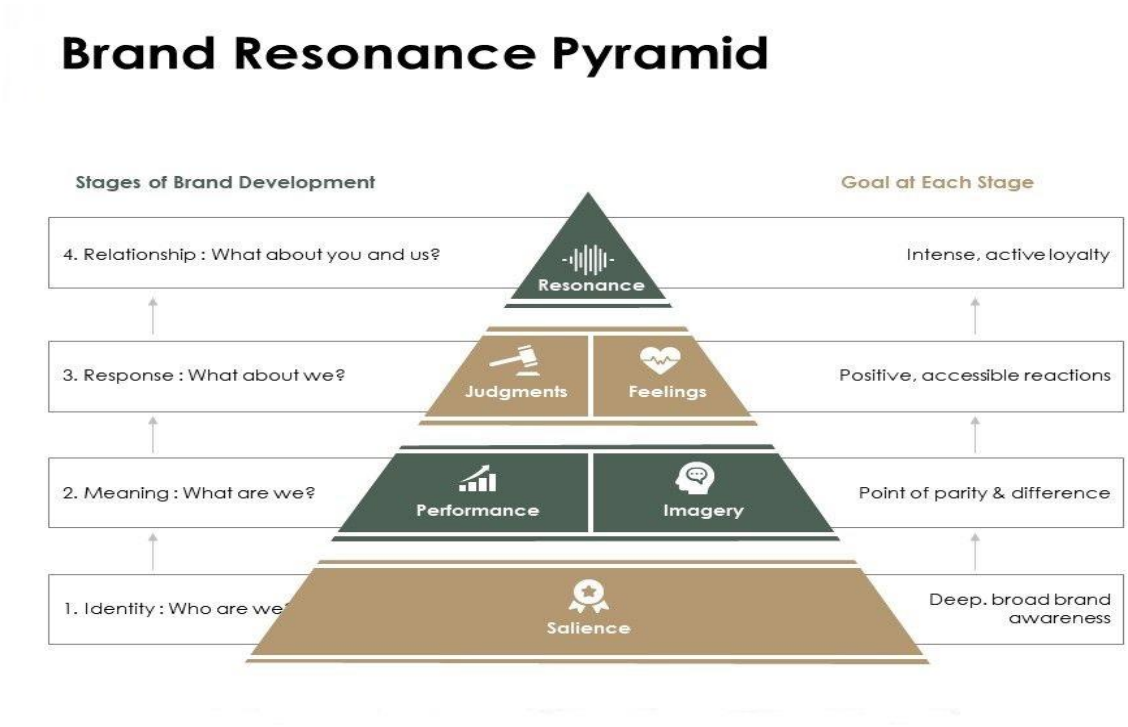


Figure 4.3: Keller's (2013) Brand Equity Resonance Model Source: Keller (2013, p. 108)

- **Brand performance and imagery**

In Keller's (1992) brand equity model, the second stage is divided into two parts that define brand meaning to customers (Kerin & Peterson, 2015). The two factors, according to Keller (1992), are brand performance and imagery. Brand performance is a factor made up of sub-components **of** product features, product reliability, customer service, style and design, and pricing of the products or services (Keller, 2013). These factors express how a brand satisfies customers' functional needs and measures the brand's intrinsic performance.

Brand imagery is a brand equity dimension that relates to extrinsic characteristics of the products or services, and these factors influence customers' psychological or social needs (Manktelow, 2015). Brand imagery predicts the customers' cognitive thinking about a brand (Kapferer, 2012). Through customer interaction with the retailer brand, imagery associations are formed either directly or indirectly. Direct imagery association is formed from consumers' experiences and contact with the retailer brand, while indirect imagery associations are driven by the brand advertisement or other information (Manktelow, 2015).

- **Brand judgment and feelings**

The third stage in building customer brand equity comprises two factors: brand judgment and feelings (Gautam & Kumar, 2012). The brand judgment relates to customers' personal opinions and evaluations. The customers collectively evaluate the performance and imagery associations to form brand opinions (Keller, 2013). Customers can then make brand-related judgments regarding quality, credibility, consideration, and brand superiority using the collected information. In addition, brand feelings create an emotional attachment to the brand that will ensure customers are committed to brand purchase (Gautam & Kumar, 2012).

- **Brand resonance**

The final step of the CBBE model is brand resonance, which represents the highest level in building brand equity. It focuses on the ultimate relationship and level of identification that the customers have with the brand (Aziz & Yasin, 2010; Barbis, 2012). Brand resonance describes the relationship and the extent to which customers feel they are 'in sync' with the brand (Keller, 2013). The goal is to achieve customer loyalty, attachment, and engagement with the brand (Keller, 2013.

An essential contribution of the Keller brand equity model is that it focuses much on consumer perceptions (Hsu, 2011). This approach is quite valuable in the contemporary marketing approaches, where the customer takes a critical centre stage, and it helps organisations evaluate their sources of brand equity from an external perspective (Barbis, 2012). In addition, the model emphasises brand knowledge and brand awareness, which are widely confirmed empirically as the first actions that brand equity building organisations should initially perform to take the brand to the consumers (Sharma, 2017). Though the model did not extensively explain other sources of brand equity as those covered by Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, its conceptualisation of customers injects important customer views to branding (Sharma, 2017). Furthermore, the CBBE model of Keller (1992) articulated brand building stages showing the primary goal at each stage, and the main activities organisations should engage in to achieve the hierarchical goals.

4.3.4 Yoo and Donthu's (2002) Brand Equity Model

The Yoo et al. (2000) brand equity model was developed by integrating aspects of both Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) brand equity models. This model is well respected in brand equity literature as it is

widely regarded as one of the most robust brand equity models with few weaknesses *(*Pappu & Quester, 2016). Its structural format comprises three sections: the marketing mix, the traditional brand equity dimensions and overall brand equity. The model is widely respected for its attempt to position the brand equity initiatives in conjunction with the general marketing strategy that uses the 4Ps usually applied in the retailer's everyday marketing initiatives. The model included the marketing mix components such as price store, image, distribution intensity, advertising spending, and price deals as antecedents of brand equity. Using a hierarchical format, the marketing mix, the 4Ps, are taken as input to brand equity dimensions. The brand equity dimensions, such as perceived product quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness/associations, are then presented directly, impacting the overall brand equity.

The Yoo et al. (2002) brand equity model is presented below, showing the interrelationships between the latent variables included in the study. Figure 4.4 shows how the marketing mix of 4Ps directly influences brand equity dimensions but indirectly impacts overall brand equity. The model shows a direct link between dimensions of brand equity with overall brand equity.

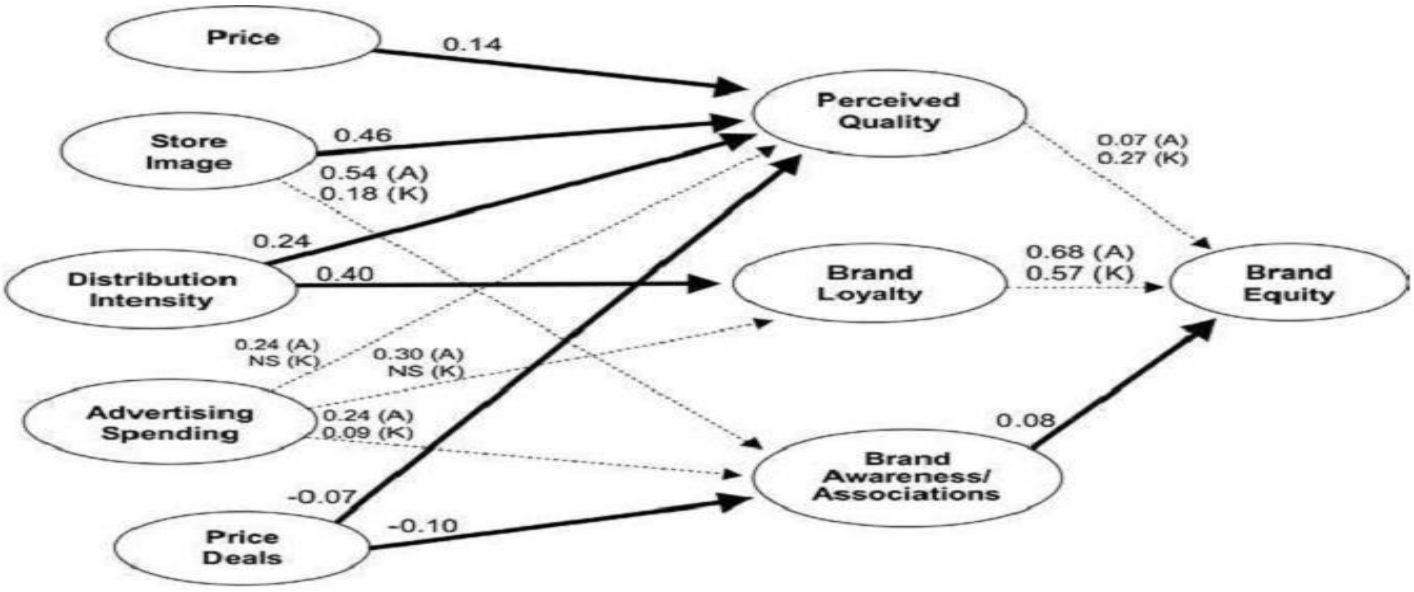


Figure 4.4: Yoo and Donthu's (2002) Brand Equity Model Source: Yoo and Donthu's (2002, p. 392)

In validating the model, Yoo and Donthu (2002) used samples from multiple cultures consisting of undergraduate students from the USA and undergraduate students from South Korean universities to

gather a broad customer perception. Furthermore, they studied brand equity using products and services, including athletic shoes, film, and colour TV.

Yoo and Donthu (2002) model concluded that brand loyalty and perceived quality directly impact overall equity. On the contrary to previous models, the model collapsed brand awareness and brand association into one dimension of brand equity due to the results of discriminant validity that failed to distinguish the two dimensions, mainly when applied to service brands such as the retailer brand (Christodoulides, John & Veloutsou (2015). In both Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) brand equity models, the dimensions of brand awareness and brand association were presented as two distinct sources of brand equity.

In Yoo Donthu's (2002) brand equity model, the marketing activities were integrated into the broad brand equity building activities. Furthermore, the model proposed a different understanding of brand loyalty. Many research studies adopted brand loyalty from a behavioural perspective; however, Yoo Donthu's (2002) model extended brand loyalty by referring to it as the general tendency of preferring a specific brand by relating the preferred brand as the customer's primary choice. In conclusion, a brand needs to keep a leading relationship with its customer base, primarily using its preferred performance factors to remain the brand of primary choice. However, several researchers Lee and Back (2010); Christodoulides, John and Veloutsou (2015) and Nam et al. (2011), argue that these results from Yoo and Donthu (2002) might need to be treated with caution when applied to service brand equity because of different findings from the mainstream brand equity models. These authors' concerns may particularly apply to grocery retailer brands that sell non-durable and low-cost items. Therefore, in addition to the need of validating Yoo and Donthu's (2002) and other discussed models with various product and service brands, including retailer brands, there is also the need to review models that have examined the outcomes of CBBE.

4.4 Models Providing Outcomes of Brand Equity

The section discuses Moradi and Zarei’s (2011) outcome model, Wang and Finn’s (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model, Buil, Martınez and Chernatony’s (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model, Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli’s (2016) CBBE Sources and Consumer Behaviour Outcomes Model and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca’s (2017) Integrated Retailer Image and Brand Equity Model. The emphasis in the section is to articulate the outcomes of brand equity.

4.4.1 Moradi and Zarei's (2011) CBBE Outcomes Model

Following the claims that brand equity produces benefits or outcomes (Keller, 2013), Moradi and Zarei (2011) examined two outcomes (brand preference and purchase intentions) of brand equity. Their study was with a sample of young Iranian consumers owning laptop and mobile phone brands. The primary objective was to test relationships between brand equity, brand preference, and purchase intentions and how the model was moderated by country-of-origin image. Figure 4.5 presents Moradi and Zarei's (2011) brand equity outcomes model.

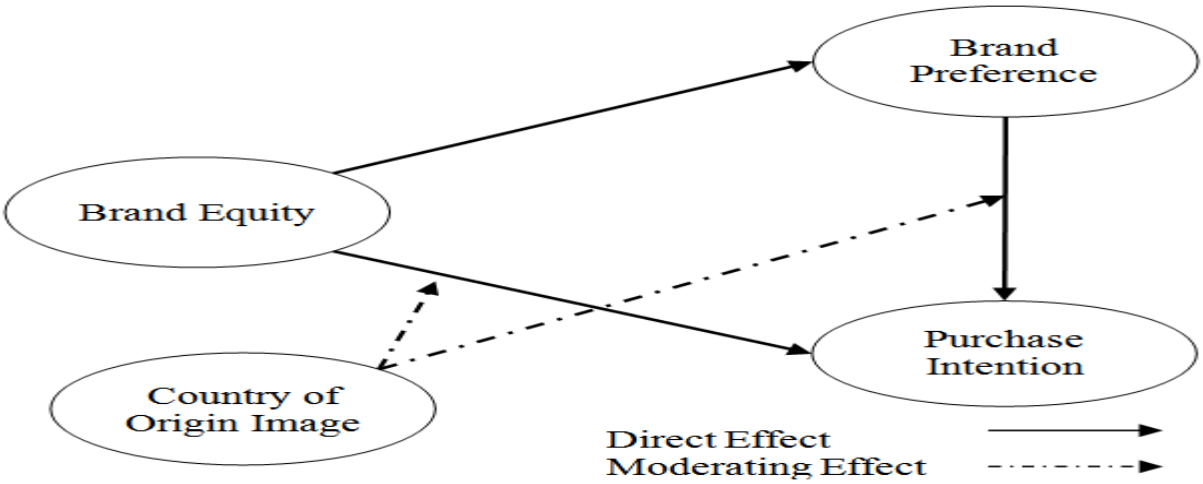


Figure 4.5: Moradi and Zarei's (2011) CBBE Outcomes Model Source: Moradi and Zarei (2011, p. 540)

Moradi and Zarei's (2011) Structural Modelling Equation results supported the stated hypotheses that brand equity has a direct and positive impact on brand preference and purchase intention. Country of origin image did not moderate the relationships between brand equity, brand preference and purchase intentions. The results implies that there are likely benefits on customer brand preference and purchase intentions when brand equity initiatives are applied.

4.4.2 Wang and Finn's (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model

Using brands within a product category and comparing a parent brand and sub-brands, Wang and Finn (2013) distinguished the latent CBBE constructs by separating formative dimensions (causes of CBBE) from reflective dimensions (effects of CBBE). Their model integrated cognitive and non-cognitive factors

and their effects on future brand equity outcomes, such as willingness to pay future price premiums and future brand loyalty. Figure 4.6 presents the model.

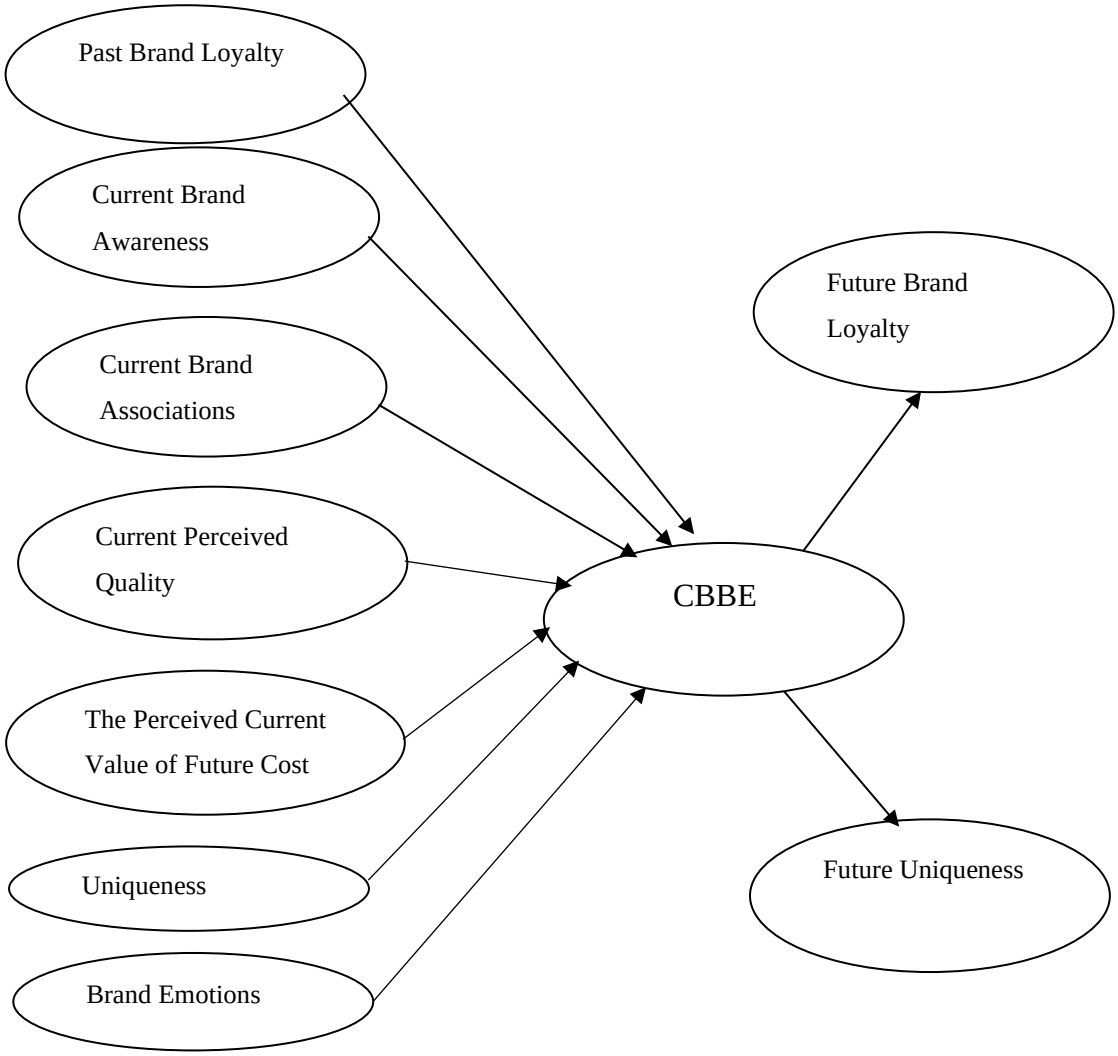


Figure 4.6: Wang and Finn's (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model

Source: Wang and Finn (2013, p. 676)

In addition to incorporating traditional CBBE sources like brand awareness, associations loyalty and perceived quality, Wang and Finn (2013) introduced new sources such as uniqueness, perceived current value of cost and brand emotions. The results show that the sources commonly impacting brand equity for the parent brand and its extensions are uniqueness and perceived quality. For example, in most Coke

product categories studied, brand equity drove future brand loyalty and willingness to pay a price premium. Wang and Finn's (2013) fundamental contributions are its retrospective aspect and differential timing of how sources can be applied to achieve brand equity outcomes.

4.4.3 Buil, Martınez and Chernatony's (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model

Buil et al. (2013) researched the interrelationships between Aaker's (1991) CBBE sources, their effects on overall brand equity and, in turn, on customer responses such as brand preference, repurchase intention, attitudes towards brand extensions and willingness to pay a premium price. In testing the model, data was collected from several Birmingham locations (the UK) and Zaragoza (Spain) to achieve a cross-country analysis of brand equity-consumers responses relationships. The model is highly referenced mainly because of the many CBBE outcomes test and its cross-cultural testing. Furthermore, the model studied both product and service brands, which also helped in analysing brand differences, and it aided in comparing brand equity differences between the two poles of brands.

The model starts with brand awareness and brand image (brand knowledge structure) as the first action in building brand equity with the idea that once brand knowledge has permeated into the customer minds, then perceived brand quality and related brand association are created. Finally, brand loyalty is considered the direct source of brand equity generated by the interrelationships of brand knowledge and perceived quality. An important finding by Buil et al. (2013) is that overall brand equity positively and significantly impacted all four outcomes of CBBE, of which brand preference and purchase intention were customer-based outcomes and premium price and brand extension were firm-based outcomes. Buil et al.'s (2013) are provided in Figure 4.7.

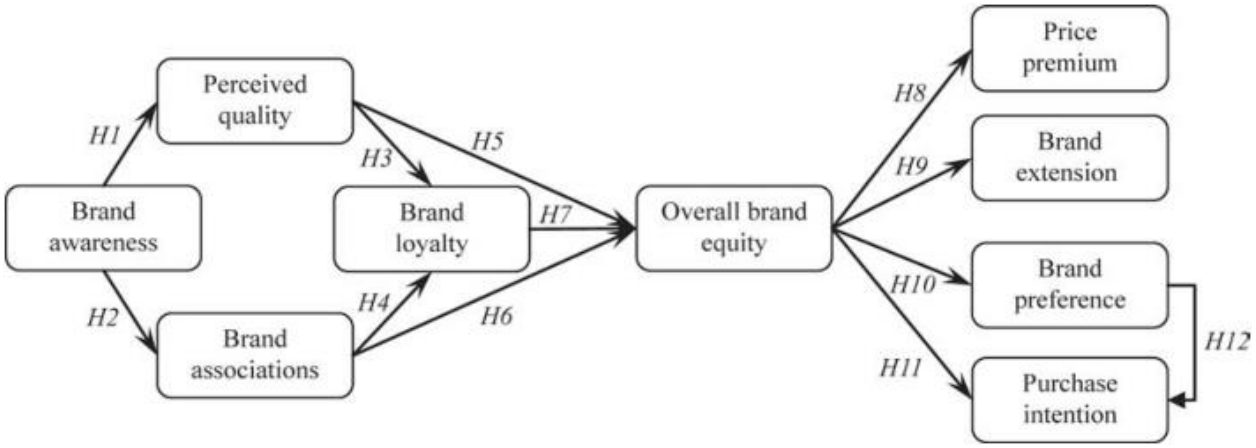


Figure 4.7: Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE Sources and Outcomes Model Source: Buil, Martinez and Chernatony (2013, p. 64)

The current study borrows the customer based CBBE outcomes tested in the context of a grocery retailer brand. The current study also followed Buil et al.'s (2013) causative order of effects among brand equity sources. During marketing programs, the first step starts with brand awareness to affect brand association and perceived quality. Once the brand is known, and a positive perception has been developed in the customers' minds, brand loyalty becomes a top priority as it is deemed to influence overall brand equity. Finally, brand preference and repurchase intentions become eminent when brand equity is firmly developed from brand loyalty (Buil et al., 2013). The findings showed that brand equity has a positive impact on consumers' responses.

4.4.4 Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli's (2016) CBBE Sources and Consumer Behaviour Outcomes Model

Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli (2016) use sources of brand equity provided by Aaker's (1991) brand equity model. They posit that brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and perceived quality will positively impact brand equity, which will drive brand equity outcomes in the Iranian motor industry, such as brand preference, repurchase intention, and willingness to pay extra cost. The model was assessed in terms of the input-process-output relationships of brand equity and tested with owners of Grand Vitara, Sportage, and Santafe KIA and Hyundai car models in Iran, Khodro. The model is presented in Figure 4.8.

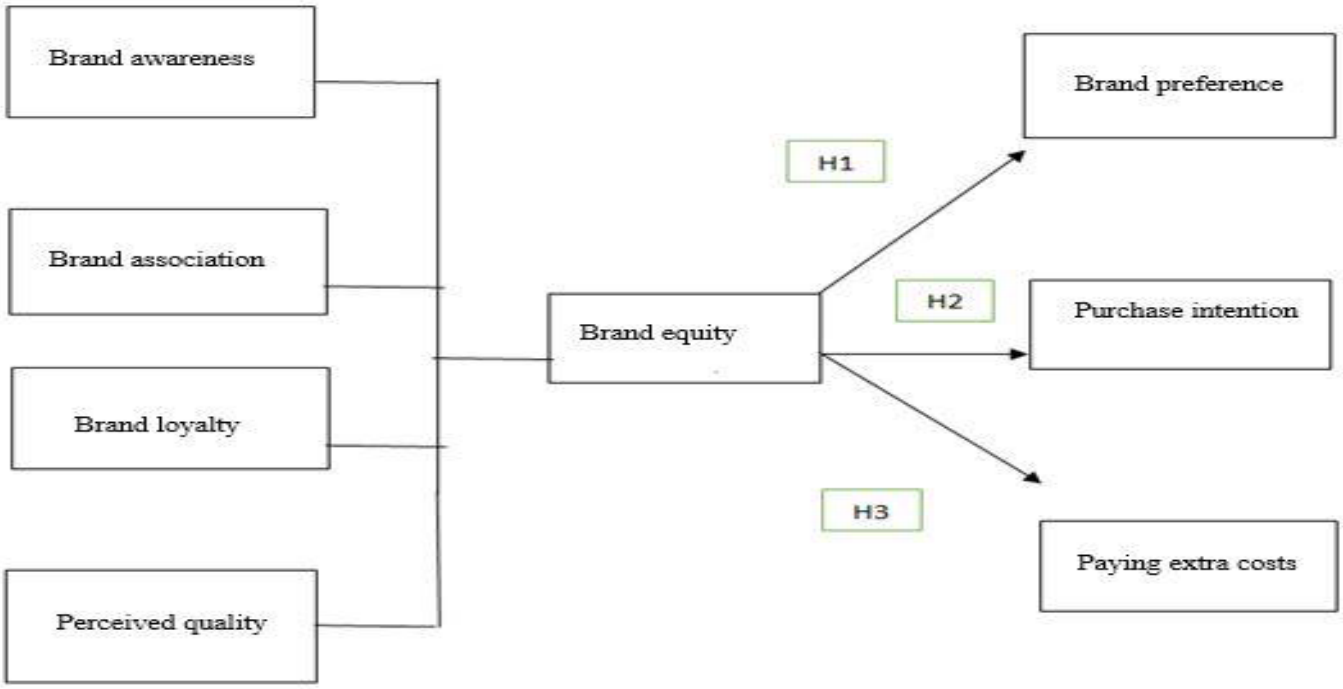


Figure 4.8: Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli's (2016) CBBE Sources and Consumer Behaviour Outcomes Model. Source: Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli (2016, p. 157)

The testing of the model in Figure 4.8 showed that all the sources significantly impacted brand equity, which significantly impacted all three outcomes studied. The model's strength is its ability to link brand equity sources to brand equity outcomes in the Iranian motor industry (Satvati et al., 2016). The weakness is that even though brand loyalty was the most vital driver of overall brand equity, its predictors were not studied. The drivers of brand loyalty were provided by Anselmsson, Burt, and Tunca's (2017) integrated retailer image and brand equity model discussed next. Salvati et al.'s (2016) model explained 34% of customer's willingness to pay extra costs, 53% of the changes in brand preference, and 26% of consumers' purchase intention. Whether these predictive powers will be the same for a grocery retailer brand needs a study.

4.4.5 Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) Integrated Retailer Image and Brand Equity Model

The model postulates that brand awareness is the first action to be carried out in order to develop an integrated retailer image and brand equity in the retailer context. Then, brand awareness is configured as a source of customer services, product quality, price policy and physical store attributes. After that, these

marketing factors are hypothesised as breeding retailer brand trust, which can increase customers' loyalty to the retailer brands. Their model is shown below.

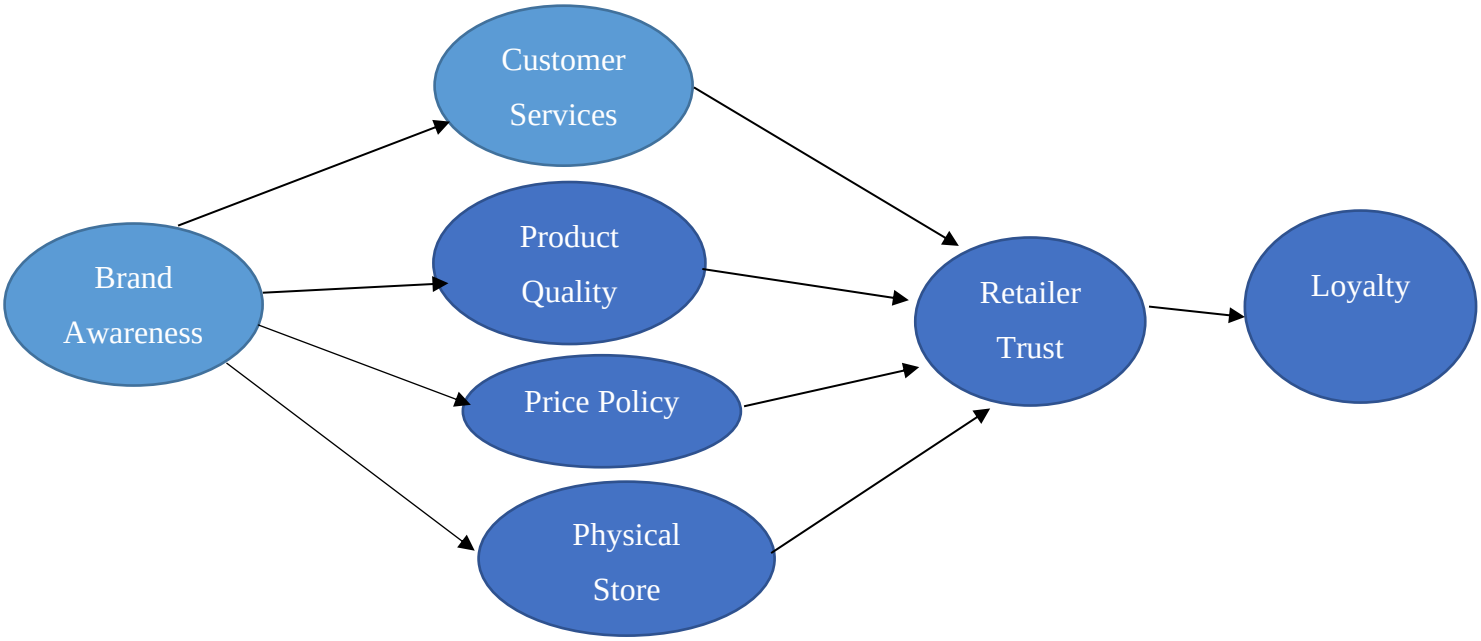


Figure 4.9: Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) Integrated Retailer Brand Equity Model. Source: Anselmsson et al.'s (2017, p. 20)

The process of testing these hypothesised relationships involved collecting data from Swedish retailers operating in the grocery and interior design space. Typically, data were collected from retailers such as ICA (The leading Swedish grocery retailer operating hypermarkets, supermarkets, and convenience stores), Willy's (a successful Swedish value-for-money big-box retailer), and Lidl (an international discount grocery store); the interior design retailers were Hemtex (a mid-market retailer) and IKEA.

Their results showed that the model explained 86% of the variance in brand trust. Furthermore, the model explained 52% of the variance in the loyalty construct (Anselmsson, Burt & Tunca, 2017). Thus, Anselmsson et al. (2017) model extended brand equity dimensions by adding retailer-specific constructs in their research. The model's primary strength is its ability to explain the sequential operating dynamics of the retailer brand equity in which brand awareness is serially arranged in operation with marketing factors, followed by brand trust and loyalty. Based on the outcome variable of loyalty studied in this model, further literature is unrevealed on brand loyalty dimensions below.

4.4.6 Dimensions of brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is a multidimensional construct that is composed of factors such as trust (Rubio, Villasenor & Yague, 2016; Ngobo & Jean, 2012), distribution (Gil-Sauraa, Corraliza-Zapataa, Ruiz-Molinaa & Michel, 2015), prices (Brown, 2013), and customer services (Min, 2010; Creswell, 2009). The four factors drive customer loyalty, especially in the grocery retailer equity context. The first factor, customer services attract customers to shop repeatedly from a specific retailer brand. Second, the prices charged on products and services influence grocery retailers' image, mainly if rational pricing systems are applied to build brand loyalty. Lastly, distribution is an essential aspect of the grocery retail sector because most of the services and products provided by grocery retailers are categorically convenience in nature. In this regard, the closeness of grocery retailers to customers plays a vital role in creating retailer patronage and customer repurchase intentions (Smith, 1992; Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000). The below sections expand these factors and further describe their relationships with brand loyalty.

- **Trust**

From a retailer brand equity perspective, brand trust is defined as a psychological variable that is formed by a set of brand attributes that include credibility, integrity, and benevolence, and these characteristics help retailers forge long-term relationships with customers (Delgado et al., 2003; Ming et al., 2011; Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami, 2013). Atkinson and Rosenthal (2015) ascertained that a good brand should create certain levels of assurance of performance and predictability in the customer value chain that enhances brand loyalty. Through the daily use of the brands, some form of customer interactions is established, which then determine the level of customer brand loyalty (Sahin et al., 2011) and brand acceptance (Delgado et al., 2003) that in turn drive the willingness of the average consumer to depend on the brand capabilities (Lin & Lee, 2012). As a result of the brand trust, customers can develop feelings of safety about the brand that ensure the brand will always meet or surpass their expectations regarding reliability, credibility, intimacy, dependability, perceived quality, and general performance aspects (Delgado et al., 2003). In this vein, brand trust can be a cornerstone for building long-term relationships between brands and customers, thus, giving leverage towards strong brand loyalty. Therefore, it is in the interest of grocery retailers to deconstruct the processes that enhance brand trust so that brand managers can build these processes in their brand loyalty programs to reap the benefits (Lin & Lee, 2012). The brand-customer mindset's intense feeling of confidence and credibility can enhance current and future

business engagements (Delgado et al., 2003). Such a positive customer mindset and feelings influence customers to buy grocery retailer products and services from certain grocery retailers. In this case, the emotional effect of trust ensures that customers can always stand by their brand and prioritise the brand against competing brands due to a well-modelled brand value – brand trust – brand loyalty relational chain (Marzocchi, Morandin & Bergami, 2013).

- **Customer services**

With the increase of information accessible to customers through various communication platforms, customers of this generation are increasingly demanding more customer services than before (Mourato, 2011). In this situation, the notion of brand durability where customers used to be loyal to a brand for their lifetime is eroded and is receiving questionable sentiments (Makovsky, 2011). These characteristics are the new normal order of the contemporary market, and to circumvent these situations, grocery retailers need to formulate brand differentiation strategies as a matter of priority. One way of retaining customers in the age of dying brand loyalty is implementing an integrated approach towards customer services (Barrett, 2018). Customer service is the support that grocery retailers offer to customers during the pre-sale and post-sale stages of customer brand encounters and experiences (Hong-Youl & Ha, 2011). Customer services are the interfacing activities undertaken between the customer and the grocery retailers to facilitate the sale and use of the retailers' brand products and services (Barrett, 2018). It represents the activities retailers perform to simplify products and services by carrying out customer training and demonstrations (Hong-Youl & Ha, 2011). Furthermore, retailers can offer free delivery services, warranty services, and trolleys to ferry goods and services to personal transport mechanisms as a form of customer service.

Tu, Li, and Chih (2011) postulate that grocery retailers' customer services are a strong barrier against competition and add value to customer loyalty. In addition to that, Barrett (2018) emphasised that customer services can act as a point of retailer brand differentiation that can help reduce marketing costs. Furthermore, according to Kalliny (2012), customer service can influence store loyalty as customers build positive attitudes and preferences that will always guide their grocery purchase decisions. In support of Kalliny (2012), the Microsoft State of Global Customer Service survey (2017) studies found that 89 percent of customers tend to switch to a competitor brand due to a bad customer experience.

Empirical evidence reinforces that good customer services are essential in service organisations where customer engagement is critically required for successful service provision and operations. In support of the above literature, the Microsoft State of Global Customer Service survey (2017), which polled 5,000 people from Brazil, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, concluded that 96% of grocery retailer customers valued customer service as an essential driver of brand loyalty. Their analysis depicts customer service as a differentiator that builds an empowering grocery retailer that can operate on a philosophy of delivering personalised services, which emphasises brand interactions which can build strategic customer experiences.

- **Distribution**

According to Mondal, Das, Musunuru, and Dash (2017), distribution is defined as all activities related to logistics that enable the delivery of a company's products or services at the right place, at the right time and at the lowest cost. Grocery retailers are placed at the last stages of the distribution channel as critical interfacing points with the ultimate users (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000). Therefore, a well-integrated distribution channel can ensure easy customer contact and help leverage brand popularity with the customer in a way that will convert the buying and selling processes of brand offerings into well synchronised and manageable processes (Ailawadi & Farris, 2017). In agreement with the above literature, a study by Silva and Giraldi (2010) established that the grocery retailers' distribution components are part of their marketing mix that needs to be coordinated systematically with the rest of the 4Ps so that a specific retailer image is created by the combined efforts of the 4Ps synchronised in one direction.

Deka (2016), in his research entitled "Understanding Customer Loyalty for Retail Stores and the Influencing Factors," concluded that sixty percent of grocery retailers' products and services are categorically within the convenience section in which customers expect them to be within their neighbourhood, thus, emphasises on the unique requirements of distribution within the grocery retailer context (Vasconcellos & Botelho, 2014). In this regard, the distribution of the grocery retailer becomes a dimension that influences customer brand loyalty. The more the retailer stores closer to the market, the more customers get used to it and create associations with the retailer brands that reinforce brand loyalty (Vasconcellos & Botelho, 2014).

- **Prices**

From the customer perspective, price is the monetary value consumers exchange when buying valuable products and services (Cifci, Sertac & Ekinci, 2016). Similarly, Herviana and Anik (2018) define price as a sum of money or value exchanged by consumers to ownership of products or services. Furthermore, Friani et al. (2018) concur with the above definitions by reinforcing that price is the money customers pay to acquire products and services. In all the definitions, it is emphatic that price represents the sacrifice that customers take to acquire products and services (Chen, 2008; Chan et al., 2009). Therefore, price becomes attractive to customers, especially when evaluating alternatives brands (Hayan, 2015). Furthermore, price determines the scale of expected sales of products and services because as the price of a brand is lowered, the sales generally increase, and when prices are high, the sales scale significantly decreases (Abedniya 2011).

Price components determine the target market's group and the quality of customers likely to buy the brand offering, especially their income bands and LSM levels (Chen, 2008; Chan et al., 2009). Depending on the nature of the product, prices affect brand loyalty in different ways. For example, in convenience products and services, low prices drive customer brand loyalty, and conversely, in speciality products and services, high prices positively influence brand loyalty (Danziger, 2014; Djumarno et al., 2018). According to Zemguliene (2013) and Kanagal (2013), the price tag is a mirror of perceived value, and it can represent a brand image in the speciality products and services category. Therefore, the pricing components contribute enormously to the total marketing mix effects (Ahmad & Vays, 2011). In conclusion, the impact of price on customer brand loyalty is guided by price fairness in convenience products and services (Urun, 2011), and in speciality products, high prices give high leverage on customer loyalty.

4.5 Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Models

The section covers the grocery retailer brand equity models by Jara and Cliquet (2012), grocery retailer brand equity model by Lee and Lee (2018), and grocery retailer brand equity model by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga and Levy-Mangin (2013) to gain an understanding of specific sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity.

4.5.1 Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Model by Jara and Cliquet (2012)

Jara and Cliquet (2012) model adopted Keller's (2013) model as they started their analysis with brand awareness that ensures that the brand equity building's cognitive processes are catered. It studied dimensions of store service brands that were also divided into physical and psychological dimensions and were tested against service brands' image as an outcome variable.

One of the elements studied in the model was physical elements that included modernity and the retailer brand's cleanliness. The second element was the employees' connections with customers. The third element was the clients and their contribution to the store's atmosphere, and the fourth element was the service itself. In the grocery retailer brand equity model by Jara and Clique (2012), retail brand awareness serves as a source of information to customers, which enabled the build-up of retail brand image, which in the model is composed of five sub-components of perceived quality, price image, personalities of the brand retailer, brand service and store service. The main goal was to identify the relevant components that maximise retail brand equity and value in the grocery context.

Jara and Cliquet (2012) developed the grocery retailer brand equity model from a study of 504 samples from three French retailers (Carrefour, E-Leclerc, and Intermarche). The model's principal component of analysis was the retail brand image due to its multidimensionality effect in the grocery retailer context.

As shown below, the preliminary model explains that awareness and positive retail brand image are essential dimensions of retailer brand equity in the grocery retail context. The model articulated that brand awareness approaches and activities can achieve a positive retailer brand image. The model gives strong evidence supporting that retailer brand image plays a significant part in building brand equity in the retailer context than other brand equity dimensions. When the grocery retailer brand image is developed, it attracts customer traffic into the branded store. These customer responses to the brand can be noticed through their brand choices and customers' purchase intentions. This model's most significant value in the retailer brand equity is anchored in giving a balanced account of brand equity sources in the consumer value chain. This balanced approach is achieved by including unique retailer brand equity drivers such as symbolic and experimental dimensions in their model and combining them with other factors from the traditional brand equity models and the retailer brand domain elements.

The process of assessing and validating the grocery retailer brand equity model by Jara and Clique (2012) involved two battery tests that examined qualitative and quantitative retail brand equity dimensions. In the qualitative section of their research study, the model predicts that the retailer brand image is a multidimensional construct composed of symbolic, external, internal, experimental, functional, tangible, personality, managerial, values, and retailer-specific factors. The model emphasised that retail brands should build their image on symbolic associations that create value for consumers. In the model, customer value is built through maintaining a set of brand associations that builds a unique brand positioning in the consumers' minds. The below figure shows the diagrammatic relationships among the constructs included in their model.

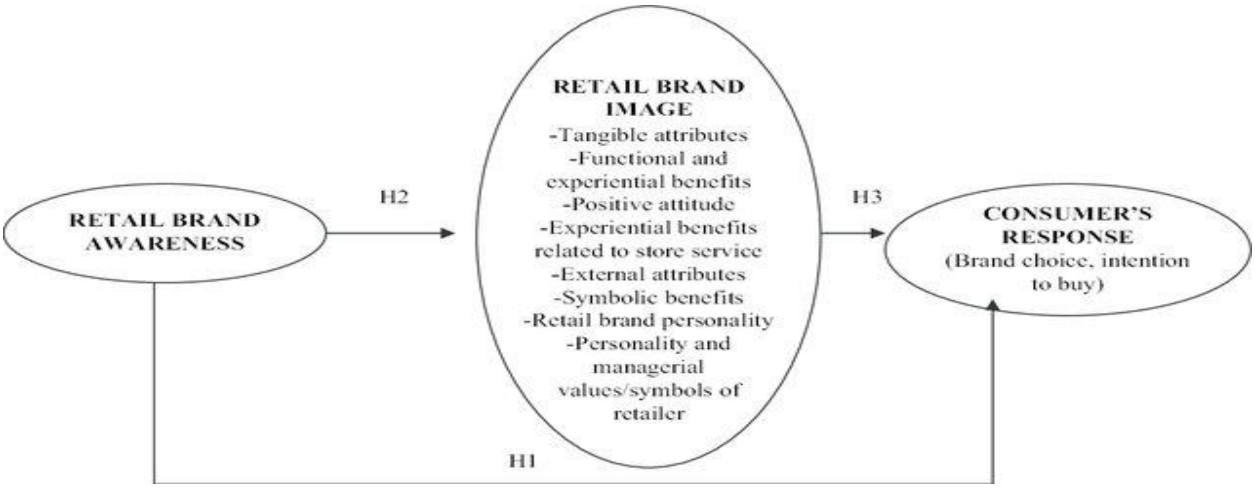


Figure 4.10: Qualitative Retail brand equity framework by Jara and Cliquet (2012)

Source: Jara and Cliquet (2012, p. 142)

On the other hand, the quantitative section of their research followed the Aaker (1991) model by factoring in brand awareness and perceived quality in their model. The quantitative model then incorporated retailer-specific brand equity drivers such as store service, price image, personality, and brand service. Thus, the model is balanced as it included sources of brand equity from Aaker (1991) brand equity model (brand awareness and perceived quality), factors from the retailer image theory (store service, price image, personality), and retailer-specific dimensions (brand service) (Jara & Cliquet, 2012). Figure 4.10 presents the quantitative retail brand equity framework by Jara and Cliquet (2012).

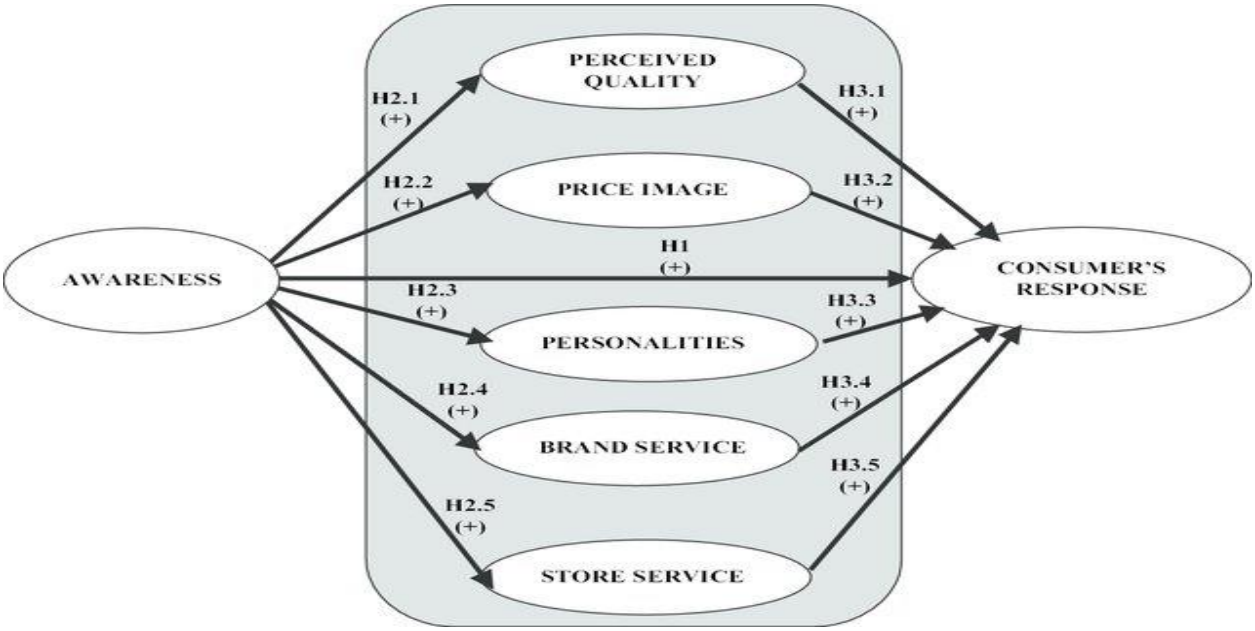


Figure 4.11: Quantitative Retail brand equity framework by Jara and Cliquet (2012, p. 145)

Source: Jara and Cliquet (2012)

The quantitative section of their study showed that price image positively impacts customer behaviour in the grocery retailer environment. Principally, the model reinforces the need to adopt a fair pricing system during the brand's introduction, especially during the short-term retailer grocery strategies. However, at the same time, the grocery retailers' brand should engage in other value-adding activities such as store services that create long-term value as it builds its brand identity (Jara & Cliquet, 2012). Furthermore, the model concluded that the brand concept helps customer brand recall, ensuring customers' insistence on buying a specific brand. The overall model confirmed that retail brand awareness has an enormous impact on retail brand image and consumers' response (Jara and Cliquet, 2012). However, their research results showed that retail brand image partially mediated the relationship between brand awareness and customer responses (Jara & Cliquet, 2012).

4.5.2 Retailer Brand Equity by Seong Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee (2018)

The retailer brand equity by Seong Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee (2018) evaluated previous research studies to build a retailer-specific brand equity measurement model that measures retailer brand equity from the consumer's perspective. The model adopted Aaker's (1991) model but took a grocery retailer perspective by appending the word "retailer" to the brand equity dimensions, resulting in retailer brand equity

dimensions such as retailer awareness and retailer associations, perceived retailer quality, retailer loyalty, and retailer reputation.

In developing this model, they argued that the value brought by product, price, place, and promotion strategies is easily challenged by competitors' ability to learn and imitate such strategies mutually; therefore, such typical strategies cannot sustain customer loyalty anymore. Therefore, they proposed that it will be strategically crucial for retail managers to understand better retailer brand equity to withstand the contemporary business environment. Their proposal developed a model where Aaker (1991) brand dimensions were reoriented to include retail concepts. Figure 4.11 below shows the interrelationships of constructs in the model.

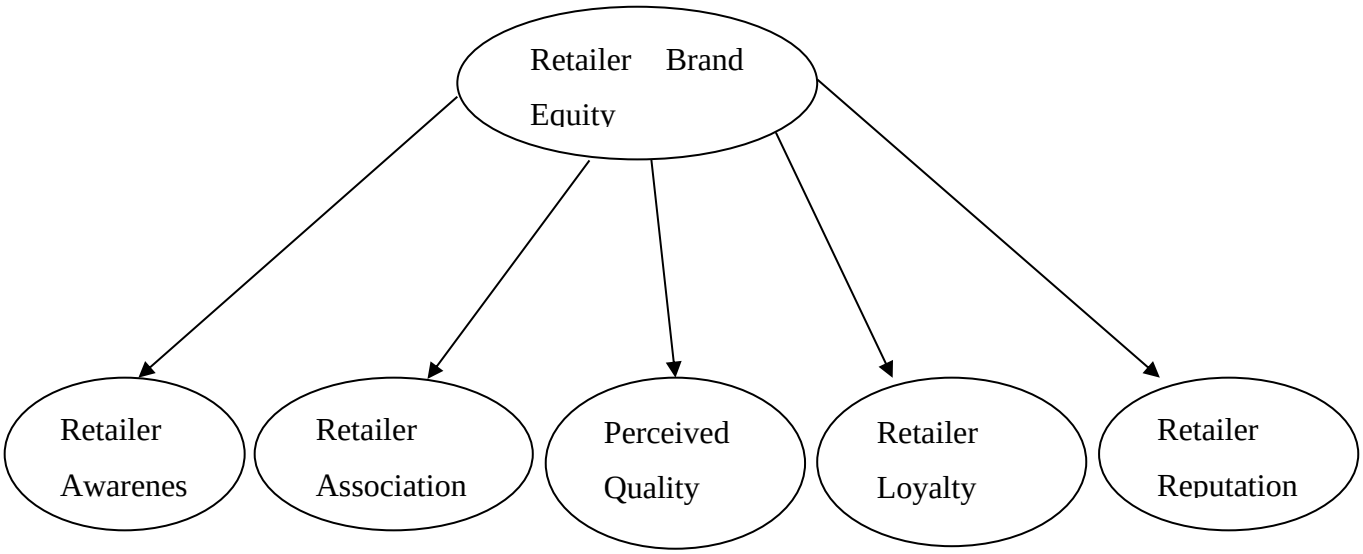


Figure 4.12: Retailer Brand Equity by Seong Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee (2018, p. 7)

Source: Seong Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee (2018)

Their study was conducted in 2017 in Seoul, South Korea. Data was collected through mall-intercept surveys where consumers from six Korean retailer categories: discount stores, online shopping malls, convenience stores, traditional markets, department stores, and factory outlets were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire.

The study concluded that retail brand equity comprises five sub-dimensions of retailer awareness, retailer associations, perceived retailer quality, retailer loyalty, and retailer reputation. The retailer reputation

dimension was added in their model to extend Aaker's (1991) brand equity dimensions. The five dimensions of retailer brand equity scored a positive impact on customers' retail usage intention.

4.5.3 Conceptual framework of Store Brand Equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013)

The store-brand equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013) followed largely Aaker (1991) brand equity by including dimensions such as store brand awareness, store brand perceived quality, store brand loyalty store and integrated them with brand price image and store image factors (store reputation, store commercial image) which are retailer-specific brand equity drivers. The model depicts that value for the company and the customer can be enhanced by using store brand equity sources. Furthermore, the brand value to the customer can influence their intention to buy from the store brands. The figure below shows the model and its hypothesised constructs relationships.

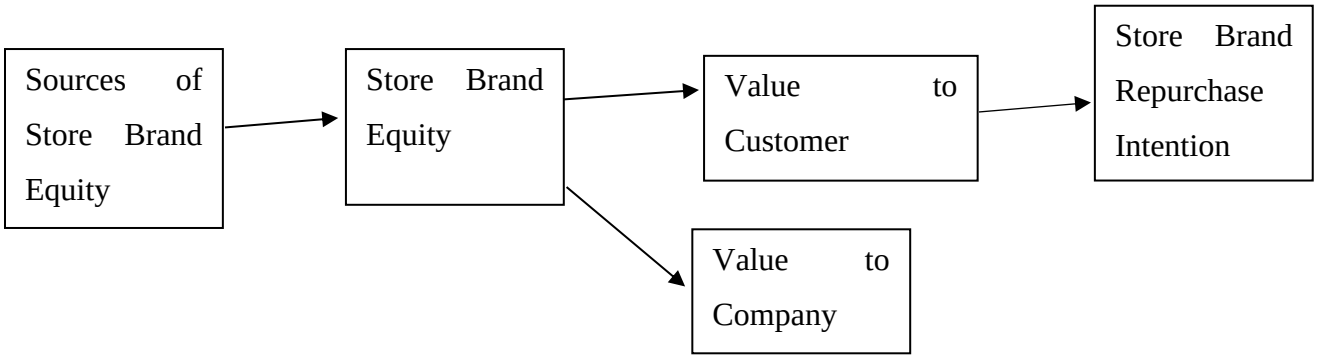


Figure 4.13: Conceptual framework of store Brand Equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013)

Source: Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013, p. 97)

The model shows the dimensions of retailer brand equity and their impact on purchase intention. The model emphasises integrating the Aaker (1991) brand equity model and the components of the retailer image theory. The extant literature has confirmed the need to include retailer-specific retailer brand equity dimensions to capture unique retail characteristics. In this regard, the conceptual framework of store brand equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013) incorporated unique factors that helped extend the brand equity dimensions by including factors such as store

reputation, store commercial image, which is most critical in determining customer patronage in the retailer context.

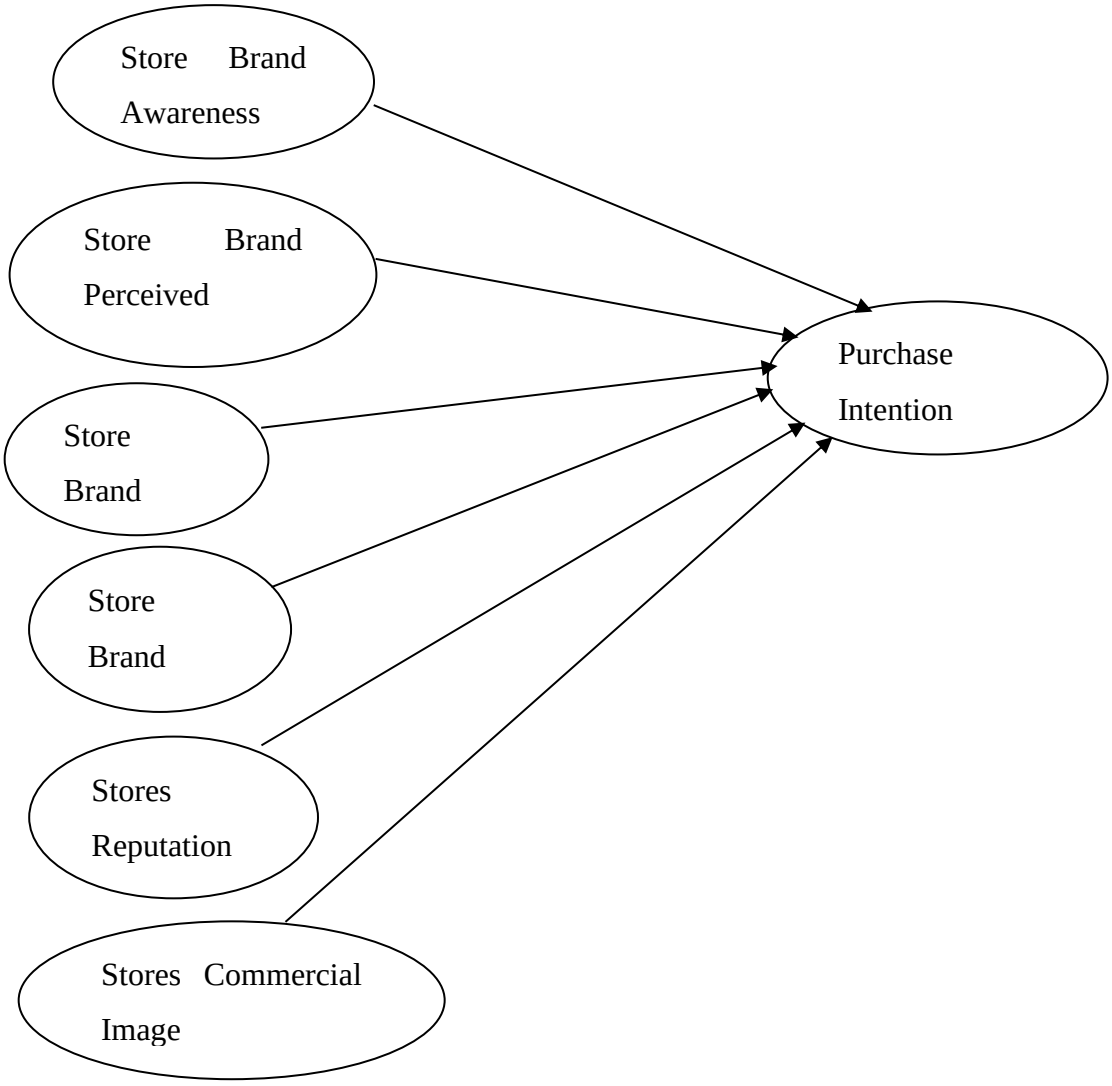


Figure 4.14: Store Brand Equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013, p. 102).

Source : Calvo-Porral et al. (2013)

The results from the testing of the conceptual framework of store brand equity by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013) concurred with Jara and Cliquet (2012) that there is a strong relationship between Aaker (1991) brand equity dimensions with customer choices of stores brand which they intend to patronise. On the contrary, their results sounded a dissonant note on store image dimensions as they showed that store image variables had little impact on purchase intention in the retail

context. These findings contradict other research results from Beristain & Zorrilla (2011), which concluded a significant impact between store reputational image and store commercial image with customers' store brand purchase intention. These differences in the findings by Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013) open the need to reassess the importance of stores image and its impact on customer purchase intention.

4.6 Other Relevant Theories of Retailer brand equity

In the sections above, theories that have a bearing on grocery retailer equity were discussed. However, theories such as Kapferer's brand prism explain how strong brand equity can be built, and this can be linked to customer responses and retailer brand equity building processes. On the other hand, the retailer image theory is confirmed as a significant contributor to customer brand equity in the retailer context hence the need to analyse it. Furthermore, empirical research findings are on record that the retailer image theory has enormous influence on grocery retailer brand equity. In this regard, both theories were examined below to account for retailer brand equity dimensions and processes.

4.6.1 Kapferer's (2004) Brand Identity Prism

Kapferer (2004) deconstructed brand identity into six integrated facets of culture, personality, self-image, physique, reflection, and relationship. Kapferer (2012) explained that these elements could help businesses build a strong brand identity, which can be communicated clearly and transparently to the targeted market. According to Kapferer (2012), strong brands that can model all aspects of the prism into a compelling integrated message can create a concise, clear, and appealing brand identity. The three facets of culture, personality, and self-image relate to the brand's internal components, while the remaining facets of the physique, reflection, and relationship are external factors of the brand identity.

The physique facet is the first stage in the process of building a brand identity. The prism is divided into three sections. The upper part of the brand prism is the brand core, which is constant in the long term. The middle part of the prism comprises the brand style, which describes its culture, personality, and self-image. The base part of the prism forms the brand themes. These brand themes include the physique of the brand, its reflection, and the relationship. Brand themes are flexible compared to the brand style and brand core in the brand-building process. The central concept illustrated in the prism is how brand identity should be

defined and managed. Brand identity refers to the message that is transmitted to customers by the brand. The figure below shows the pictorial relationships of the elements of the brand identity.

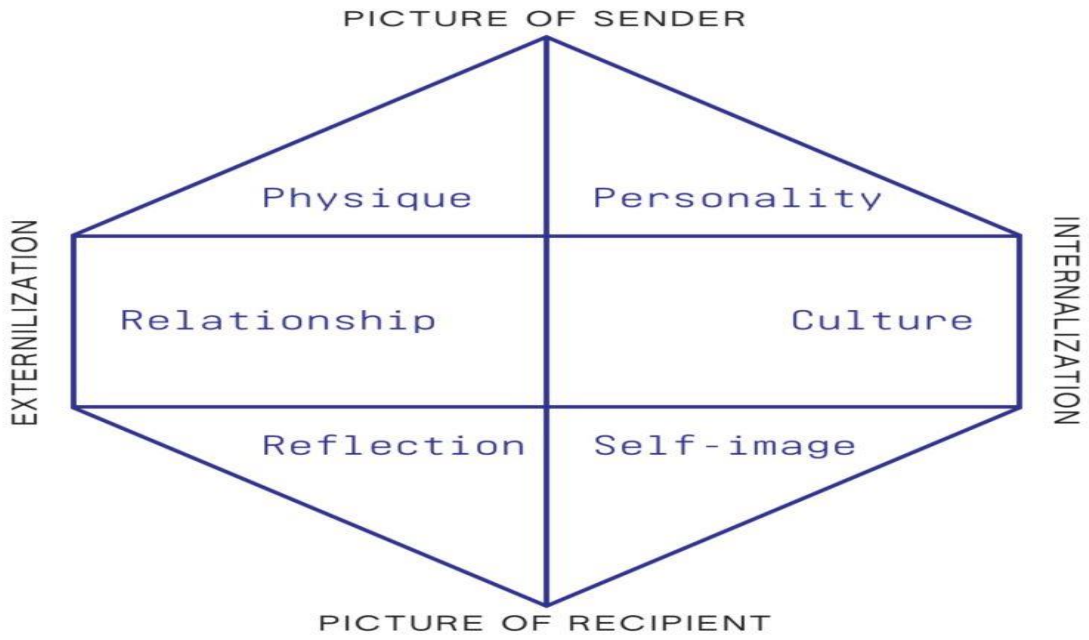


Figure 4.15 Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism **Source: Kapferer (2008)**

The brand pyramid model is used to analyse the concept of brand identity. The elements of brand identity are explained below.

- **Physique**

The physique of a brand refers to the physical characteristics, such as corporate colour, logo, and packaging. These physical elements give visual cues that help consumers identify brands. According to Kapferer (2008), the components of physique form the basis of the brand. The physique component incorporates the physical look or structure of the products or services, the functionality sought after by customers, and the crucial features that simplify brand recognition. The physique characteristics act as a clear flagship of a brand by representing its overall qualities (Haaften, 2009). According to Rashmi and Dangi (2016), in the retailer sector, the physique characteristic is evident in the usage of signs and naming conventions of retailer stores to create a personal and social identity through branding. In application, retailers like Woolworths stores have their names engraved at the entrance of each store to promote their identity and create customer identification markers (Burt & Sparks, 2016).

- **Personality**

Brand personality or character is the behavioural trait of the brand in the eyes of the consumers. Aaker (1997) developed the concept of brand personality in detail and described it as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). The brand personality can be comprehensively defined using the five dimensions of brand personality, commonly distinguished by the "big five." The big five dimensions explain brands' symbolic and self-expressive functions regarding sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness.

According to Aaker (1997), sincerity refers to a situation whereby retail stores operate down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful (Barrash, 2008). The down to earth character means the grocery retail stores will listen and consider client complaints in the humblest way without adopting the goliath effect, which is usually the approach that the so-called big organisations usually adopt (Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka & Valette-Florence, 2005). In brief, grocery retailers strive to serve their customers as honestly as possible. Furthermore, grocery retailers' customer contact processes will need to follow a holistic approach that views a service encounter in a wholesome manner if the 'big five' phenomena are adopted (Hirsch et al., 2012).

Wood (2012) postulates that the retailer stores' excitement includes applying innovative and imaginative tactics interpreted by customers as daring, spirited, and up-to-date, capturing customer appeal and interest towards grocery retailer brands. In this regard, the aspects of brand excitement encompass innovative pricing deals, innovative store layout, and a good store atmosphere that brings brand-customer excitement (Seimiene, 2012)

The competence aspects describe the reliability, intelligence, and success associated with a retailer brand. Reliability defines the consistent performance of the retailer brand. Intelligence explains the ability of retailer staff to deal with complex customer requirements (Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka & Valette-Florence, 2005). Through the competence of staff, the retailer grocery brand can become very successful. The value of the customer-retailer relationship's personality components is anchored on personality concepts' ability to reveal much information about the customer's lifestyle and preferences (Donnelly, 2012). Another component of personality is sophistication, which refers to the nature of the products and services, for example, products classification such as upper-class portfolio of products and services. It also

included charming factors of the store. Lastly, ruggedness includes store characteristics related to the outdoor and toughness characteristics of a grocery retailer brand.

From the retailer grocery context, sincerity describes whether customers appreciate the broad human considerations that the retailer management put in place (Barrash, 2008). Additionally, sincerity factors include the stores' conscientiousness to customer concerns (Donnelly, 2012). Doss (2014) describes excitement as more or less equal to extraversion in which retailer store look forward to some dominance in the market and enjoys much central market attraction. According to Vazifehdoost (2012), competence takes a coordination role between retailer customer conscientiousness and brand intention, thus positioning brands in their extraversion motives. The dimensions of ruggedness and sophistication were not included in the study that focuses on retailer brand equity due to the less value they can add to the grocery retailer operating environment (Hirsch et al., 2012)

- **Culture**

Kapferer (1996) described culture as a set of values that create the foundation base for each brand. Culture is defined as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations" (House et al., 2004, p.57). The fundamental culture reflects important aspects pushed by the original manufacturers, and it has some traces of culture from the country of origin (Kapferer, 2008). For example, culture determines what society eats and what the society does not support (Huang & Shen, 2016). Using these cultural antics in branding helps to keep retailer organisations in a positive image with the dominant culture prevailing in a specific market (Messner, 2016). In this case, a substantial market can be captured. The prevailing cultural evidence applied in branding relate to issues of corporate colours that organisations opt to use. These colours are chosen to identify organisations in a way that traces its historically perspective. Furthermore, retailer organisations adopt uniforms for their service and frontline employees to reinforce their identity.

- **Self-image**

Self-image describes the way customers' identity matches with the brand identity. The self-image fit between the brand and the customer helps associate customers with certain brands (Kapferer, 2012). Prior research studies show that self-image directly impacts consumer behaviour phenomena such as brand preference, satisfaction, and purchase intent (Hosany & Martin, 2012). For example, Han and Hyun (2013)

noted that self-image has a more significant impact on consumers' evaluation when the product is publicly consumed, while its effect on privately consumed products and services is less. This phenomenon gives guidance to grocery retailers on how to handle brand building of publicly consumed products and services in order to secure required social approval. Prestige products and services requires societal social approval and status; hence, brand-building should indicate the appropriate target market in order to pitch brand initiatives at the right market level. For example, Woolworths's products and services are destined for the medium and high-class grocery market; hence, their total product should be packed and assembled with a high-class connotation to attract enough customers in the relevant class.

- **Reflection**

Reflection refers to how the brand target audience views a brand. Reflection is a component of the identity prism that should be viewed from the customer viewpoint (Haaften, 2009). It depicts a set of stereotypical beliefs or attributes of a brand, usually shown in its communication strategies. These attributes can be attached to a brand's stereotypical customer, leading to a common identification of brands. Lee, Su and Yang (2016) asserted that retailers employ well-known star opinion leader image for acceptance and endorsements and achieve a positive advertising effect and reinforce brand reputation. These methods apparel to brand-emotion connections of customers to ensure breakthrough of new product or service introduction. (Lucia et al., 2011). Therefore, consumers' affection for self-consistency toward a brand serves as a critical factor for achieving a positive brand-customer reflection matching (Lucia et al., 2011). The association of grocery brands and its customers is hinged on the supply of fresh and quality products and services; hence the service delivery of Woolworths should embed such quality processes to match its products and services with its perceived customer reflective understanding (Lee, Tseng & Chan, 2019).

- **Relationship**

The relationship facet relates to how customers emotionally connect with the brand. The way the brand is presented connotes the symbolic relationship between the brand and the ultimate consumers. Customer relationships are developed through a process of engagement. A general agreement among marketing scholars is that engaged customers could lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, 2012; Islam & Rahman, 2016, p. 2008; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). For instance, engaged customers may contribute to more significant firm’s revenue (Kumar & Pansari, 2016, p. 497). The relationship that has been forged for years determines whether the consumers can be

emotionally attached to a brand. Strong brand relationships fortify a brand from competing alternative brands (Kapferer, 2008). In the grocery sector, relationships between stores are created by establishing relationship marketing that includes offering gifts to customers, drawing competitions, and awarding loyalty points to be redeemed in exchange for goods and services. Service firms can establish relationships with their customers (Brodie, 2017, p. 20). The following section analyses the retailer brand image theory.

4.6.2 The retailer brand image theory

The image theory uses cognitive and behavioural approaches to create, maintain, and regain a specific image in their stakeholders' eyes (Willi, Nguyen, Melewar & Dennis, 2014). In the retailer context, retailers' application of a mixture of tangible and intangible dimensions to develop a complex meaning that forms the relationships between the retailers and its customers are prevalent and crucial (Lee, James, Kim, 2014). Brand image is a pluralistic term that defines the total sum of customers' perceptions of a store brand (Elkins & Naef, 2011). The customer perception of a retailer brand is usually derived from the complex interplay of various factors such as merchandise, service, price, atmosphere and promotions (Yoo et al., 2000; Bloemer & Oderkerken-Schroder, 2002; Villarejo, 2003). The store image concept was first coined by Martineau (1958), and it explains how customers viewed retailer brands after considering their functional and psychological attributes. In summary, the concept of retailer brand image helps in building up public perceptions of retailer brand in terms of credibility, reputation, identity, and image (Merwe & Puth, 2014), and such public perceptions determine the type of customers that are attracted to the retailer brand stores (Yoo et al., 2000; Bloemer & Oderkerken-Schroder, 2002; Villarejo, 2003).

The retail brand image represents the retailer brand's long-term picture that can be developed by applying an integrated marketing strategy (Lee, James & Kim, 2014). Empirical evidence supports that store image is a critical variable influencing customer store choices and differential preference (Zhang, 2015). In the grocery retailer context, functional factors such as an assortment of commodities, layout, location, price, and customer services determine the overall retailer brand image (Yoo et al., 2000; Bloemer & Oderkerken-Schroder, 2002; Villarejo, 2003). The value brought about by the image theory aspects in the retailer brand equity is exceptionally high compared to other retailer equity dimensions (Troiville & Cliquet, 2015). Researchers and academicians who advocate for the image theory concur that in grocery retailer setups, customers mainly value the in-store atmosphere, merchandising, product assortment, and price, which are factors that lie in the store image domain (Troiville & Cliquet, 2015). The brand image

initiatives form the basis of creating some form of customers' shortcuts that will enable customers to have a positive recall of their past shopping experiences (Yoo et al., 2000; Bloemer & Oderkerken-Schroder, 2002; Villarejo, 2003), and these positive encounters enhance grocery retailer brand equity and satisfaction (Lee, James & Kim, 2014).

As postulated by Troiville and Cliquet (2015), the grocery retailer image is fundamentally the big picture of the retailer framed in consumers' minds, and this picture forms the basis of retailer brand equity. Thus, the image theory ends the discussions on theoretical analysis of the sources and outcomes of the grocery retailer brand equity aspects.

4.7 Conclusion

The literature review chapters discussed brand equity models from both sources and outcome perspectives. It further articulated retailer brand equity models that apply to the grocery sector. A critical analysis was done at various literature levels to discover the value of different models in the grocery retailer brand equity domain. The literature review chapters concluded by analysing theoretical gaps in various brand equity models in order to discover a common ground that acts as a fundamental research gap of this study. The next chapter formulates the conceptual framework to be used in this study, and this framework is grounded on the reviewed literature.

CHAPTER V

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter uses some relevant theories discussed in Chapter 4 and the literature reviewed to develop the unified grocery retailer brand equity model and accompanying hypotheses. The chapter starts by recapping the theories and models found useful for developing the conceptual model and hypotheses. After that, empirical literature is used to defend and formulate the hypotheses. Lastly, the conceptual model is developed.

5.2 Recap of Theoretical Models Found Useful for this study.

Various theoretical models contributed to developing the unified grocery retailer brand equity conceptual model used in this study. Aaker's (1991) was the foundational brand equity model on which the other models were built. It provided brand-related constructs, such as brand awareness and image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Since Aaker's (1991) model lacked marketing factors, Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE model was employed to provide marketing factors in building brand equity. Considering that the study was based om a retailer brand, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity were employed to provide retailer-related constructs. Considering that these four models lacked outcomes of brand equity, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model was useful for the provision of brand equity outcomes. For example, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model provided brand preference and repurchase intentions as important brand equity outcomes. Specifically, Aaker's (1991) model offered brand-related factors (brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality of the brand, brand loyalty), the models of Yoo and Donthu (2002), Jara and Cliquet's (2012) and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca (2017) provided marketing (i.e., price, product quality, distribution) and retailer related (i.e., retailer personality, customer service and trust) factors impacting overall CBBE. Table 5.1 highlights the models used in this study.

Table 5.1: Highlights of the Theoretical Models Used in this Study

Source of the Model	Borrowed constructs in the model for this study	Was brand equity outcomes provided?	Reason of using the model in this study
Aaker's (1991) CBBE Model	Brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, and brand loyalty	No	It is a foundational CBBE model providing brand-related sources of brand equity.
Yoo and Donthu (2002) CBBE Model	Price, brand image, distribution, and brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty	No	It provided marketing factors in the building of brand equity
Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model	Brand awareness, retailer brand image and personality	Customer responses (brand choices and intention to buy)	It demonstrates that the building of brand loyalty and equity starts with high brand awareness. More so retailer brand personality was gotten as a predictor of brand equity.
Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model	Brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty.	Customer brand equity outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intention) and firm-based brand equity outcomes (premium price and brand extension)	This model provided CBBE outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intentions). It also demonstrated that the sources of brand equity are interrelated.
Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity	Brand awareness, customer services, product quality, price and brand trust, and loyalty	No	While Yoo and Donthu (2002) provided general marketing factors, this model provided marketing factors related to retailers.

5.3 The Development of Research Hypotheses and the Unified Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Conceptual Model

As mentioned before, the borrowing and integration of ideas from previous models mentioned in 5.2 and found in Table 5.1 led to the development of the current study's unified grocery retailer brand equity

conceptual model from which hypotheses were developed. The resultant conceptual model's primary strength is embedded in its borrowing from several previous models and the ability to link retailer brand equity sources and outcomes within the grocery retailer context. In addition to borrowing from the previous models, empirical literature was also consulted to defend and formulate the hypotheses which are discussed next.

5.3.1 Development of Hypotheses

Following Jara and Cliquet (2012), who suggest that the examination of the predictive power of CBBE sources should start by assessing how much brand awareness impacts the sources, the formulation of hypotheses in this section starts with discussing the extent to which brand awareness impacts the studied sources: brand personality dimensions, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty. The formulation of the hypotheses then proceeds to look at how much marketing and retailer factors influence brand loyalty. After this, the relationships between the sources and overall grocery retailer brand equity are discussed. The last hypotheses examine the relationships between overall grocery retailer brand equity with two CBBE outcomes: brand preference and repurchase intentions. The mediation role of overall brand equity in the relationships between the sources and outcomes of overall brand equity is also examined.

5.3.1.1 Relationships between brand awareness and brand equity sources

Romaniuk, Wight and Faulkner (2017:469) define brand awareness as "the degree to which customers are aware of the brand as a member of the category." Jara and Cliquet (2012:141) define brand awareness as the "likelihood that a brand name will come to mind and the ease with which it does so." Brand awareness comprises brand recall and recognition by customers (Keller, 2013). For a grocery retailer like Woolworths studied here, these definitions mean that if it has strong brand awareness each time consumers think of grocery retailers, Woolworths will easily come to mind, be recognised, be preferred, and the purchase will take place. Before it gets to the brand preference or purchase stages, an assessment of how brand awareness enables the other sources of overall CBBE has to be made. This is particularly important because Jara and Cliquet (2012) and Romaniuk et al. (2017) contend that brand awareness is the first foothold and requirement for developing higher-order constructs, such as perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty and brand personality

- **Brand awareness and brand personality**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, brand personality comprises five key dimensions: brand competence, brand sincerity, brand excitement, brand sophistication, and brand toughness/ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997) broadly describes these personality drivers as the "Big Five" that explain brands' symbolic and self-expressive functions to customers. Brand sophistication and brand toughness/ruggedness relate to physical product characteristics and do not apply to service brands (Valette-Florence & Barnier, 2012). Thus, these two dimensions were excluded from this study on the grocery retailer brand, which is part of a service brand. Researchers have studied the benefits of these five dimensions in building consumer-brand relationships, favourable attitudes, brand engagement, brand satisfaction, brand loyalty and recommendation, and brand equity (Seimiene & Kamarauskaite, 2014). Brand personality is used to facilitate the brand storytelling process (Mathur, Jain & Maheswaran, 2012). However, the determinants of or how brand personality is built are rarely studied. One of the ways that brand personality can be built is through marketing communication activities (Seimiene & Kamarauskaite, 2014). It has been found that brand awareness can drive the five dimensions of brand personality in a way that can influence customers' perceptions of the brand (Iglesias, Oriol, Ind, & Alfaro, 2013). By helping to explain key brand characteristics through storytelling, brand awareness can influence brand personality (Mathur, Jain & Maheswaran, 2012). Retailers' brand awareness serves to coordinate brand meaning between the firm and the customer (von Wallpach, Voyer, Kastanakis & Mühlbacher, 2017). It strives to formulate a brand message that conveys the sincerity characteristics of warmth, friendliness and cheerfulness, which are concepts that are socially agreed upon by society. In this case, retailer brand awareness is used to transmit positive attributes of the retailer brand that ensures that the target population builds a favourable impression of the brand (Davies, Rojas-Mende & Mete, 2017, Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012).

Through brand awareness, retailer brands create a courageous, imaginative and exciting retailer trading atmosphere to increase customer traffic in their stores. It increases sales and profit because customer excitement with a brand encourages trial (Dolatabadi, Kazemi & Rad, 2012). The use of innovation in their stores' operations, such as improved store layout, exceptional price deals and loyalty programs, creates retailer brand excitement in grocery retailer establishments. This may increase retailer brand equity by appealing quality dimensions (Clemenz, Brettel, & Moeller, 2012) and brand engagement (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012).

The brand personality component of competence refers to brand reliability, dependability and efficiency, which are factors that are much sought after by customers when performing grocery purchases. (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). For customers to be aware of these characteristics associated with a retailer brand, a campaign on various media platforms should be instituted. These campaigns form part of the retailer brand awareness that helps potential customers understand what is emphasised in a specific retailer brand, and through these messages, a good fit between brand personality with consumer lifestyle and self-concept is developed. In this way, customer value is nurtured (Das, Datta, & Guin, 2012). Jara and Cliquet (2012) find a direct relationship between retailer brand awareness and brand personality, even though they did examine brand personality in all of its dimensions. From the empirical literature, the following can be hypothesised:

$H_{1:}$ Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand sincerity.

H_2: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand excitement.

H_3: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand competence.

- **Brand awareness, perceived quality brand image and brand loyalty**

Researchers have examined the interrelationship between brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and loyalty) (Buil et al., 2013; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Pike & Bianchi, 2016). Literature shows that consumers must first be aware of a brand to build a set of brand associations (Aaker, 1991; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014), assess the brand quality, develop brand loyalty and resultant brand equity. This means that brand awareness has positive effects on brand equity dimensions of brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty (Keller, 2013; Zhuowei & Liping, 2015) for brand equity to be developed. For example, with British and Spanish samples in the context of physical product brands, Buil et al. (2013) find that before overall brand equity was built, brand awareness positively influenced perceived quality, brand image/associations (including brand personality), which both impacted brand loyalty, a good positive predictor of overall brand equity. For destination marketing and Rome as a destination brand, Kladou and Kehagias (2014) observe that brand awareness is a positive predictor of perceived quality and brand image. In addition, Jara and Cliquet conclude that brand awareness positively impacts brand image and perceived quality in retailing. Using samples from Chile and New Zealand, Pike and Bianchi (2016) note that brand awareness is a positive driver of brand loyalty. In a retail setting,

Anselmsson et al. (2017) confirm the brand awareness-brand loyalty relationship. Considering this empirical literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_4: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' customer perceived quality.

H_5: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer brand image.

H_6: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.

5.3.1.2 Relationships between marketing factors, retailing factors and brand loyalty.

Considering that brand loyalty has consistently been found to be a strong driver of overall brand equity, Anselmsson et al. (2017) studied the marketing (product quality, pricing policy, and awareness creation) and retailer (customer service, physical store, and retailer trust) factors impacting brand loyalty. Since Anselmsson et al. (2017) did not study distribution as one of the marketing factors, it will be added in the current study. Using retail brands, including grocery brands in Sweden, they found that brand loyalty was positively influenced by product quality, pricing policy, brand awareness, physical store and retailer trust. Even though it has been found that the better the customer services, the better the customer loyalty to the brand (Lin, 2015), Anselmsson et al. (2017) found that customer services negatively impacted brand loyalty. Customer services can be in the form of fast cash registers, home delivery, and after-sales assistance, and these types of services can act as differentiating features that build brand value proposition. Furthermore, if customer services strategies are formulated with strategic skills, they can define the customers' touching points, resulting in customers' brand attachment. Thus, customer service positively impacted brand loyalty (Lin, 2015).

Price has a significant role in influencing customer behaviour, including brand loyalty (Effany et al., 2018). As to how price impacts brand loyalty, there have been mixed results. For example, while Anselmsson et al. (2017) find that pricing policy positively influences brand loyalty, Effany et al.'s (2018) results show that price level negatively impacts brand loyalty. Gecti (2014) examined the seven related price components and observed that the pricing strategy positively impacts consumer behaviour, such as loyalty for high-end products, and conversely note a negative impact on brand loyalty for low-value items. Retailer trust can help in building confidence, reliability, and integrity between customer and retailer brands. Trust is very subjective and is built based on consumers' beliefs rather than on hard facts (Yannopoulou et al., 2011). If trust is formed, customers can develop loyalty towards the specific brand

(Jing et al., 2015; He & Wang, 2014). In the context of a retailer brand, Anselmsson et al. (2017) reveal that retailer trust strongly affects brand loyalty.

Distribution is another marketing element that has been found to impact brand loyalty, especially as "consumers will be more satisfied when the products are available in a greater number of stores because they will be offered the product where and when they need it" (Effany et al., 2018, p. 196). The gravitational theory of retailing states that the greater the distance between the groceries retailers' brand and its customers, the smaller the level of interaction between the grocery retailer and its customers. The literature illustrates the importance of distance utility in customer buying behaviour. If customers are far from the grocery retailer stores' location, their number of visits to the grocery retailer decreases (Effany et al., 2018; Micu, Geru & Lixandroiu, 2017). Conversely, if there is an intensive distribution of a retailer's stores, there will be convenience, less time to go to the store, and easier access to the store products and services. This creates value to customers in terms of cost and time saving and builds the retailers' brand image. Thus, both the distribution (Effany et al., 2018) and brand image generate retailer brand loyalty (Buil et al., 2013). Kladou and Kehagias' (2014) study in Rome, and Pike and Bianchi's (2016) in New Zealand and Chile also show a positive relationship between brand image and brand loyalty. From these findings, the following are hypothesised:

H_7: Customer service positively influences Woolworths' brand loyalty.

H_8: Woolworths' prices positively influence its brand loyalty.

H_9: Customers' trust in the Woolworths brand positively influences its brand loyalty.

H_{10}: Woolworths' distribution network positively influences its brand loyalty.

H_{11}: Woolworths' brand image has a positive impact on its brand loyalty.

5.3.1.3 Relationships between brand equity sources and overall retailer brand equity

The sources examined as predictors of grocery retailer brand equity were brand awareness, brand personality dimensions, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty. Brand awareness is one of the dimensions of brand equity that has been consistently found to have a positive and significant influence on CBBE as it creates feelings of familiarity (Aaker 1991; Romaniuk et al., 2017; Tran, Nguyen, Do & Nguyen, 2020). The brand recognition, recall and familiarity embodying brand awareness put brands in

the purchase consideration set (Tran et al., 2020) and make brand awareness the most significant positive driver of brand equity (Keller & Lehmann, 2003). While Jara and Cliquet (2012) and Buil et al. (2013) see brand awareness as an indirect driver of brand equity through its brand equity dimensions, Tran et al. (2020) find brand awareness has a direct impact on overall brand equity.

Brand personality determines consumers' brand engagement and disengagement, which affect the core of retailer brand equity and value. This is because customers' brand engagement helps create, develop and maintain strong brands (Kapferer, 2010; Lin, 2010). Maehle and Supphellen (2011) studied the various brand personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness) and suggest that specific personality dimensions have positive relationships with brand equity. For example, they report that brand sincerity has a high correlation with family-related brand associations, high brand morals and thus resultant brand equity. Furthermore, brand excitement gives leverage to grocery retailer brand equity (Maehle & Supphellen, 2011). Another component of brand personality is brand competence. It is a factor that describes the brand's overall functional and psychological performance. Customers interpret brand competence as a reflection of quality, a driver of retailer brand equity (Dikcius, Seimiene, Zaliene, 2013).

Perceived quality is the customer's perception of a brand's overall superiority compared to its intended purpose (Prakesh, 2011). Keller (2008) identifies perceived quality as an essential element used by customers to judge a brand. Moreover, Aaker (1991) points out that perceived quality plays a significant part in the customer buying proposition for both products and services, and it affects customer usage level to enhance brand equity. While Buil et al.'s (2013) model suggest that perceived quality impacts overall brand equity through its impact on brand loyalty, Jara and Cliquet (2012), Effany et al. (2018) and Liu (2020) indicate that perceived quality has a direct relationship with customer differential response or brand equity.

Brand image has also been found to have a direct and indirect impact on overall brand equity. Retailer brand image defines the psychological image created in customers' minds due to the brand's exhibited functional qualities and psychological attributes (Chien-Hsiung, 2011; Das, 2015). Functional attributes refer to store elements such as merchandise, price, credit policies, and store layout, while psychological attributes refer to affective characteristics of brands (Winarso, 2012; Morhart, Malar & Guevremont, 2014). The retailer brand image is a complex picture developed in customers' minds based on evaluating

these retailer attributes (Choi & Huddleston, 2015). It gives the overall framework of consumers' perceptions of specific retailer brands, and such perceptions of consumers can drive retailer brand equity. Through brand image, customers build mental pictures about a brand that can nurture brand equity directly or indirectly (Mishra & Datta, 2011; Juntunen, Juntunen & Juga, 2015). For example, while Buil et al. (2013) suggest an indirect relationship between brand image and overall brand equity through brand loyalty, Liu (2020) finds a strong direct relationship between brand image and brand equity. Ha (2020) also finds a direct relationship between green brand image and green brand equity.

Brand loyalty is one of the dimensions of brand equity (Aaker 1991; Yoo et al. 2000; Goyal, 2014) and grocery retailer equity that has been found to strongly impact brand equity (Lin, 2015; Jinfeng & Zhilong, 2009). Keller (2013) indicates that brand loyalty is the primary source of customer-based brand equity. Brand loyalty brings emotional attachment to a specific brand that can leverage brand equity (Lin, 2015). Buil et al. (2013), Efanny et al. (2018) and Liu (2020) have found a strong relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity. From these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{12}: The brand awareness of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{13}: Woolworths' brand sincerity positively impacts its overall brand equity.

$H_{14:}$ Woolworths' brand excitement has a positive impact on its overall grocery brand equity.

$H_{15:}$ Woolworths' brand competence has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{16}: The perceived quality of the Woolworths brand positively impacts its overall brand equity.

H_{17}: The brand image of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall brand equity.

H_{18}: Woolworths' grocery retailer's brand loyalty has a positive impact on overall grocery retailer brand equity.

5.3.1.4 Relationships between overall brand equity and outcomes of brand preference and repurchase intention.

Palvia and Grover (2011) contend that brand equity is the primary building block of brand preferences. Brand equity facilitates consumers' convergent and divergent dialogue that usually supplies information related to the strong points of the brand and effects brand preference in the process (A-Qade, Omar &

Rubel, 2017). Furthermore, Muqaddas and Ahmad (2016) emphasise that brand equity builds consumer brand preference. The ability of brand equity processes to cultivate rich brand engagement and interaction can determine utility value that aligns the brand with the customer self-concept and preferences (Kumar & Narayana, 2018). In this case, brand equity acts as an antecedent of brand preference (Chang & Ming, 2013).

Grocery retailer brand equity embraces an incremental effect of customers' purchasing frequency and the purchase amount (Sener & Behdioglu, 2013). Therefore, when customers place high brand equity value on a brand, there is a strong motivation of patronising the brand today and in future, thus effecting a high propensity of repurchase intentions. Additionally, Ajini (2012) notes a significant positive relationship between brand equity and customer repurchase intentions. Therefore, it can be concluded that a strong brand equity-repurchase intention relationship exists (de Oliveira et al., 2015). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{19}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact its brand preference.

H_{20}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact repurchase intention.

5.3.1.5 Mediation effect of overall brand equity in the relationships between CBBE sources (brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand personality dimensions) and outcomes (Brand Preference).

Brand awareness as a CBBE source serves as a source of information about a brand (Shahid, Hussain & Zafar, 2017). From the information, customers build perceptions, associations and are influenced to act differentially towards the brand to the point of influencing brand equity (Athulya & Ramya, 2019; Chand et al., 2015). Brand equity impacts customer brand preference (Chand et al., 2015). Chang and Liu (2009:1694) define brand preference as "the extent to which the customer favours the designated service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the designated service provided by other companies in his or her consideration set." Their model suggests a mediating role of brand equity in the brand attitude, brand image and brand preference relationships. Specifically, they find that brand equity is generated from brand attitude, and brand image positively drives brand preference.

Brand personality gives symbolic or self-expressive function to customers (Hosany & Martin, 2012; Keller, 2013). Customers are inclined to use or buy whatever brand they think reflects their whole being

(Ismailpour et al., 2014; Almasi & Dadanehi, 2017). This means that customers acquire or reinforce their sense of self through the goods and services they buy and what they eat. Brands have a social meaning that facilitates customers' association with specific brands mostly driven by brand characteristics. Therefore, brand personality increases the brand equity of related brands (Loureiro et al., 2014) through the application of its dimensions, such as brand sincerity and excitement. The enhanced brand equity generates customers' differential responses (Jara & Cliquet, 2012) that lead to brand preference (Chang & Liu, 2009).

According to Vinh and Huy (2016), perceived quality is brand equity's "core" facet. It can impact brand preference directly or through its impact on brand loyalty and overall brand equity (Buil et al., 2013). Perceived quality provides a sense of brand value that influences overall brand equity and customer brand preference, according to Severi and Ling (2013) and Vinh and Huy (2016). While these authors suggest that brand equity generated from perceived quality drives brand preference, Buil et al.'s (2013) findings show that overall brand equity generated from brand loyalty leads to brand preference. From these suggestions and findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

$H_{21a\text{-}g}$: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationships between its sources ([a]brand awareness, [b]brand sincerity, [c]brand excitement, [d]brand competence, [e]perceived quality, [f]brand image, [g]brand loyalty) and its outcome of brand preference.

5.3.1.6 Mediation effect of overall brand equity in the relationships between CBBE sources (brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand personality dimensions) and outcomes (repurchase intentions)

Concerned that the outcomes of overall brand equity are rarely studies, Moradi and Zarei (2011) examined the extent to which overall brand equity impacts outcomes of both brand preference and repurchase intentions. They found that overall brand equity has a substantial impact on both brand preference and repurchase intentions. However, they did not study the sources of overall brand equity. Buil et al.'s (2013) study did not only support Moradi and Zarei's (2011) findings but went further to suggest a mediating role of overall brand equity in the relationship between sources of equity and repurchase intentions. They specifically found that brand equity generated from brand loyalty positively and significantly impacting repurchase intentions. According to Buil et al.'s (2013) model, brand loyalty was an outcome of brand

image and perceived quality, all driven by brand awareness. Liu (2020), Tran et al. (2020), Ha (2020), and Liao et al. (2017) point out that sources (perceived quality, brand image, brand loyalty, and brand personality) of brand overall brand equity directly impact it. Buil et al. (2013) and Wu et al. (2020) show that overall brand equity mediates the relationships between these sources and repurchase intentions. For example, and like Buil et al. (2013) and Wu et al. (2020) find, brand awareness, brand image, and perceived quality interrelate and influence brand loyalty before impacting overall brand equity. As a result, brand equity was noted to be a strong driver of repurchase intentions. From the suggested mediating role of overall brand equity, the following hypotheses are formulated:

$H_{22a\text{-}g}$: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationships between its sources ([a] brand awareness, [b]brand sincerity, [c]brand excitement, [d]brand competence, [e]perceived quality, [f]brand image, [g]brand loyalty) and its outcome of repurchase intentions.

The hypotheses were developed into a unified grocery retailer conceptual model, which is presented in Figure 5.1.

5.3.2 The Unified Grocery Retailer Conceptual Model (2017)

The unified grocery retailer brand equity model developed for this study is an integrated framework. It builds on Aaker's (1991) CBBE model that provides traditional sources of brand equity such as brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, and perceived quality sources of brand equity. Aaker's (1991) and Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE models, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model, and Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) retailer brand equity are integrated to form a unified model.

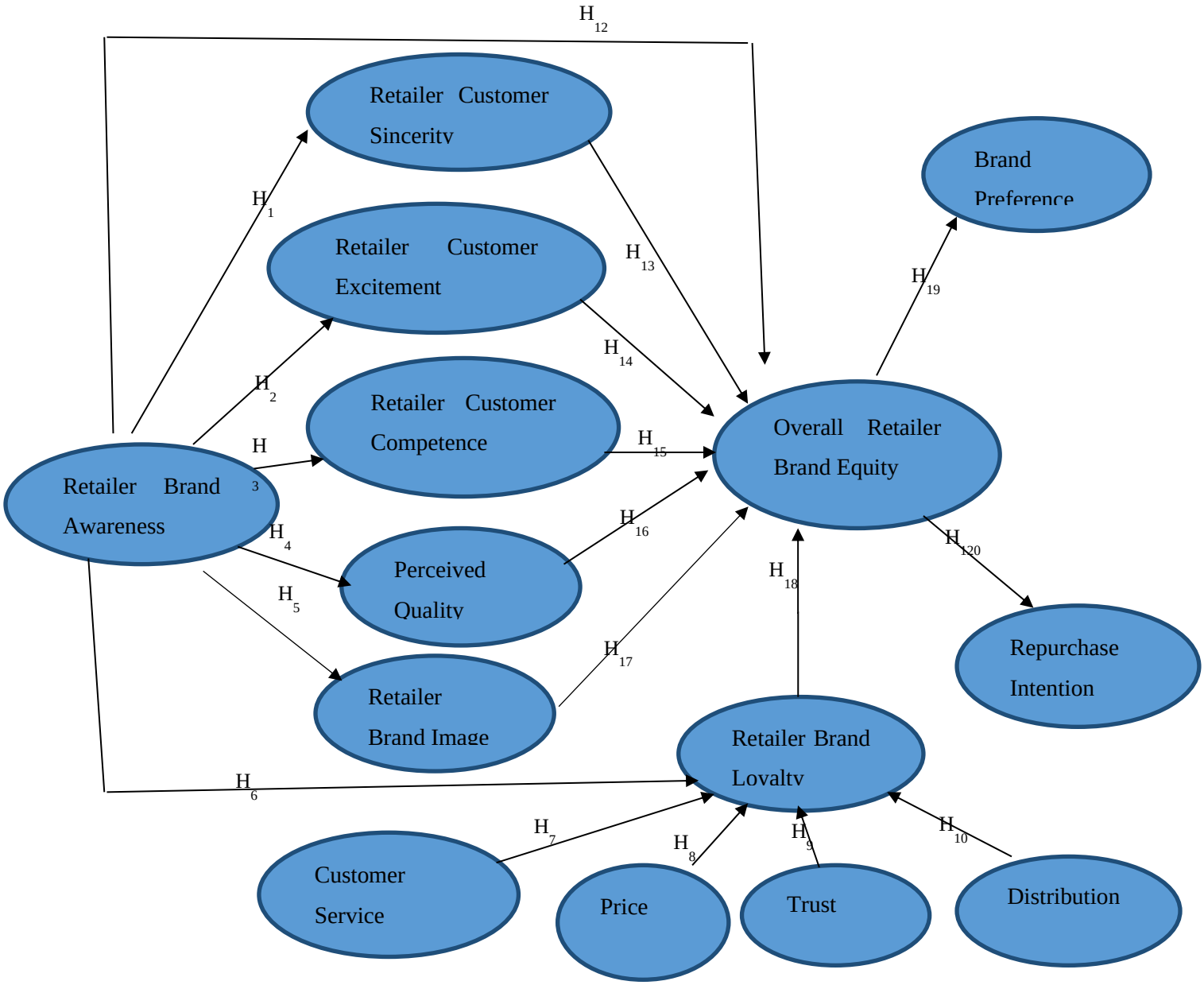


Figure 5.1: The Unified Grocery Retailer Brand Equity Model

The unified model posits that when retailer brand awareness is created, other sources of retailer brand equity such as brand image, brand personality (retailer brand sincerity, brand excitement and brand competence), perceived quality, customer service, price, trust, distribution and brand loyalty will be generated. Thus, brand awareness will either impact overall brand equity directly or indirectly through these sources. The overall brand equity will, in turn, drive outcomes of repurchase intentions and brand preference. Thus, overall retailer brand equity plays a mediating role between the sources and outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity.

5.4 Conclusion

The chapter integrated five CBBE models and empirical literature to develop a unified grocery retailer conceptual model from which hypotheses were developed. The resultant model provided various sources of grocery retailer brand equity and two outcomes which will be tested using the research methods discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 6.

CHAPTER VI

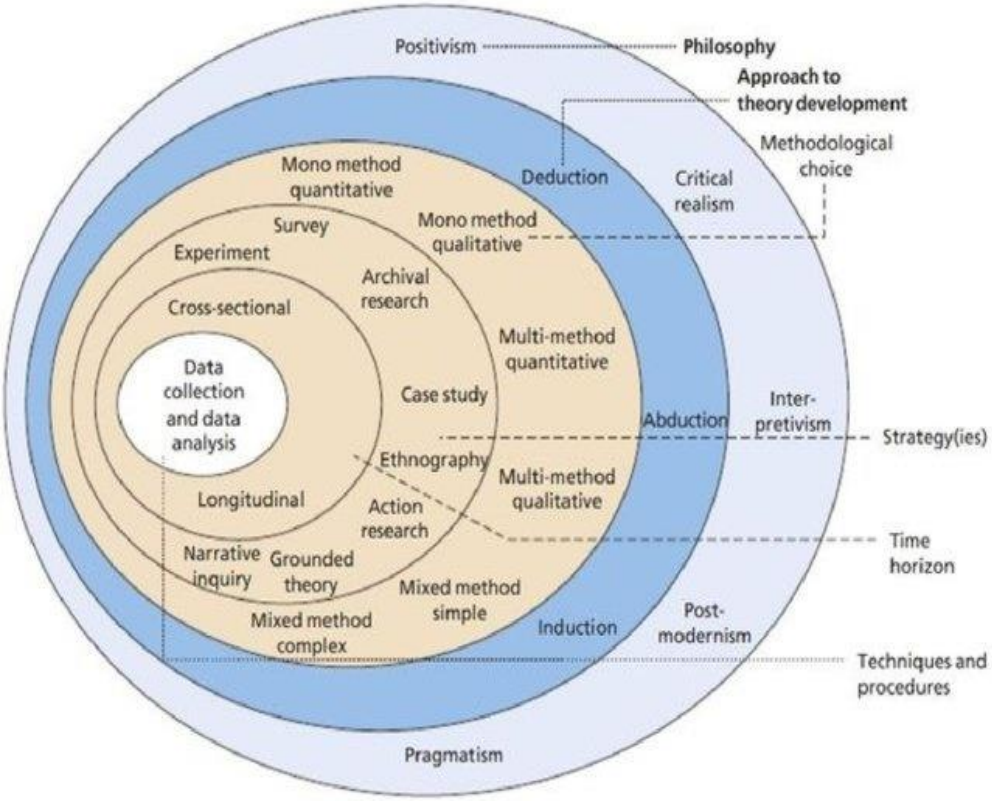
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter developed the unified conceptual model and the accompanying hypotheses. This chapter aims to discuss the methods used to collect and data to test the conceptual model and hypotheses. The chapter covers the research philosophy, research design, sampling techniques, research instruments and data analysis procedures adopted in this research study. In principle, it covered the research roadmap that was used in the study. The chapter starts with the research onion and relates its steps to the current study. The chapter ends by discussing the steps and methods used for data analyses.

6.2 The Research Onion

The research onion structure created guidelines of step-by-step research processes that were followed in this study. According to Bryman (2012), the research onion layers give a detailed presentation of the progression of research processes. The main advantage of the research onion is its ability to adapt to all research methodology, thus allowing it to be universally applied to any research setting. In line with the above guidelines, the sections below show the roadmap used in this study. Figure 6.1 below shows the stages of the research onion.



Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) **Figure 6.1: Research onion**

Figure 6.1 illustrates the underlying options that were selected in this research study. It comprises six layers of research philosophies, approaches, methodological choices, research strategies, time horizons and data collection and analysis procedures.

6.3 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs concerning how scientific investigations can be undertaken after considering the nature of the research problem at hand (Bryman, 2012). The philosophy delineates how the research study should be conducted considering a system of beliefs and philosophical assumptions that largely shape the understanding of the research questions and the underpinning factors that influence the choice of research methods (Saunders et al., 2016). The choice of research philosophy is figured out by the type of knowledge investigated in the research study (May, 2011). The research methodology's ultimate purpose is to ensure consistency between chosen research tools, techniques, and underlying philosophy with the research objectives and research questions (Saunders et al., 2016). According to Bryman (2012), examining the philosophical research worldview is critical to achieve a good

alignment between the research philosophy and research objectives. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) postulate the three philosophical worldviews applicable to research studies. They are epistemological, ontological and axiological perspectives.

6.3.1 Epistemological Worldview

Epistemology is a philosophical worldview that approaches research from a scientific perspective so that knowledge and information can be proven beyond doubt (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Its debate is centred on whether social science can be analysed and studied using the same procedures and principles of the natural sciences (Bryman, Hirschsohn, Bell, dos Santos, Du Toit, Masenge, Van Aardt & Wagner, 2014). As a result of this guiding philosophical worldview, research studies can start from an acceptable knowledge; usually, a theory before the fieldwork is done. This stage is followed by vigorous research processes and procedures in the fieldwork and intensively conducting data analyses to test social science research questions and objectives.

6.3.2 Ontological Worldview

Ontology is a philosophical worldview centred on a belief system that contributes to building rational processes and procedures to study social phenomena (Scotland, 2012). It is concerned with reality and relations among essential components of research studies and their participants (Bryman et al., 2014). It concentrates on examining the underlying belief system of a researcher, especially how the researcher believes that something makes sense or is real. The researcher's assumptions help conceptualise the form and nature of reality about what one believes (Mertens, 2011). As a result, these assumptions, concepts, or propositions orientate the researcher on conceptualising the research problem, its significance, and approaches and procedures to contribute to the research problem (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The ontological philosophy endeavours to understand foundational concepts that can be used to derive research themes that uncover embedded knowledge in research data (Saunders et al., 2016). From the ontological physiological worldview, issues of objectivism and constructivism are central. Objectivism principles ensure independent analysis of the social phenomenon. To satisfy the objectivism criteria, the researcher should be isolated from the research processes to remove researcher bias at all costs and protect research data integrity (Bryman et al., 2014). On the other hand, constructivism principles accept the researcher's beliefs in constructing knowledge and meaning of the social phenomena.

6.3.3 Axiological Worldview

An axiological worldview is an approach that defines the expected values related to the participants-researcher relationships, data processing, presentation and analysis and the audiences' privilege to access the research results (ARC, 2015). According to Silverman (2013), the axiological philosophy covers how values and opinions ethically impact the processes adopted in the data collection, the conduct of researchers in their interaction with research subjects, data storage and access, and the tools to be applied during data analysis. The axiological philosophy is categorised into four criteria of ethical conduct: teleology, deontology, morality and fairness (Canales, 2013). Teleology is centred on the theory of morality that states that moral precepts should be maintained in every human endeavour to achieve intrinsically good or desirable ethical conduct. The deontological criteria are concerned with the need for researchers to understand that every action they undertake when studying a research phenomenon has an equivalent consequence that might benefit the participants, the researcher, or the public (Tuch, Roth, Hornbæk, Opwis, & Bargas-Avila, 2012). The morality criterion refers to the intrinsic moral values upheld during the research (Bynum, 2015). Finally, the measure of fairness draws the researcher's attention to the fair treatment of research participants and ensures that their rights are upheld. The section below discusses the research philosophies and how they relate to philosophical worldviews.

Added to the above, according to Bryman (2012), there are three primary research philosophies of positivism, realism and interpretivism.

6.3.4 Discussion of Specific Research Philosophy

The section discusses the positivism, interpretivism and realism research philosophies.

6.3.4.1 Positivism

According to Tavakoli (2012:473), positivism postulates that in a research setup, the world is composed of observable sensory experiences that help discover the universal causal laws that conform to values of neutrality. Research results are concluded through the application of statistical means. Theories drive the positivist paradigm to derive visible, identifiable and definable indicators that test such theories (Saunders et al., 2016). Its theory-based approach assists in discovering new facts and contributing to the new frontiers of knowledge. Positivists believe reality is stable and consists of a phenomenon that can be observed, described and measured objectively (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The positivist researchers believe that the truth and reality are free and independent from the researcher and that the world conforms

to permanent, unchanging laws, rules of causation and happenings. Saunders et al. (2016:135) add that positivism relates to the natural science philosophical stance of producing observable social reality that presents law-like generalisations. As ascertained by Greener and Martelli (2015:21), the goal of positivism is to promote experimenting and testing research data to validate or invalidate stated hypotheses to improve or generate a new body of theories by combining facts and emerging principles. From an epistemological viewpoint, positivism adopts a social scientific approach that uses an acceptable set of knowledge and ensures that the researcher's behaviour remains passive during data collection, thus maintaining objectivity in the research study. With an axiological worldview, the study adopting positivism should be value-free as the researcher should be completely detached and neutral in all research processes.

6.3.4.2 Realism

The philosophy of realism is equivalently termed the "transformative paradigm" (Riyami, 2015), mainly because it is based on relativism from an ontological paradigm. This paradigm takes a transactional epistemology in which the researcher has active interaction with the participants. It adopts a historical, social realism stance that promotes dialogue with the participants in research studies (Martens, 2015). From an axiological paradigm, realism supports research subjects' cultural norms (Martens, 2015). The realism paradigm is anchored on the fact that reality in social science requires an interplay of media, institutions and society.

In conclusion, critical realism believes that reality is external and independent and that there are two steps to understanding the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). From the outset, a process of seeing and experiencing the research subjects should happen first in a research study. Then, in the second instance, this process is followed by a process of reflection on reality regarding what is happening to the targeted research object or event (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Finally, an iterative process of some sort that involves reasoning back and forth, linking again to the research object or events, takes place through the process of retroduction (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). The idea is to understand underlying causes and relate them to historically-based or socially-based knowledge or facts in the critical realism philosophy. The realism philosophy uses the act of constructing theories by considering cultural norms and individuals' social positioning. To sum up, the characteristics of realism philosophy are underpinned by constructed research facts and knowledge based on participatory research methodologies.

6.3.4.3 Interpretivism

The philosophy of interpretivism is grounded on the fact that human and social sciences differ in interpretation from physical sciences because human beings tend to interpret the world based on what they hear and feel in a natural setting (Thompson, 2015; Hammersley, 2013:26). As a result, interpretivism adopts a relativist ontology that ascribes to the fact that multiple interpretations are mainly subjective in a research situation depending on how individuals interpret it. This gives this philosophy an advantage over other philosophies as it describes objects, human, or events in great detail and from different perspectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The emphasis of interpretivism is placed on understanding individuals and their interpretation of the world in the research context. Interpretivism adopts a subjectivist epistemology, relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and balanced axiology (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). From a subjectivist epistemology perspective, the philosophy involves constructing meaning and knowledge from the collected data by applying the researchers' thinking and cognitive processes guided by their interactions with the research subjects. In terms of relativist ontology, the interpretivist philosophy believes in creating knowledge in complex circumstances. Multiple realities are the output of the research processes that interact with research subjects as data sources (Bryman et al., 2014). Balanced axiology informs the adoption of balanced, ethical considerations by considering both the researcher and research subjects' values in the research processes. Hence, the interpretivist philosophy advocates that theory follows the research processes grounded on the generated data (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014).

6.3.5 The research philosophy of choice

The positivist research philosophy was adopted in this study, investigating the impacts of the sources on outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity. This study was conducted from this particular viewpoint, especially after considering the research objectives that seek reality within the retailer brand equity. It was achieved by soliciting information from external sources of the retailer organisations, using information from their customers. The researcher was detached from the data collection processes to avoid research bias (Johnson, 2014). Additionally, the data was collected from a large sample, 480 grocery retailer customers. The large sample size allows for gathering comprehensive information from individuals with different perceptions of the constructs being studied. This further enables the generalisation of the data from the sample to the sample population at a better-calculated level of accuracy.

Following an epistemological philosophy, the positivist perspective was appropriate, and it includes scientific explanations using accepted knowledge. For this study, overall brand equity had to be explained, and a unified brand equity model in the grocery retailer sector had to be tested. Care was taken so that objectiveness in the data collection for the testing of the model was retained. The following section discusses the research approaches.

6.4 Research Approaches

There are three research approaches the deductive, inductive and abductive research approaches. In terms of the deductive research approach, the emphasis is on testing hypotheses to verify a theory. In this light, the deductive approach starts from general to specific issues of the phenomena under study. As a result, the procedures use the top-down approach as it begins from known theories (general) and then narrows down to the testing of hypotheses (specific) (Silverman, 2013). In alignment with the above description, the deductive approach develops assumed answers to the research questions and problems (hypotheses) derived from the underpinning theories of constructs being studied. The hypotheses are then tested so that they can either be accepted or refuted. These processes match the positivist philosophy in which hypotheses are formulated and applied to statistical testing to make objective interpretations.

On the other hand, the inductive research approach generates new knowledge through the creation of theories from collected data (specific) and generalises the data into a new theory (general) (Surbhi, 2018). This approach of carrying out research is usually called the bottom-up approach. In this approach, the starting point of the research process involves the researcher selecting an area of research interest and formulating the research problems. The next stage is an intensive interaction with the research subjects during the collection of rich narrations using tools such as interviews and observations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Finally, a critical analysis of this data will be undertaken to discover patterns and categorise responses to create new theories.

The abductive approach is used to study surprising or incomplete observations or conclusions regarding any social aspect in which both empirical information and subjective opinions of people are crucial in answering the research problem and research question (Saunders et al., 2016). In the abduction approach, elements of the inductive and deductive approaches are combined to build theory and its empirical testing (Surbhi, 2018).

The chosen research approach for this study was deductive. Following this approach, theories and models were reviewed to identify the sources and outcomes of grocery retailer equity. Next, the theories and models guided the development of the unified conceptual model from which hypotheses were formulated for empirical testing using quantitative collected data. Finally, the data was statistically analysed so that hypotheses could either be confirmed or refuted (Burns, Bush & Veeck, 2016).

6.5 Methodology Choices

Various research methodology choices include mono, mixed-method, multi-method and mixed-method (Sauders et al., 2016). The mono method utilises a single method to solve a research problem. In this method, either quantitative or qualitative methods can be used. Multi-method is a research methodology that can employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in carrying out a research study. According to Flick (2011), the multi-method means the research is divided into segments with each component producing its specific data set. There are two versions of the multi-method. One example is multi-mode quantitative, meaning quantitative is the primary method used, and qualitative can be used for pilot studies or retest methods to ascertain reliability requirements. This means the results are in two data sets: one data set is for the research findings, and another data set is for pilot testing or reliability processes. Another case is multi-mode qualitative, meaning the qualitative choice is used as the primary research method. The quantitative choice is used for either pilot studies or retesting to confirm the data's reliability status, thus producing two datasets. Finally, according to Flick (2011), the mixed method combines quantitative and qualitative methods to create a single dataset. The findings are reported as one set of data that integrates data from both methods.

In general terms, the methodological research choices are grouped into two: quantitative and qualitative methodological choices. Saunders et al. (2016) define a qualitative research choice as a method that studies social events and context by examining individual or group opinions and behaviours. Quantitative research choice involves investigations, assessments and quantifications of relationships between different variables by applying various statistical techniques on data from large samples, enabling the generalisation of the research results to the targeted population. Guercini (2014) concurs that qualitative methodological choices involve contacting the research subjects to get direct information that facilitates understanding of complex phenomena (Nardi, 2018). In conclusion, these two poles of methodological research choices

differ in a few ways. Table 6.2 shows the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research methodological choices.

Table 6.1: Differences between the Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Areas	**Quantitative**	**Qualitative**
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive, empirical testing of theory	Inductive, generation of theory from data
Epistemological orientation	Natural science model, in particular, positivist	Interpretivist
Ontological orientation	Objectivist	Constructionist

Source: Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018)

The table shows that quantitative research approach intends to use objective data in its analytic processes and the data can be deductively assessed. On the other hand, qualitative approach involves use of subjective data that is inductively assessed. In line with the positivist philosophy, the research study adopted the mono mode quantitative methodological approach. This method tests theories by examining the relationships among variables using statistical procedures applying descriptive and statistical models (Creswell, 2014: 4). In utilising this methodological choice, the main motive was to apply statistical testing on theories and hypotheses to infer and generalise findings based on the sample results. The primary objective of this research study was to determine the sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity in the South African grocery retail sector and develop and test a unified grocery retailer equity framework. In achieving this objective, the validation of constructs under the study was performed by calculating relational factors using approaches such as coefficient of determination (r^2) and cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) to quantify these relationships among latent variables and between observed variables and their equivalent latent variables. The quantitative methodological choice achieved these objectives by applying statistical models that compute coefficients denoting the power of the relationships between variables.

6.6 Research Strategies

Dinnen (2014) defines a research strategy as a step-by-step plan of action that gives direction towards applying thoughts and efforts. A research strategy facilitates the conduct of research studies into a systematic process that enables the researcher to produce quality results and detailed reporting. As a result of the plan, the research study can stay focused, reduce frustration, enhance quality and, most importantly, save time and resources. Alternatively, Saunders et al. (2016) define research strategy as an action plan to answer research questions. Research strategy facilitates the collection and analysis of data required to answer the research questions. Following the research onion structure, research strategies are categorised into experimental designs, survey, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry. Except for experimental designs and survey, the research mentioned above strategies is used in either mixed or qualitative research methodological choices. Experimental designs and survey fall within quantitative methodological choices. The research adopted a quantitative approach; hence the sections below explained the different strategies applicable to the quantitative approach.

6.6.1 Experimental design

Experimental research design is a design that is guided by natural science (Saunders et al., 2016). In practice, this strategy involves testing hypotheses under controlled conditions by manipulating the independent variables and recording changes in the dependent variables. An independent variable is manipulated in order to observe changes in the dependent variable in a laboratory-like environment with controlled conditions. In social science, it involves applying some treatments to the experimental group. The intervention effects are recorded and compared with the control group, which was not exposed to the treatment. In the end, the results from the two groups are analysed to come up with cause-effect relationships (Saunders et al., 2016). This study could not use an experimental method because it has to test a model with many relationships that would have impracticably required too many manipulations.

6.6.2 Survey Strategy

Survey research is a research strategy used to collect information from many individuals using a closed questionnaire. It is suitable for studying quantitative constructs (Check & Schutt, 2012). According to Avedian (2014), the survey strategy gathers information that reflects the population's attitudes, behaviours, opinions and beliefs. Historically, a survey strategy was employed to collect descriptive data from a large

population cost-effectively and quickly. It gathers composite information related to demographic characteristics of the sample, opinions on programs or products and a sample's beliefs and attitudes towards a specific industry. Survey research is a vigorous approach that adapts scientifically approved methodologies that give enough details on whom to include in the study to achieve a representative sample. The survey processes and methods are used to reduce non-response errors which are usually common errors that can jeopardise high-quality research processes and does threatens the attainment of expected outcomes in research studies. The table below shows some of the errors associated with a survey and the strategies applied to reduce them.

Table 6.2: Common Errors in Survey and Strategies to reduce them.

Type of Error	**Source of Error**	**Strategies to reduce them**
Coverage error	Unknown or zero chance of individuals in the population being included in the sample.	Apply multi-mode design.
Sampling error	Individuals included in the sample do not represent the characteristics of the population.	Identify the population of interest, diverse participant recruitment strategies.
Measurement error	Questions or instruments do not accurately reflect the topic of interest. Interviews or questionnaires do not evoke truthful answers.	Use valid and reliable instruments—pre-test questions. Use user-friendly graphs and visual characteristics.
Non-response error	Lack of responses from all individuals in the sample.	Design a user-friendly survey. Do follow-up procedures for non-responders.

Source: Ponto (2015, p. 169)

6.6.3 Research Strategy chosen in this research

A survey strategy was used in this study. It was the appropriate research strategy because this study had to test a large model that required data from a large sample. Therefore, the survey strategy could provide

data from a large population (Wyse, 2012). In this study, the sample size was 480 customers of the Woolworths grocery retailer brand. Therefore, the survey method was deemed the best method to collect and manage such extensive data cost-effectively relative to other research strategies.

Furthermore, since the survey strategy can gather information on customer behaviours and preferences using structured questions, which was needed for this study, the survey strategy was appropriate. The survey strategy enabled the collection of multi-dimensional data that included attitudes, opinions and behaviours (Ponto, 2015) about the many constructs examined in this study. The survey data could be processed by a quantitative statistical technique testing both the measurement and structural models applied for this study. Finally, since standardised surveys are free from several types of errors because the researcher is detached from the research processes of collecting data, a survey was appropriate.

6.7 Time Horizon

In research studies, the time horizon is defined as the time the research will last, and according to Saunders et al. (2016), there are two types of time horizons: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period to monitor whether the responses of the constructs under the investigation will change during the different periods of measurement (Hemed 2015). In this regard, longitudinal studies can conduct several studies on the same phenomena analysing the same construct and the same research respondents over a long period (Johnson, 2016). The advantage of the longitudinal study is that there is a chance to monitor for changes in the characteristics of the phenomena under study and differences in responses by the target population over time (Saunders et al., 2016).

On the other hand, cross-sectional studies are limited to a specific time frame. Creswell (2013) notes that researchers are always under a constrained time frame, especially in research projects undertaken for academic courses. The cross-sectional time horizon conforms to the time frame requirements for educational purposes. Consequently, it was selected for use in this study. A cross-sectional design is a descriptive study in which participants from different groups are sampled, and the groups' characteristics or behaviours are compared at a single point in time (Leedy & Ormrod 2015:157). In cross-sectional studies, group or group samples are studied simultaneously as a snapshot. At least two variables are analysed to provide a descriptive picture that offers the possibility of discovering relationships among them (Thomas, 2013: 173). Therefore, the cross-sectional study was appropriate for this study as it included samples from various age groups and gender orientations who are customers of the Woolworths

retailer brands. In this study, a comparison of Woolworths grocery brands was done by comparing the dimensions of brand equity of Woolworths grocery brands using the data collected from different strata of its customers. Therefore, the cross-sectional time horizon was appropriate in this study as it allowed robust testing of the relationships between variables in the conceptual framework (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2014: 180).

6.8 Sampling Methods

Since collecting data from many study participants is expensive (Suresh & Chandrashekara, 2012), sampling, which is a process of selecting a representative part of the total sample population, is advisable. The data collected from the sample make definite statements about the sample population at large. The sample population is the full set of cases from which a sample is drawn (Saunders et al., 2016). This section discusses the sample frame, size determination and the sampling technique used. It starts with a description of the sample frame and how the sample size was determined.

6.8.1 Determining sample frame and size.

The sample frame was all Woolworths' customers between the ages of 18 and above, of all income levels and racial groups residing in the Gauteng Province. Gauteng Province was selected because it is the economic capital of South Africa and harbours people of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The sample size to be used in any research study is particularly important because it determines the reliability of the results of a study (Flick, 2011). Three methods determine the sample size: the rule of thumb method, the sample population calculation method and the data analyses determination method. The rule of thumb method determines the sample size through the number of constructs and items. The sample population method determines the sample size by estimating the general sample population and using a calculator to determine the percentage of the sample population drawn with minimal errors. Finally, the data analyses method stipulates minimal sample sizes that can be used for various data analyses methods (Saunders et al., 2016). For this study, the sample size was determined by the rule of thumb and data analyses methods considering the multi-variant and multi-item nature of the study.

To calculate the sample size using the rule of thumb in this study, an analysis of the constructs under study was done. The total number of constructs of interest is fourteen. With each construct having about four measures/items and each measure supposedly requiring at least ten observations or respondents

(Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019), the estimated sample size was 14x4x10 = 560. With these conditions, a sample of 560 was required. Despite this number, Tabachnick and Fidell (2019) recommend that good sample size for factor analysis can be 300 cases. According to Kyriazos (2018), when structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis is adopted and the analysis method used in this study, sample sizes of 50 are very poor; 100 poor; 200 fair; 300 good; 500 very good, and 1000 as excellent. In order to meet the very good sample recommendation, a sample size of 500 Woolworths grocery retailer brand customers living in Gauteng was the target. However, the actual sample size was 480.

6.8.2 Choosing sampling techniques.

There are two types of sampling techniques: Probability and non-probability techniques. Wolmarans and Meintjes (2015) define non-probability sampling as a sampling process in which the probability that a member of the population can be included in the sample, cannot be reasonably estimated and remains unknown. In this regard, it means that non-probability sampling is arbitrary and subjective (Etikan & Bala 2016). In its process of drawing the sample, factors such as the characteristics of participants, easy accessibility, respondent availability and willingness to participate are considered in selecting a sample (Sarstedt et al., 2018). Some non-probability methods are convenience, judgemental and snowballing methods. According to Maree (2015), convenience sampling involves drawing a conveniently easy sample to contact or reach. It enables the researcher to include anonymous individuals in the sample. Snowballing supports convenience sampling in that it allows the researcher to select a small sample of known persons and expands the sample by asking those initial respondents to identify other respondents who fit the sample frame characteristics (Crossman, 2020). Naderifar et al. (2017) note that snowballing could easily grow the sample sizes by obtaining referrals from the initial group of respondents.

On the other hand, probability sampling is a sampling process in which the chances and probability of including each sample population element are equal, can be estimated with certainty, and are known (Claire et al., 2016). Probability sampling is composed of techniques such as simple random, systematic and stratified sampling. Its main advantage is the ability to get rid of researcher bias in selecting the respondents. However, in practical terms, it is not easy to randomise and still achieve a sample that meets research requirements without researcher guidance in selecting the sample.

Non-probability sampling was used in this study with convenience and snowballing methods. These non-probability methods were used because the researcher did not have a list of all Woolworths customers in

Gauteng to be able to conduct random sampling as required for a probability sampling. Depending on availability and willingness to participate, a sample of 480 Woolworths shoppers was drawn conveniently. Data was collected using an online survey that complied with the COVID 19 pandemic period of social distancing requirements. The online questionnaires were distributed to social media contacts after obtaining permission from the Registrar and Ethics Committee. The researcher's social media sites where the link to the questionnaire was posted were Facebook, LinkedIn. An email with the link was also sent to the researcher's contacts. The questionnaire had a screening question on whether the respondent had some shopping experiences with Woolworths grocery retailer was asked to check if the respondent is a Woolworths grocery customer. If the answer to the screening question was "Yes", then the respondents could complete the rest of the questionnaire. If the answer was "No", the respondent was not allowed to continue with the survey. In the introduction of the questionnaire, respondents were solicited to forward the questionnaire to friends and family members that they thought had shopped at Woolworths' grocery stores. With the forwarding and for no incentive paid, the participation was snowballed.

6.9 Research Instruments

Primary data is data collected for the first time to solve a specific research problem. The instruments that can be used to collect primary data are interviews, observation and questionnaires. This research study used a questionnaire to collect relevant data to address the research questions. Saunders et al. (2016) define a questionnaire as a data collection tool where participants record their responses through paper-based and online monkey survey methods. The main advantage of using a questionnaire data collection tool is its ease in administering. It can be sent to participants electronically over long distances, hence saving on travelling costs and time. Furthermore, this presents the most efficient and effective way of collecting large responses from the population (Saunders et al., 2016).

6.9.1 Questionnaire Structure and Sources of Research Instruments

The questionnaire included three sections (A to C) covering general information, sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity.

6.9.1.1 Section A: General information

This section had questions related to demographics and any general related information. The section asked information on the sample demographic information that might act as a mediator between sources and

outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity. A mediator variable is an intervening variable that can influence the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:58). The items included in this section are age, race, gender, educational background, marital status and family size.

6.9.1.2 Section B: Sources of Brand Equity

This section of the instrument collected data on perceived quality, brand image, brand personality, brand loyalty and brand awareness. The central instrument employed in this study was adopted from Yoo et al. (2000). In its earlier research studies, the instrument achieved a reliability score of above 0.7 Cronbach alpha, which is considered acceptable. Furthermore, the measure is very comprehensive, and its measurement items are extensively referenced in various literature sources (Yoo et al., 2001; Buil et al., 2013; Londono et al., 2017; Chuma et al., 2018). The measurement represents a complete brand equity model as it captures the major dimensions such as brand awareness, service quality, and product quality and brand loyalty. Under this section, retailer-specific measures asking for information on pricing policy, product range, customer service, character, and reputation were derived from Burt and Carralero-Encinas (2000). All items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree). Hartley (2013) discovered that the most used Likert-type scales are either four (4) or five (5) points.

The 5-point Likert scale was chosen for use in this study because it was discovered that if a four (4) points Likert scale and five (5) points Likert scale were both used in the same instrument, the five (5) points Likert scale achieved a large score in reliability. However, if the same instrument is changed to seven (7) points Likert, it registered a marginally small improvement in the reliability scores. Therefore, the 5-point Likert scale was used in this research. The selected Likert scale utilises both the nominal and interval scale (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal. 2015). The nominal scale measures the mean, standard dispersion and uses a non-parametric analytic method, while the interval scale measures the mean, standard dispersion but uses the statistical analytic method (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015). The interval Likert scale assigns a quantitative meaning to the scale of the responses, whilst the ordinal scale considers them as only ranking without a quantitative meaning given to the answers. The nominal Likert scale was employed to analyse information related to the sample demographic. The interval scale allows the computation of composite scores for each latent variable. Therefore, it was the chosen and preferred Likert scale in analysing constructs parameters in this study (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal. 2015). The table below shows the sources and references from which the measures of various variables were adopted.

Table 6.3: Sources of Research Instruments

Measure	Source
Retailer Brand Image	Chuma (2018)
Brand Awareness	Yoo et al. (2000)
Brand Loyalty	Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuman (1996); Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000)
Perceived Quality	Anselmsson et al. (2017) ; Londono et al. (2017)
Brand Personality	Aaker (1997)**;** Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka and Valette-Florence (2005)
Trust	Delgado et al. (2003)
Perceived Price	Jaafar, Naba and Lalp (2012)
Distribution	Smith (1992); Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000)
Customer Services	Saxe and Weitz (1982); Hong-Youl Ha (2011)
Overall Brand Equity	Buil et al. (2013)
Brand Preference	Buil et al. (2013)
Repurchase Intentions	Buil et al. (2013)

Source: Researcher drafted (2021)

Measures were adapted from various research instruments developed in previous studies on the retailer brand equity source. These measures were selected because they aligned with this research study, as described below.

a. Retailer brand Image

The retailer image construct was operationalised by five questions that were borrowed from Chuma (2018). The five measures scored an aggregate reliability Cronbach alpha of 0.84, which is quite higher

than the acceptable threshold of 0.7. The measures gathered information on brand efficiency, brand uniqueness, brand market positioning, and Woolworths' overall brand image.

b. Retailer Brand Awareness

The instrument examined whether respondents knew their preferred brand by asking for information on brand recognition, ability to recall whether the brand is on the top of mind of the sample and the customer brand knowledge. The five measures were adapted from Yoo et al. (2000), and these items scored a reliability score of above 0.7; hence they were considered reliable. These measures are widely referenced and used in many studies. For example, a typical question is, "I know what the Woolworths brand looks like." This was measured using a five-point Likert scale that is structured from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, to (5) strongly agree. The minimum score is five [5] in this measure, while the maximum score is 25. Using the 5-point scale, the mean value of 3 represents a neutral belief of the measured constructs. After considering the earlier reliability scores, the instrument was incorporated into the current instrument to capitalise on historical reliability achievements.

c. Brand Personality

Aaker (1997) developed the brand personality instrument. It was later changed by Siguaw and Mattila (2003) to suit their research study. In the current research, only three constructs of brand personality were adapted from their instrument. The three constructs, all composed of five questions, are excitement, competence, and sincerity. Under sincerity, the instrument investigated whether a retailer brand store is honest, caring, cheerful and friendly towards its customers. This instrument scored a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 and above (Aaker, 1997, 2005; Branaghan and Hildebrand, 2011) and was consequently deemed reliable. The competence construct was operationalised by measures adopted from Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka, and Valette-Florence (2005). The measure consists of 4 elements that solicit information on whether the staff are helpful to customers, whether Woolworths is a leader in the grocery sector, whether Woolworths offers the best, and finally, whether the Woolworths brand is the most successful brand in the retail grocery sector. The last brand personality construct included in the study is brand excitement. The five measures related to this construct were adopted from Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka & Valette-Florence (2005). The measures solicited information on whether Woolworths has an imaginative layout, whether the products and services align with the customer lifestyle, whether Woolworths offers a unique

shopping experience, and whether the Woolworths brand has charming characteristics. The brand competence construct was later excluded from the conceptual framework and further analysis, as its pilot study results failed to pass reliability and validity tests.

d. Perceived Quality

The three components of the perceived quality instrument were adapted from Anselmsson et al. (2017) and are aspects concerning the reliability of the store, the quality of store merchandise, and customers' quality expectations. The remainder of the measures was adopted from Arnett et al. (2003) and Londono et al. (2017). They relate to aspects of the brand ability to offer good deals frequently and the ability of the brand offering to have quality packaging. These measures were highly recommended by El Hedhli and Chebat (2009) as well as Pappu and Quester (2018) as comprehensive, hence the decision to include them in the current study**.** Furthermore, they consistently scored reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient above 0.7 in the earlier research applications (El Hedhli & Chebat, 2009; Pappu & Quester, 2018).

e. Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty was operationalised by the three statements from Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuman (1996). The statements relate to the willingness to recommend the brand to others, the willingness to continue with the brand usage and a negative statement about a willingness to switch over to other brands if there is a problem. These measures were adopted because of their significant reliability results in different studies over a long period (Ekinci, Dawes & Massey, 2008). The other three measures were borrowed from Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000), and these relate to aspects of the Woolworths brand as a first choice, frequency of shopping the retailer brand and the willingness to use the brand continuously. These measures were tested and used by many researchers and achieved a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of above 0.7 in previous research usage (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Gradojevic & Irwin, 2007; Ekinci & Whyatt, 2011; Vukasovic, 2016; Pappu & Quester, 2016; Alarm & Anis, 2016; Seong-Ho Lee & Sun-Ho Lee, 2018).

f. Distribution

Three measures for the distribution construct were borrowed from Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000). A typical question is: "Woolworths stores have more distribution stores compared to their competing brands." The instrument used the 5- point Likert scale. The distribution measures scored a Cronbach alpha of 0.87,

which is higher than the 0.7 cut-off point in earlier studies. The measure further asked for information on comprehensive coverage relative to competing brands; it also investigated grocery assortment in the store and compared the number of stores with competitors' brands. The remaining two measures were adapted from Smith (1992). They asked for information about whether the brand has a national footprint and information about the closeness of the retailer brand to its client homestead. These two questions scored individual reliability scores higher than 0.7 in earlier studies (Smith, 1992).

g. Perceived Price

The perceived price used four measures adopted from Jaafar, Naba, and Lalp (2012**).** These measures solicited customer information on whether the price is essential in buying groceries, on the issue of whether customers compare prices, on saving methods using prices, on whether the Woolworths brand offers low prices and overall lower costs. Additionally, these measures scored reliability scores which were consistently above 0.7 (Jaafar, Naba, and Lalp, 2012**).**

h. Customer Services

The SOCO scale was used to measure customer services and was changed to suit previous study requirements over its years of use (Hong-Youl Ha, 2011). This instrument was developed by the American Marketing Association (1995), and in this current research, only five measures were employed. The selected measures relate to whether the brand employees go the extra mile, whether employees have a full understanding of customer requirements, whether the brand is equipped with resources of customer services initiatives, whether employees quickly act on customer problems and the ease with which customers discuss their needs with brand representatives.

i. Trust

Delgado et al. (2003) developed the brand trust scale, which had 11 scales and out of these, only four components were selected for use in the current study. The components that operationalised the trust construct include information on whether customers get what they want from Woolworths stores, whether customers rarely experience disappointments with the brand, whether the Woolworths brand keeps its promises and whether the Woolworths brand has one-on-one relationships with its customers.

j. Overall Brand Equity

A set of four retailer brand equity measures was adapted from Buil et al. (2013). These four questions investigated brand insistence, brand ambassador, brand referral, and the brand's ability to offer economical options to customers. These components are aligned well with the research goals that seek to investigate brand equity initiatives that can influence customer behaviour. The overall brand equity scored Cronbach alpha of 0.93 in earlier research studies of Buil et al. (2013).

6.9.1.3 Section C – Outcomes of Brand Equity

This section explains the outcomes of grocery retailer brand equity instruments that relate to brand preference and purchase intention. These instruments measured customer buying behaviour and how sources of retailer brand equity drive them.

a. Brand Preference

The three items of brand preference measures were adopted from Buil. (2013), and these items relate to brand appeal, brand commitment and brand customer preference in buying choices. These brand preference items were used because of their alignment with the research goals that seek to interrogate drivers and antecedents of brand preference. Furthermore, these measures were chosen to operationalise brand preference because, in research studies by Buil et al. (2013), they achieved high reliability (Cronbach alpha of above 0.7). One item was borrowed from Baalbaki (2012), and it covered the aspect of customer insistence to use the Woolworths brand and customers' unconditional loyalty to it. The measures from Buil et al. (2013 and Baalbaki (2012) scored Cronbach alpha composite reliability above 0.7; hence, they were considered reliable for use in this research study.

b. Repurchase intention.

The three items of this instrument were adapted from Buil et al. (2013), and they relate to aspects of motivation to shop at Woolworths stores, intention to continue to shop at Woolworth stores and whether customers have outstanding commitment to buy from Woolworths stores only. The remaining two items related to customers' repetitive choices in making a similar purchase and the customer commitment to future patronage were adopted from Vinh &Huy (2016). The full questionnaire is placed in the Appendix section, with all questions for each construct lined up accordingly.

6.10 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire for meaning and errors using a sample of 35 customers of Woolworths grocery. Some corrections and adjustments to the instrument were made before the full-scale administration of the questionnaire. The pilot study results are articulated in table format below, focusing on the reliability scores of constructs.

Table 6.4: Pilot Study Reliability and Valid Results

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Comment
Retailer Brand Awareness	0.745	0.829	0.496	Scores are within limits
Retailer Brand Image	0.694	0.802	0.455	Scores are within limits
Perceived Quality	0.759	0.838	0.511	Scores are within limits
Retailer Brand Loyalty	0.902	0.925	0.676	Scores are within limits
Retailer Brand Sincerity	0.758	0.838	0.564	Scores are within limits
Retailer Customer Excitement	0.850	0.892	0.623	Scores are within limits
Customer Services	0.894	0.919	0.695	Scores are within limits
Perceived Price	0.793	0.856	0.582	Scores are within limits
Brand Trust	0.806	0.871	0.629	Scores are within limits
Distribution	0.842	0.819	0.874	Scores are within limits
Overall Retailer Brand Equity	0.911	0.938	0.792	Scores are within limits
Retailer Brand Competence	0.363	0.672	0.361	Scores are out of limits
Brand Preference	0.857	0.887	0.618	Scores are within limits

Repurchase Intention	0.884	0.921	0.745	Scores are within limits.

Source: Adapted for this research

The pilot study results showed that all the constructs passed validity and reliability tests, except brand competence. Furthermore, its indicators did not meet a threshold of 0.707-factor loading, except for one indicator. Due to these inconsistencies associated with this construct, it was dropped from the model. This has resulted in a reordering of the hypotheses after retailer brand competence related hypotheses were eliminated. The changes are shown in the table below:

Table 6.5 Pilot Study Changes in the hypotheses

Old Hypotheses Orderly Arrangement	**New Hypotheses Orderly Arrangement**
H1: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand sincerity.	H1: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand sincerity
H_2: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand excitement.	H_2: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand excitement.
H_3: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand competence.	Dropped because it did not pass the reliability and validity tests.
H_4: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' customer perceived quality.	H_4: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' customer perceived quality.
H_5: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer brand image.	H_5: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer brand image.
H_6: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.	H_6: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.
H_7: Customer service positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.	H_7: Customer service positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.

H_8: Woolworths' grocery retailer prices positively influence its customer brand loyalty.	H_8: Woolworths' grocery retailer prices positively influence its customer brand loyalty.
H_9: Woolworths' grocery retailer customer trust positively influences its brand loyalty.	H_9: Woolworths' grocery retailer customer trust positively influences its brand loyalty.
H_{10}: Woolworths' grocery retailer's distribution network positively influences customer brand loyalty towards its brand.	H_{10}: Woolworths' grocery retailer's distribution network positively influences customer brand loyalty towards its brand.
H_{11}: Woolworths' grocery retailer brand image positively influences its brand loyalty.	H_{11}: Woolworths' grocery retailer brand image positively influences its brand loyalty.
H_{12}: Brand awareness of Woolworths' grocery retailer has a positive impact on its overall retailer brand equity.	H_{12}: Brand awareness of Woolworths' grocery retailer has a positive impact on its overall retailer brand equity.
H_{13}: The Woolworths grocery retailer brand's sincerity positively impacts its overall grocery retailer brand equity.	H_{13}: The Woolworths grocery retailer brand's sincerity positively impacts its overall grocery retailer brand equity.
$H_{14:}$ Woolworths' brand excitement has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.	$H_{14:}$ Woolworths' brand excitement has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.
$H_{15:}$ Woolworths' brand competence has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.	It was dropped because it did not pass the reliability and validity tests.
H_{16}: Perceived quality of Woolworths' grocery retailer brand positively impacts its overall grocery retailer brand equity.	H_{16}: Perceived quality of Woolworths' grocery retailer brand positively impacts its overall grocery retailer brand equity.
H17: Brand image of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.	H17: Brand image of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.

H_{18}: Woolworths' grocery retailer's brand loyalty has a positive impact on overall grocery retailer brand equity.	H_{18}: Woolworths' grocery retailer's brand loyalty has a positive impact on overall grocery retailer brand equity.
H_{19}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact its brand preference.	H_{19}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact its brand preference.
H_{20}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact repurchase intention.	H_{20}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact repurchase intention.
H_{21a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources (brand awareness [a], sincerity [b], excitement [c], perceived quality [d], brand image [e], brand loyalty [f]) and its outcome of brand preference.	H_{21a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources (brand awareness [a], sincerity [b], excitement [c], perceived quality [d], brand image [e], brand loyalty [f]) and its outcome of brand preference.
H_{22a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources (brand awareness [a], sincerity [b], excitement [c], perceived quality [d], brand image [e], brand loyalty [f]) and its outcome of repurchase intention.	H_{22a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources (brand awareness [a], sincerity [b], excitement [c], perceived quality [d], brand image [e], brand loyalty [f]) and its outcome of repurchase intention.

6.11 Data analysis

Patten (2018:71) emphasises that in business research studies, the goal is to compute the collected data into meaningful information and knowledge that an organisation can use to improve decision-making. The data analysis process converted data into knowledge, information, and power that conveys meaning to management and academics. The section below describes the data processing methods applied in this research study. In terms of sequence, the data analysis started by descriptive analysis being applied to the general section and all the constructs. At the end of statistical analysis, PLS-SEM analysis was computed.

6.11.1 Descriptive Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics were utilised to compute the central tendency and the dispersion of data using the mean and standard deviation (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The standard deviation measured the variability and the spread of numerical values around the mean (Foster, Lane, Scott, Hebl, Guerra, Osherson & Zimmer, 2018). A 5-point Likert scale was used in this research study, and the median value was employed to compute the central tendency. In this case, the median value is three [3], meaning values in any measure above the median value show a positive perception of the construct, and values below the median value indicate a negative perception of the construct (Patten, 2018). Using Baco-Shone's (2015) guidelines, standard deviation values greater than 25% of the mean show high dispersion, while standard deviation values less than 25% of the mean indicate low dispersion.

6.11.2 SEM Data Analysis

There are various ways of carrying out data analysis. For multivariate analyses, the commonly used methods include covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), partial least square SEM (PLS-SEM) and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) techniques. CB-SEM is primarily used to confirm an established theory; in contrast, PLS-SEM is a prediction-oriented approach analysis designed to achieve high predictive accuracy in cause-effect relational studies. In practice, the PLS-SEM can calculate both the explanatory and predictive power of models, thus can achieve the two objectives of understanding underlying causes and making predictions of relationships between the latent constructs. It is also a method good to test large multivariate models (Sarstedt et al., 2018). With these qualities, this study used the PLS-SEM as opposed to the CB-SEM.

The CB-SEM method is used to establish estimated model parameters to reduce the differences between the observed sample covariance matrix (calculated before the analysis) and the estimated theoretical model (Hair et al., 2012b). Regarding the differences between the two methods, CB-SEM is based on the common factor analysis model, while PLS-SEM is based on the composite factor analysis model (Hair et al., 2017c). As a matter of principle, the SEM methods are popular in research as they overcome some of the limitations of first-generation multivariate techniques, including regressions in Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). However, in using OLS methods, there are limitations such as the provision of incomplete explanation on how the integration of systems components affects the confidence in the results, which exhibit some bias (Nicolaou, Sedatole & Lankton, 2011). Additionally, first-generation statistical methods

assume that collected data is error-free and does not include methods to discover such errors. This assumption is mostly not correct in research environments. These weaknesses can be avoided using SEM methods that implement deliberate methods to minimise source, measurement, and random errors associated with research studies. The table shows the differences between the three methods of analysing data in detail.

Table 6.6: Difference of CB-SEM, PLS-SEM and OLS Regression technique

Criteria	**CB-SEM**	**PLS-SEM**	**OLS Regression**
Main software used	LISREL, EQS, AMOS, Stata and MPLUS.	SmartPLS, LSGraph, NEUSREL and WarpPLS.	SPSS, SAS, Excel, Stata and Minitab.
The objective of general analysis	Assesses whether the proposed model's null hypothesis is plausible, rejecting null hypotheses of specific paths without effect.	Rejects the null hypothesis of a set of specific paths.	Rejects the null hypothesis of a set of specified relationships
The objective of variance analysis	Global adjustment model according to the data, represented by several adjustment indices.	Explained variance (e.g., high R^2)	Explained variance (e.g., high R^2)
Estimation technique	Maximum likelihood (ML) is the most used.	Ordinary Least Squares.	Ordinary Least Squares
Type of maximisation	Maximises the reproduction of the covariance among the variables.	Maximises the prediction of original gross scores.	Maximises the prediction of original gross scores.
Specification of construct	Supports the use of reflexive and formative measures for the constructs.	Supports the use of reflexive and formative measures for the constructs.	The measures are combined using a scale, index, or other weighting schemes.

Dependent variables	Supports multiple dependent variables.	Supports multiple dependent variables.	A single dependent variable can be assessed.
Mediation test	Mediating variables are tested as part of the comprehensive model.	Mediating variables are tested as part of the comprehensive model.	Separate multistep model to test mediating variables (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986).
Premises	Multivariate normal distribution and independent observations (parametric).	Non-parametric.	Multivariate normal distribution and independent observations (parametric).
Data source	Primary data.	Primary and secondary data.	Primary and secondary data
Sample size	Small samples may not converge, but large samples can introduce bias in the goodness-of-fit statistics.	Large samples do not entail bias in the statistics.	Large samples do not entail bias in the statistics.

Source: Lee, Petter, Fayard and Robinson (2011, p. 285).

6.11.3 Justification for the use of PLS-SEM

The PLS-SEM approach was applied in the current research mainly because of its ability to handle survey-based research studies with complex models and multiple relationships among latent variables (Nitzl, 2014). The method can analyse formative and reflective variables in an integrated model (Jarvis et al., 2003). Furthermore, the PLS-SEM data analysis approach is based on making predictions and testing theories. These two characteristics of PLS-SEM data analysis are vital in this current business research study requiring both theory improvements and the need to predict some trends and recommendations from the empirical data. The PLS-SEM data analysis approach computes data using statistical analysis even when the normality of data cannot be confirmed. For example, the population of this study was computed employing estimates of the population from the rule of thumb methods, thus posing a challenge to the population normality assumptions.

6.11.4 Choice of Software for SEM Data Analysis

Various types of software can be used in PLS-SEM data analysis, such as Smart PLS, PLS Graph, NEUSREL, and Warp PLS. However, research models are usually developed with goals that resonate between theory testing and model prediction capabilities. For example, LISREL software can achieve better results on theory testing but lacks much on prediction, while ANN software is powerful but has downsides on testing models. SMART PLS 3 has remarkable strength in both theory testing and prediction, making it the appropriate software for the current business research that values both goals. Furthermore, Shackman (2013) confirms that Smart PLS 3 is mostly used in Information Systems and Marketing. Considering the points above, SMART PLS 3 software was selected to carry out data analysis in this marketing research study.

Data analysis was conducted using PLS Structural Equation Modelling. The data was first captured and coded into an SPSS format before being imported into SMART PLS 3. The PLS-SEM data analysis involves two stages: the measurement model and the structural model. To compute the measurement model, the confirmatory composite analysis was utilised. The measurement model evaluates indicators reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity for the reflective constructs used in this research as predicted by Figure 6.3.

6.12 Procedures for testing the conceptual framework.

The PLS-SEM data analysis was done in two stages involving the measurement model and structural model testing. The measurement model examined the outer model that tested the relationships between the latent variables and their indicators. The structural model examined the inner model by examining the relationships between constructs (exogenous and endogenous variables). The conceptual model in this study was tested using confirmatory composite factor analysis (CCA), which includes four steps carried out in a serial format that starts with model specification, followed by model identification. The next stage is a model estimation, and the last stage is the model assessment (Schumacker and Lomax, 2009; Sarstedt et al., 2017).

The figure below shows the step-by-step process of computing data when testing both the measurement and structural models.

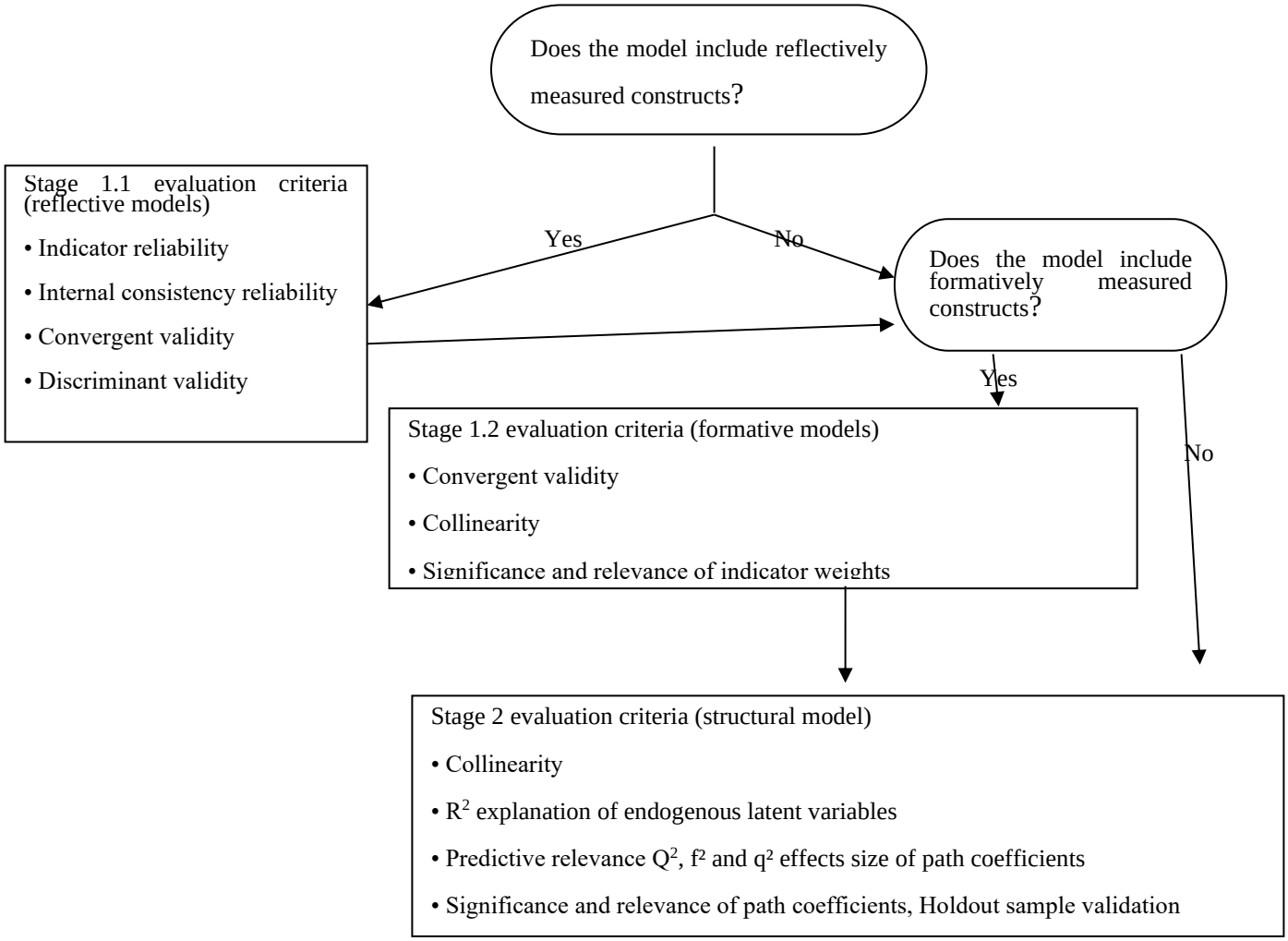


Figure 6.2: PLS-SEM model evaluation **Source: Sarstedt et al. (2014, p. 145)**

6.12.1 Measurement Model

A confirmatory composite analysis was used to validate the measurement model. The first stage examined the indicator loadings. Loadings which are above 0.708 show that the construct is significant. The next stage involved testing reliability to confirm the consistency of results when the variables' behaviours are tested repeatability over time. If the reliability test results yield similar values when multiple individuals measure the same constructs, then collected data is deemed reliable (Saunders *et al.*, 2016; Bonnet & Wright, 2015:3). The reliability test of the instrument was done using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. According to Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2014), Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 and above is significantly regarded as reliable. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.3 to 0.6 is considered medium reliability, while 0.1 to 0.2 is low reliability. Finally, the composite reliability was used to assess the internal consistency of the measurement model. Composite reliability (CR) measures how consistently individual items

respond to each other within a scale (Hsiao et al., 2018). Fornell (1982) recommends that all items with composite reliability exceeding 0.60 are acceptable in exploratory research, and results between 0.70 and 0.95 represent satisfactory reliability levels (Hair et al., 2017b: 112). However, higher than 0.95 results are problematic, as they suggest that the items are almost identical and redundant.

A valid study is a study that has collected and interpreted data so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied (Yin, 2009:78). Convergent validity refers to the extent to which two different measures capture the same construct (Carlson & Herdman, 2012). Convergent validity can be assessed by checking if individual item loadings for each corresponding research construct are greater than 0.5, as Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended. For example, an acceptable threshold for the Average Value Extracted (AVE) is 0.50 or higher. This level or higher indicates that, on average, the construct explains (more than) 50% of the variance of its indicators.

Discriminant validity was examined by computing the correlation matrix, which, according to Henseler et al. (2015), can be achieved using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations. The HTMT criterion is defined as the mean value of the indicator's correlations across constructs relative to the (geometric) mean of the average correlations of indicators measuring the same construct. Therefore, high HTMT values indicate discriminant validity problems. Henseler et al. (2015) suggest a threshold value of 0.85 can be used to judge whether the constructs are conceptually very similar. When using the HTMT method, any value exceeding 0.90 indicates a lack of discriminant validity. The correlation matrix shows how distinct and less similar the constructs are from one another. To achieve high discriminant validity, correlations among latent constructs should be less than 1.0 (Wang & Cheng, 2010). Discriminant validity is assessed by demonstrating that the highest shared variance (SV) or squared correlation between one latent construct should be lower than the AVE for each variable (Nusair & Hua, 2010; Lim, Huang, Kim & Biocca, 2015).

Lastly, model fit is used to qualify the measurement model. SmartPLS uses SRMR, Exact fit criteria d_ULS and d_G, NFI and RMS_theta. The SRMR computes the difference between the observed correlation and the model implied correlation matrix in assessing the average magnitude of the discrepancies between observed and expected correlations. The cut-off thresholds for SRMR and NFI are SRMR < 0.08 and NFI > 0.90) respectively. The exact model fit tests the statistical (bootstrap-based) inference of the discrepancy between the empirical covariance matrix and the covariance matrix implied

by the composite factor model. The RMS_theta is the root mean squared residual covariance matrix of the outer model residuals (Lohmöller, 1989). This fit measure is only useful to assess purely reflective models because outer model residuals for formative measurement models are not meaningful. For example, in SmartPLS, RMS_theta RMS_theta values below 0.12 indicate a well-fitting model, whereas higher values indicate a lack of fit (Henseler et al., 2014).

6.12.2 Structural Model

After the measurement model was tested, the next stage tested the structural model. The structural model analysed the structural relationships among variables and was presented in a path diagram (Hair, Black & Babin 2010). The collinearity aspects among the constructs should be tested to discover the model's predictive capabilities using statistical computations such as coefficient of determination (r^2), cross-validated redundancy (Q^2), and the path coefficients. For testing the coefficient of determination (r^2), the results should be between 0 and 1. According to Fuchs (2011) and Chin (2010), results equal to or greater than 0.67 are regarded as excellent, results above 0.33 are generally good and results below 0.19 are regarded as weak. According to Chin (2010), the R^2 values should be between 1 and -1. The path coefficient's decision criteria are that any results between 0.2 and -0.2 are weak (Hair, Howard & Nitzl, 2020). As the values increase from 0.2 upwards, the results move from being moderate to strong. In terms of testing the path coefficients, the t-independent values were used. The t-values indicate the significance of path coefficients (Fuchs, 2011; Chin, 2010). A path coefficient of, say, 0.5 implies that if the independent construct increases by one standard deviation unit, the dependent construct in response increases by 0.5 standard deviation units when keeping all other independent constructs constant. Subsequently, the path coefficients' strength and significance are evaluated using the relationships (structural paths) hypothesised between the constructs. This method is similar to assessing formative indicator weights using the significance assessment based on bootstrapping standard errors as a basis for calculating t and p values of path coefficients or applying bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (Aguirre-Urreta & Ronkko, 2017). Utilising this method, a path coefficient is significant at the 5% probability of error level if zero does not fall into the 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval. For example, a path coefficient of 0.15 with 0.1 and 0.2 as lower and upper bounds of the 95% (bias-corrected and accelerated) confidence interval would be considered significant since zero does not fall into this confidence interval.

Last, blindfolding procedures were used for testing the predictive power of the model. Q^2 represents the predictive power in PLS-SEM. Blindfolding explains the process of the sample re-use technique, in which data points are deleted using the selected D (distance). According to Hair et al. (2017), an omission distance (D) between 5 and 12 is highly advised and can lead to effective prediction. This process is repeated until every data point has been omitted and the model is re-estimated. The smaller the difference between the predicted and the original values, the greater the Q^2 criterion and, thus, it signifies that the model's predictive accuracy and relevance are significant. There are two approaches for calculating the Q^2 values: cross-validated redundancy and cross-validated communality. The former is recommended to explore the PLS path model (Wold, 1982). As a rule of thumb, Q^2 values larger than zero for endogenous constructs indicate that the path model's predictive accuracy is acceptable for the construct. Hair et al. (2017) recommend that results above 0 have good prediction levels while results below 0 have insignificant effects on predicting the PLS-SEM model. Fuchs (2011) stipulates definite figures as criteria for deciding the predictive values. He states that 0, 02, or lower values have a very low prediction, while values of 0.15 or lower have moderate prediction levels. The values with a large predictive effect are equal to or greater than 0.35. Shmueli et al. (2016) point out that it is fundamental to follow proper predictive procedures to enhance the ability to predict measurable information on new cases. As a remedy, Shmueli et al. (2016) developed the PLS predict procedure for generating holdout sample-based point predictions in PLS path models at the item or construct level. Table 6.7 shows all the thresholds used as cut-off points to make statistical decisions in various circumstances in the study.

Table 6.7: A Summary of Statistical Thresholds used in the study.

INDICATOR/ PROCEDURE	**PURPOSE**	**REFERENTIAL VALUES / CRITERIA**	**REFERENCES**
AVE	Convergent validities	AVE > 0.50	Henseler; Ringle and Sinkovics (2009)
Crossed loads	Discriminant validity	Load values greater than the original LVs in others	Chin (1998)

Criteria of Fornell and Larcker	Discriminant validity	Compare the square roots of each construct's AVE values with the correlations (of Pearson) between the constructs of latent variables. Again, the square roots of the AVEs should be greater than the correlations of the constructs.	Fornell and Larcker (1981)
Alpha Cronbach and Composite Reliability	Model reliability	AC > 0.70 CC > 0.70	Hair et al. (2014)
t-Test	Evaluation of the significances of the correlations and regressions	$t \geq 1.96$	Hair et al. (2014)
Evaluation of the coefficients of Pearson's determination (R^2)	Evaluate the portion of variances of the endogenous variables, which is explained by the structural model	For social and behavioural sciences, R^2=2% is classified with a small effect, R^2=13% as a median effect, and R^2=26% as a large effect. R^2=0.25 weak, R^2=0.50 moderate and R^2=0.75 large	Cohen (1988)
Predictive Validity (Q^2) or Stone-Geisser indicator.	Evaluates the accuracy of the adjusted model.	Q2> 0, 0.02</or=Q2=0.15 weak predictive power, 0.15</or=Q2=0.35 moderate and Q2>0.35 strong	Hair et al. (2014)
Path Coefficient (Γ)	Evaluation of the causal relations	Interpretation of the values to the light of the theory	Hair et al. (2014)

Source: Ringle, da Silva and de Souza Bido (2014, p. 72)

6.12.3 Testing for mediation

Mediation analysis was carried out to examine the causal relationship between an exogenous variable and an endogenous variable when a third explanatory mediator variable has been included (Hair et al., 2013). The test for mediating can be done using the tests of Sobel (1982), Aroian (1944), Goodman (1960), and the bootstrapping method. In the study, the bootstrapping method was used. In PLS-SEM, the bootstrapping approach is suitable for mediation analysis because bootstrapping makes no assumption about sampling distribution and can be applied to small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2013). To carry out the mediation analysis using PLS-SEM, the first step was to assess the exogenous variables' direct effect on the endogenous variable, which should be significant. Furthermore, for mediation tests to be successful, the independent variable should influence the dependent variable. In this regard, mediation is possible if the four conditions below are satisfied.

1. the independent variable (sources of retailer brand equity) should significantly affect the mediator (overall retailer brand equity),
2. the independent variable (sources of retailer brand equity) should significantly affect the dependent variables (outcomes of retailer brand equity) in the absence of the mediator
3. the mediator has a significant unique effect on the dependent variable, and
4. the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable should shrink upon the mediator's addition to the model (Bommae, 2016).

Figure 6.4 below shows the relationships of variables in a mediated model. It also shows the calculation of mediation coefficients at various levels.

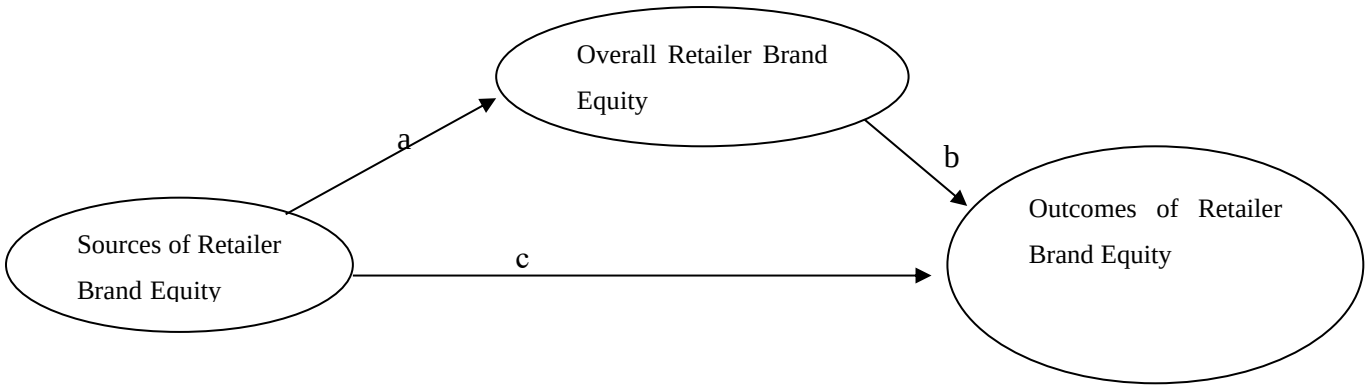


Figure 6.3: Bootstrapping Regression Map **Source: Bommae (2016)**

Mediation was computed using the below calculations.

Mediated effect = ab. This is the mediation between overall brand equity and outcomes of retailer brand equity.

Direct effect = c. This is the mediation of sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity.

Total effect = ab + c. This is the mediation of overall brand equity in the model.

Variation accounted for $=\frac{ab}{ab+c}$

The decision of the level of mediation is based on the value of VAF, as per the conditions of mediation effect given by Hair et al. (2013). If $0 < VAF < 0.20$, then there is no mediation. Secondly, if $0.20 < VAF < 0.80$, then there is partial mediation. Last, if $VAF > 0.80$, then there is full mediation.

6.13 Ethical Considerations

The research study followed international research guidelines on ethical principles such as those presented by Saunders et al. (2016). The general ethical considerations recommend that the research design should not put the research population into risky situations that disadvantage the respondents, such as embarrassment and harm (Saunders et al., 2016). Ethics refers to the appropriateness of researchers' behaviour to the rights of those who become the subject of their work (Saunders et al., 2016). The research study ensured that the respondents gave informed consent by accepting to participate in the study, and no signatures were required that might keep a track record of the respondents (Saunders et al., 2016). The respondents remained anonymous, and all the collected data were treated as private and anonymous. After a vigorous assessment of ethical issues, the research study was issued with ethical clearance by the Witwatersrand University ethical committee. The research study ensured that respondents were protected from potential harm caused by any research processes. In this case, Creswell (2012) establishes that respondents' information should be accessible for academic processes only.

The respondents were informed of the level of anonymity and confidentiality that the research study maintained and upheld throughout the research processes. Furthermore, respondents were offered the opportunity to receive a report of the research findings and conclusions if it was in their interest. Last, respondents were informed that they could withdraw unconditionally at any given stage if they felt uncomfortable with the research processes.

6.14 Conclusion

The chapter examined the research philosophy, approaches, strategies, research time horizons, and the data analysis processes adopted in this study. It further explained the application of Smart PLS structural equation modelling methods. Using PLS-SEM, the conceptual model was analysed in two stages. First, the measurement model validated the conceptual framework in terms of reliability and validity methods. Second, the structural model was used to interpret the explanatory and predictive ability of the conceptual model.

CHAPTER VII

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

7.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the results from the testing processes of the conceptual model and hypotheses. The data presentation started by reporting on descriptive statistics of the demographic data computed from IBM SPSS 27 to assess the sample representativeness. After that, descriptive statistics of the constructs were examined. Following these are the PLS-SEM testing results of both the measurement and structural models. Next is the presentation of the results of the mediation role of overall retailer brand equity between the relationships of sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity. Finally, the chapter further articulates the explanatory and predictive strength of the conceptual model on each outcome of retailer brand equity (brand preference and repurchase intentions).

7.2 Description of response rate

Figure 7.1 presents the response pattern of the sample by showing the total number of questionnaires received in the survey monkey database, the useable questionnaires and the spoiled questionnaires.

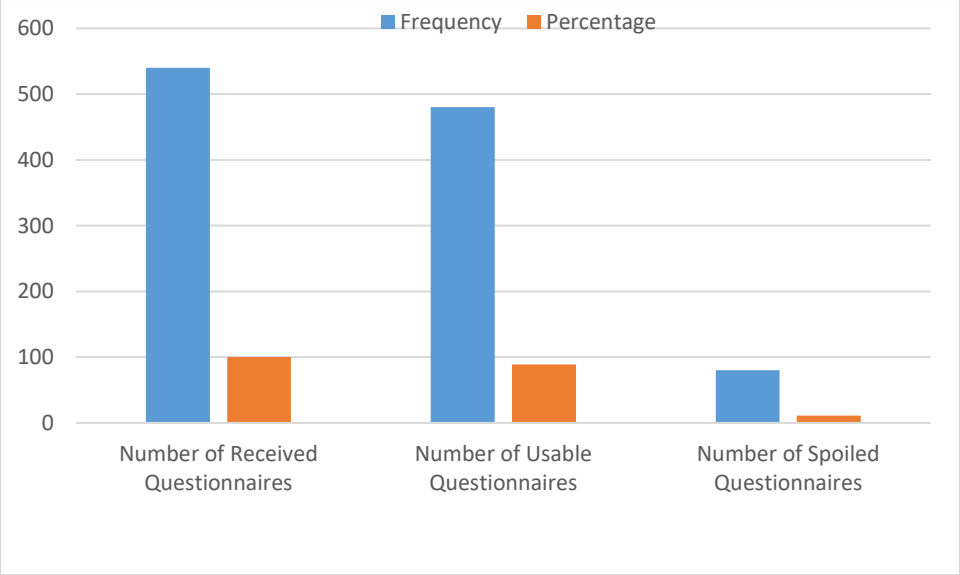


Figure 7.1: Response Rate

The total number of questionnaires received from respondents was 540, and the usable ones which were fully completed without missing data were 480. This represented 88.89% of the total questionnaires. There were 60 spoiled questionnaires which represented a percentage of 11.11%. The spoiled questionnaires included those that failed to meet screening criteria.

7.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis applied frequency tables to assess the demographic data of the sample. The frequency tables presented gender, marital status, population group, household financial status and grocery retailer preference. The analysis then used mean and standard deviation to describe the responses per construct to assess central tendency and data dispersion.

7.3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 7.1 illustrates the demographic profile of the respondents by showing their gender, status, population group, household financial status and grocery retailer of preference. The different components of the demographic sections are discussed subsequently.

Table 7.1: Presentation of Demographic Data

Demographic Description		**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender	Male	276	57.5
	Female	204	42.5
Total		**480**	**100**
Age Groups (in years)	18-25	36	7.5
	26-35	126	26.3
	36-45	169	35.2
	46-55	110	22.9
	56-65	30	6.3
	65 +	9	1.9

Total		**480**	**100**
Marital Status	Never Married	120	25
	Married	298	62.1
	Separated/Divorced	39	8.1
	Not married but living with partner	23	4.6
Total		**480**	**100**
Population Group	White	92	19.2
	Black	317	66
	Coloured	50	10.4
	Indian/Asian	19	4
	Others	2	0.4
Total		**480**	**100**
Household Financial Status	Not well-off at all	43	9
	Not so well-off	151	31.5
	Somewhat well-off	246	51.2
	Very well-off	40	8.3
Total		**480**	**100**
Grocery retailer stores do you more frequently shop?	Woolworths	262	54.6
	Others	218	45.4
Total		**480**	**100**
Grocery retailer stores do you most prefer	Woolworths	316	65.8
	Others	164	34.2
Total		**480**	**100**

7.3.1.1 Gender

The sample distribution in terms of gender consisted of 57.5% male and 42.5% female. The SA Statistics Report No P0302 reveals that the male population in Gauteng province is somewhat larger than the female population: 50.1% to 49.9%. (Stats SA, 2019). This shows that the population being studied was a bit skewed towards the male category, which is a trend that is also shown in the sample distribution. Consequently, it makes the gender distribution of the research sample a true reflection of the Gauteng population's gender distribution.

7.3.1.2 Age Groups

The results in Table 7.1 show that the modal age group was the 36-45 years group with 35.2% representation. This is followed by the age group between 26-35 years, constituting 26.3% of the sample. Next was the 46-55 years group with 22.9%. Finally, the age groups with small representations were the 18-25, 56-65 and 65+ years with percentage representations of 7.5%, 6.3% and 1,9% respectively. Thus, the empirical data show that data was collected from the mature and economically active age groups who are purchase decision-makers for the grocery retailer products and services in the Gauteng population.

7.3.1.3 Marital Status

The collected data on marital status shows that the married category was most represented with 62.1 % of the respondents. Next was the never-married group with 25% sample representation. Finally, the groups with the least frequency of representation were divorced and the never-married but living with a partner groups with 8.1% and 4.6% percentage compositions respectively.

7.3.1.4 Population Groups

Table 7.1 results show that the modal population group was the black category with 66% sample representation. The following population representation group in the second position was the white category with 19.2%. This was followed by the population category of Coloureds that had 10.4% representation, and the least represented population groups were the Asian/Indian and other groups with 4% and 0.4%, respectively. The Statistics South Africa (2019) report on the racial demographics of the South African population detailed that 80.7% were Black people, 8.8% were Coloureds, 7.9% were

Whites, and 2.7% were Indians or Asians. The results of the population groups show that the used sample represented the South African population distribution equally. The results show that the black group has the highest composition, followed by the Coloureds group with the second representation, and the white group marginally followed the Coloured groups. The Indian/Asian groups are the last group with the least population distribution.

7.3.1.5 Household Financial Status

The sample was requested to describe their household financial status. The results in Table 7.1 show that 51.2% described themselves as somewhat well-off, and 31.5% described themselves as not so well-off. Those who described themselves as not well-off at all constituted 9%. The last group of very well-off financially was composed of 8.3%. The results concur with the United Nations report (2018). The United Nations report (2018) described the South African population's financial status as averagely stable but cautioned that the economic situation is worsening, effectively dragging the average majority population to their worst financial positions. Generally, however, 59.5% of the respondents were somewhat well-off and very well-off; thus, they should be able to shop at the Woolworths' retailer, which is somewhat more expensive than other grocery retailers in South Africa.

7.3.1.6 Grocery retailer stores most frequently shopped at.

The sample was asked about the grocery retailer brand which they frequently shopped. The responses in Table 7.1 show that 54.6% shopped mostly at Woolworths grocery stores, whilst 45.4% frequently shopped at other grocery retailer stores. Thus, the results show that the sample had a strong association with the Woolworths grocery brand, reflecting their preference for the brand compared to other brands (BrandZ^{TM}, 2019).

7.3.1.7 Most preferred grocery retail stores

The sample was requested to state their preferred grocery brand stores. The empirical data showed that the Woolworths grocery brand was preferred by 65.8% of the sample, whilst 34.2% of the sample preferred other grocery brands. The results reinforce the 2016– 2018 South Africa Consumer Satisfaction Index

findings, which consistently positions Woolworths grocery brand in the top ranks of customer satisfaction perceptions (SA-SCI, 2019), thus making it the preferred brand.

7.3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

This section presents the descriptive statistics of the studied constructs in terms of mean and standard deviation.

7.3.2.1 Retailer Brand Image

Table 7.2 below shows descriptive statistics in terms of the mean and standard deviation of the brand image construct. Furthermore, it reflects the percentage frequencies of the construct. The overall mean of brand image construct is 4.14 and is greater than three (3), the median value of the 5-point Likert scale. When the pooled mean is greater than the mean of the applied Likert scale, it implies that the sample agreed to holding positive brand image of the Woolworths grocery brand. Baco-Shone (2015) postulates that standard deviation values greater than 25% of the mean indicate high dispersion, whereas standard deviation values less than 25% of the mean indicate low dispersion. Therefore, the pooled standard deviation was equal to 0.864, and when compared to 1.04 (which was 25% of mean), it thus signifies that the collected brand image data was lowly dispersed.

Table 7.2 Descriptive Statistics: Retailer Brand Image

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths' grocery store brand is regarded as a prestige store.	4.19	0.857	11	8	49	223	189	480
			2.3%	1.7%	10.2%	46.5%	39.6%	100%
Woolworths' grocery store brand represents efficiency.	4.02	0.869	9	18	68	244	141	480
			1.9%	3.8%	14.2%	50.8%	29.4%	100%
Compared with other grocery retail store brands, the brand image of Woolworths the store is unique.	4.16	0.908	15	11	43	226	185	480
			3.1%	2.3%	9.0%	47.1%	38.5%	100%
I have a good			11	4	49	259	157	480

perception of the overall image of the Woolworths brand.	4.14	0.807	2.3%	0.8%	10.2%	54.0%	32.7%	100%
The Woolworths grocery store brand is well established in the market.	4.18	0.879	13 2.7%	11 2.3%	39 8.10%	232 48.3%	185 38.5%	480 100.0 %
Pooled Statistics	4.14	0.864						

The percentage representation of responses of the brand image measures was skewed towards the Agree choice of the Likert scale, with each indicator showing above 45% sample selection for this option. The Strongly Agree choice was the second-ranked with percentage representation ranging from 29.4% to 39.6% in each measure. They disagree and strongly disagree options had the least percentage representation ranging from 1.7% to 3.8% and 1.9% to 2.9% respectively, depending on the. The section below analyses the retailer brand awareness.

7.3.2.2 Retailer Brand Awareness

Table 7.3 provides the retailer brand awareness mean, standard deviation and percentage frequencies of the retailer brand awareness construct.

Table 7.3: Descriptive Statistics: Retailer Brand Awareness

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I know the colours that represent the Woolworths brand.	4.04	0.977	20 4.2%	17 3.5%	48 10%	233 48.5%	162 33.8%	480 100.0%
I can recognise Woolworths groceries among other competing retailer brands.	4.21	0.830	11 2.3%	10 2.1%	29 6%	247 51.5%	183 38.1%	480 100.0%

I am aware of the Woolworths grocery brand.	4.25	0.796	12	3	26	252	187	480
			2.5%	0.6%	5.4%	52.5%	39%	100.0%
The characteristics of the Woolworths brand come to my mind quickly.	4.01	0.950	19	14	57	242	148	480
			4%	2.9%	11.9%	50.4%	30.8%	100.0%
I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of the Woolworths brand.	4.19	0.938	17	12	36	213	202	480
			3.5%	2.5%	7.5%	44.4%	57.9%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**4.14**	**0.982**						

Table 7.3 shows that the pooled mean of the five items measuring retailer brand awareness was 4.14, which is higher than three (3), the median of the 5-point Likert scale. This shows that the respondents agreed that they are aware of the Woolworths grocery retailer brand. However, the pooled standard deviation was 0.982. This is smaller than 1.04, which is 25% of the mean, suggesting that the retailer brand awareness construct data was lowly dispersed. The mean of the five indicators ranged from 4.01 to 4.19, with a standard deviation range of 0.796 to 0.977. In terms of the percentage frequencies, the Agree category had the highest percentages of responses which ranged from 44.4% to 50.4% per measure, followed by Strongly Agree with responses in the range of 30.8% to 40% per indicator with the exception of one indicator of "I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Woolworths brand" which scored 57.9%. The least represented categories were the strongly disagree and disagree options with percentage ranges of 2.3% to 4.2% and 2.1% to 3.5%, respectively.

7.3.2.3 Retailer Perceived Quality

The descriptive statistics of the retailer perceived quality are presented in Table 7.4. The measures of retailer perceived quality are presented in terms of mean, standard deviation and percentage presentation of responses are illustrated in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Perceived Quality

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths grocery stores offer reliable products.	4.20	.830	9	10	42	232	187	480
			1.9%	2.1%	8.8%	48.3%	39%	100.0%
Woolworths stores offer good deals relative to other offers available in the market.	3.63	1.076	22	54	106	247	101	480
			4.6%	11.3%	22.1%	41%	21%	100.0%
Woolworths retail stores sell high-quality merchandise.	4.26	.812	8	10	34	200	197	480
			1.7%	2.1%	7.1%	47.1%	42.1%	100.0%
Food products from Woolworths are fresher than from other store brands.	4.17	.911	10	16	57	200	197	480
			2.1%	3.3%	11.9%	41%	41.7%	100.0%
Woolworths retail brand has good packaging facilities compared to other brands.	4.08	.872	8	14	74	219	165	480
			1.7%	2.9%	15.4%	45.6%	34.4%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**4.07**	**0.900**						

The pooled mean of the retailer perceived quality was 4.07, giving an overall positive sample perception of the Woolworths grocery retailer perceived quality. The mean is above three (3), the mean of the 5-point Likert scale. The five measures of retailer perceived quality recorded mean values ranging from 3.63 to 4.26, which were all above 3, thus signifying positive perceptions for each measure. The pooled standard deviation of the retailer perceived quality construct was 0.900, and the 25 % of the pooled mean of 4.07 was 1.018, showing that the pooled standard deviation was lower than 25% of the mean; thus, denoting low responses dispersion. The standard deviations of individual measures were between 0.830 and 1.076 with four of the constructs showing low dispersion, whilst one of the measures of "Woolworths stores

offer good deals relative to other offerings available in the market" scored a standard deviation that was above 25% of the mean, suggesting that the collected data had high dispersion in this measure.

The frequency distribution of the retailer perceived quality construct response was skewed towards the agree option of the 5-point Likert scale, which recorded 41% to 48.3% across the individual measures. This was followed by the strongly agree option, which measured response rates of 21% to 42.1% across the retailer perceived quality measures. The other percentages of responses ranged from 7.1% to 22.1, 2.1% to 11.3% and 1.7% to 7.6% for the neutral, disagree and strongly disagree options, respectively.

7.3.2.4 Retailer Brand Loyalty

Table 7.5 below illustrates the descriptive analysis of the retailer brand loyalty construct of the Unified Grocery Retailer Brand Equity model (UGRBEM). The pooled mean of the retailer brand loyalty was 3.48, which was slightly higher than 3, denoting an above-average perception of the respondents for the Woolworths grocery retailer brand loyalty. Similarly, the individual measures' mean was from 3.27 to 3.94, which were all above 3. The pooled standard deviation was 1.185, which is greater than 25% of the pooled mean of 0.87, meaning the collected responses were highly dispersed.

The standard deviations across the measures of retailer brand loyalty ranged from 0.981–1.275, which showed high dispersion of the collected data in all six measures. The frequency table sections showed that responses across measures were concentrated around the agree option, ranging from 30.8% to 47.1%. The strongly agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree options had response rates of between 18.8% and 29.4%, 15.6% and 23.1%, 4% and 18.8% and 4% and 11.3%, respectively, for different individual measures.

Table 7.5: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Brand Loyalty

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I usually choose Woolworths grocery brand over other grocery retailer brands.	3.42	1.189	37	79	102	162	100	480
			7.7%	16.5%	21.3%	33.8%	20.7%	100
			37	75	111	163	94	480

When I want to shop for groceries, a Woolworths brand is always my first choice.	3.44	1.207	7.7%	15.6%	23.1%	34%	19.6%	100.0%
I can confidently recommend the Woolworths grocery brand to anyone who seeks my advice.	3.94	.981	19 4%	19 4%	75 15.6%	226 47.1%	141 29.4%	480 100.0%
I consider Woolworths grocery stores as my first choice to buy groceries.	3.45	1.240	44 9.2%	73 15.2%	90 18.8%	169 35.2%	104 21.7%	480 100.0%
I do more purchases at Woolworths grocery brand stores compared to other stores.	3.27	1.275	54 11.3%	90 18.8%	98 20.4%	148 30.8%	90 18.8%	480 100.0%
I revisit Woolworths retailer stores whenever I need groceries.	3.36	1.217	42 8.8%	83 17.3%	104 21.7%	161 33.5%	90 18.8%	480 100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.48**	**1.185**						

7.3.2.5 Retailer Brand Sincerity

Table 7.6 below articulates the descriptive results of the retailer brand sincerity means, standard deviations scores and percentage frequencies**.**

Table 7.6: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Brand Sincerity

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths brand is honest in dealing with customers.	4.01	.834	7 1.5%	10 2.1%	91 19%	233 48.5%	139 29%	480 100.0%

I feel safe shopping at Woolworths, considering its regular good quality.	4.10	.872	12	9	61	234	164	480
			2.5%	1.9%	21.6%	48.8%	34.2%	100.0%
Woolworths grocery brand ensures all family needs and wants are catered for.	3.91	.931	10	28	86	225	131	480
			2.1%	5.8%	17.9%	46.9%	27.3%	100.0%
Woolworths store brand creates a cheerful and reliable customer experience.	4.01	.834	7	16	73	251	133	480
			1.5%	3.3%	15.2%	52.3%	27.7%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**4.01**	**0.868**						

The pooled mean of 4.01 is greater than the mean of the Likert scale. This showed that respondents were positive about Woolworths' grocery retailer brand sincerity. The individual measures achieved means ranging from 3.91 and 4.10, which all above 3. The pooled standard deviation was 0.868, which was below 25% of the pooled mean of one (1), showing low dispersion of the gathered data. The standard deviations of individual measures are between 0.834 and 0.931 across the four measures, which are all lower than one (1). The frequencies of the responses are mostly concentrated around the agree option with percentage responses between 46.9% and 52.3%, followed by strongly agree options with percentage response rates between 27.3% and 34.2%. The neutral option followed with percentage responses between 15.2% and 21.6%, and the disagree option with 1.9% to 5.8% of responses. Finally, the strongly disagree option came in with 1.5% to 2.5% percentage responses. The table below shows retailer brand excitement results.

7.3.2.6 Retailer Brand Excitement

The section discusses the descriptive analysis of retailer brand excitement in terms of mean, standard deviation and percentage frequency.

Table 7.7: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Brand Excitement

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
The Woolworths store brand is imaginative in its store layout.	3.87	.884	10	22	97	243	108	480
			2.1%	4.6%	20.2%	50.6%	22.5%	100.0%
Woolworths' grocery stores offer products and services that match my lifestyle.	3.81	.941	15	28	93	242	102	480
			3.1%	5.8%	19.4%	50.4%	21.3%	100.0%
Woolworths' grocery stores provide unique in-store experiences.	3.95	.887	8	24	82	238	128	480
			1.7%	5%	17.1%	49.6%	26.7%	100.0%
It is exciting to shop at Woolworths grocery stores.	3.98	.876	8	17	89	227	139	480
			1.7%	3.5%	18.5%	47.3%	29%	100.0%
Woolworths' store brand has charming characteristics.	3.91	.883	9	19	98	232	122	480
			1.9%	4%	20.4%	48.3%	25.4%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.90**	**0.894**						

The retailer brand sincerity pooled mean and the standard deviation is 3.90 and 0.894, respectively. The pooled mean is well above 3, the mean of the 5-point Likert scale suggesting that respondents had positive impressions of the Woolworths retailer brand excitement. The pooled standard deviation of 0.94 was smaller than 25% of the mean of 0.975, denoting low data dispersion. The individual items of the construct measured means in the range of 3.81 and 3.98, which are all above three and individual standard deviation between 0.876 and 0.941 that denoted lowly dispersed data. Four of the five measures showed low dispersion, whilst one measure of "Woolworths grocery stores offer products and services that match my lifestyle" had highly dispersed results. The responses were concentrated between agree and strongly agree options were accounting for over 70% of the responses across all five measures. The remaining responses

were distributed as follows: neutral was between 17.1% and 20.4%, disagree between 3.5% and 5.8% and strongly disagree between 1.7% and 3.1%.

7.3.2.7 Retailer Brand Trust

Table 7.8 illustrates the descriptive results of the retailer brand trust construct by examining the mean scores, standard deviation and percentage distribution of responses. Table 7.8 articulates these results in detail.

Table 7.8: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Brand Trust

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
With Woolworths grocery retail stores, I get what I am looking for.	3.89	.879	11	21	86	253	107	480
			2.3%	4.4%	17.9%	53.1%	22.3%	100.0%
Woolworths never disappoints me in terms of its product offerings.	3.90	.903	12	21	86	244	117	480
			2.5%	4.4%	17.9%	50.8%	24.4%	100.0%
I can rely on Woolworths for my grocery needs.	3.75	1.007	19	36	96	224	105	480
			4%	7.5%	20%	46.7%	21.9%	100.0%
Woolworths keeps its promises to customers to deliver quality goods and services.	3.92	.819	7	10	60	235	168	480
			1.5%	2.1%	12.5%	49%	35%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.87**	**0.902**						

A pooled mean of 3.87 is above 3, showing that the respondents had significant brand trust in the Woolworths grocery retailer. However, a pooled standard deviation of 0.902 was smaller than 25% of the pooled mean (0.968), suggesting lowly dispersed data around the mean. The individual measures' means ranged from 3.75 to 3.90, which are above 3. Equally, the standard deviation scores of the four

measures were in the 0.819 to 1.007 range with two measures having low dispersion characteristics and the remaining two measures of "Woolworths never disappoints me in terms of its product offerings" and "I can rely on Woolworths for my grocery needs" were highly dispersed.

The percentage distribution of responses was skewed towards both the agree and strongly agree options which had above 68.6% of responses in every measure. The remaining responses are distributed in the following order: the neutral option has responses of 12.5% to 20%, the agree option has 2.1% to 7.5% and strongly agree has 1.5% to 4% responses in each individual measure. The section below discusses the descriptive analysis of the retailer perceived prices.

7.3.2.8 Retailer Perceived Price

The pooled mean of retailer perceived price construct is 3.46, which is marginally greater than 3, suggesting a marginally positive perception of the perceived prices of the Woolworths grocery brand as compared to the other grocery brands. On the other hand, the pooled standard deviation was 1.127, which was greater than the 25% of the pooled mean of 0.865, signifying high dispersion of the sample data. On individual items, the mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.96, which are all greater than 3. Additionally, individual measures showed a standard deviation of 0.979 to 1.214, indicating high dispersion of the data from the sample. Table 7.9 displays the descriptive results in each category.

Table 7.9: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Perceived Price

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths grocery stores offer fair price compared to the product quality.	3.46	1.157	34	71	103	184	88	480
			7.1%	14.8%	21.5%	38.3%	18.3%	100.0%
I compare prices from my favourite store brands with other stores.	3.96	.979	19	20	65	232	144	480
			4%	4.2%	13.5%	48.3%	30%	100.0%
The price of groceries is reasonable at Woolworths.	3.33	1.140	35	81	125	167	72	480
			7.3%	16.9%	26%	34.8%	15%	100.0%

Compared to other grocery retailers, Woolworths charges reasonable prices for its product quality.	3.39	1.143	35	80	101	193	71	480
			7.3%	16.7%	21%	40.2%	14.8%	100.0%
I can save money buying from Woolworths.	3.15	1.214	50	109	105	152	64	480
			10.4%	22.7%	21.9%	31.7%	13.3%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.46**	**1.127**						

Additionally, the highest percentage representation of the retailer perceived price construct's responses was within the agree to strongly agree options with 39.8% to 78.3% of the responses across the individual measures. The neutral option responses ranged from 13.5% to 21.9% across the different items of retailer perceived price. Last, the disagree to strongly disagree options had percentage responses from 8.2% to 33.1%.

7.3.2.9 Retailer Customer Services

Table 7.10 below shows the descriptive results of retailer customer services in terms of the mean scores, standard deviation and percentage frequencies.

Table 7.10: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Customer Services

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths goes beyond the normal call of duty to please customers.	3.87	.894	11	18	106	231	111	480
			2.3%	3.8%	22.1%	48.1%	23.8%	100.0%
Woolworths provides excellent service to its customers.	4.07	.788	6	7	75	249	143	480
			1.3%	1.5%	15.6%	51.9%	29.8%	100.0%
			7	15	93	230	135	480

Woolworths has adequate resources to meet customer service needs.	3.98	.856	1.5%	3.1%	19.4%	47.9%	28.1%	100.0%
Woolworths has friendly personnel who provide satisfactory services.	4.00	.777	4	12	84	259	121	480
			0.8%	2.5%	17.5%	54%	25.2%	100.0%
I can freely discuss my needs with Woolworths salespeople.	3.93	.888	9	21	89	235	126	480
			1.9%	4.4%	18.5%	49%	26.3%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.97**	**0.841**						

The pooled mean and standard deviation of the retailer customer services construct were 3.97 and 0.841, respectively. The pooled sample mean score is above 3, suggesting much positive impression of the sample responses on the Woolworths grocery retailer customer services. On the one hand, the pooled standard deviation of 0.841 is smaller than 25% of the pooled mean of 0.993, signifying low dispersion of the collected data. The individual mean scores of measures ranged from 3.87 to 4.07, which are all above 3. On the other hand, the individual standard deviation of individual measures ranged from 0.788 to 0.894 and are all below 25% of the pooled mean, showing that the collected data was lowly dispersed around the sample mean. The percentage frequencies of responses distribution were ranked as follows: The agree option had the most responses in various categories of the measures with percentage frequencies of 47.9% to 54%. This was followed by the strongly agree option with percentage presentation of 23.8% to 29.8%, and the neutral option had a percentage range of 15.6% to 22.1%. The least responses representation was in the disagree to strongly disagree options with percentage ranges of 1.5% to 4.4% and 0.8% to 2.3%, respectively.

7.3.2.10 Retailer Distribution

The retailer distribution constructs were measured with five measures that scored a composite mean of 3.50, a value which is marginally greater than 3, thus, showing a marginally above average impression of the Woolworths grocery retailer distribution structure. The construct had a pooled standard deviation of

1.137, which is higher than the 25% of the mean, indicating highly dispersed data from the sample mean. The individual mean scores of measures were between 3.20 and 3.87, representing a marginal difference with the mean of the 5-point Likert scale of 3. The individual scores of standard deviations were between 1.001 and 1.261, which are all above 25% of the pooled mean of 0.875, showing high dispersion of data due to the significant effects of outlier results from the sample.

The percentage frequencies showed that the modal option was the agree option with percentage ranges of 32.7% to 46.3% in different measures. This was followed by the neutral option with frequency percentage ranges of 9.4% to 25.6% of the responses in individual measures. The next option was the strongly agree with percentage response ranges of 13.1% to 37.9% per measure. Four of the measures had percentage frequencies which were below or around 20% in the strongly agree option, whilst one measure of "Woolworths grocery stores have a national footprint" scored a percentage had a high frequency of 37.9%. The next set of responses were from the disagree option with percentage frequency ranging from 6% to 18.3% in different measures. Finally, the least ranked option of the retailer distribution was the strongly disagree with percentage ranges of 3.8% to10.2%. Table 7.11 articulates the results in a table format.

Table 7.11: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Distribution

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths has more distribution stores compared to its competing brands.	3.36	1.160	37	78	120	167	78	480
			7.7%	16.3%	25%	34.8%	17.3%	100.0 %
The number of Woolworths stores that deal with groceries is more than that of its competing brands.	3.20	1.186	49	88	123	157	63	480
			10.2%	18.3%	25.6%	32.7%	13.1%	100.0 %
			28	62	114	205	71	480

Woolworths distributes a greater assortment of goods and services than competing store brands.	3.48	1.075	5.8%	12.9%	23.8%	42.7%	14.8%	100.0 %
Woolworths grocery stores are available around where I stay.	3.60	1.261	48	61	45	208	118	480
			10%	12.7%	9.4%	43.3%	24.6%	100.0 %
Woolworths grocery stores have a national footprint.	3.87	1.002	18	29	80	222	131	480
			3.8%	6%	16.7%	46.3%	37.9%	100.0 %
Pooled Statistics	**3.50**	**1.137**						

The following section discusses the descriptive results of Woolworths grocery overall retailer brand equity.

7.3.2.11 Retailer Overall Brand Equity

The section analyses the retailer's overall brand equity's descriptive data by computing the mean, standard deviation, and percentage frequency tables.

Table 7.12: Descriptive Analysis: Retailer Overall Brand Equity

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
It makes sense to go to Woolworths instead of any other store, even if they offer the same products.	3.56	1.117	24	68	101	187	100	480
			5%	14.2%	21%	39%	20.8%	100.0%
Even if another store has the same features as Woolworths, I would prefer buying from Woolworths.	3.57	1.090	26	56	107	199	92	480
			5.4%	11.7%	22.3%	41.5%	19.2%	100.0%
Even though other grocery shops are cheaper, Woolworths would still be my choice.	3.41	1.207	39	82	96	171	92	480
			8.1%	17.1%	20%	35.6%	19.2%	100.0%
Compared to other stores, I am willing to pay a higher price at Woolworths.	3.38	1.242	51	70	96	173	90	480
			10.6%	14.6%	20%	36%	18.8%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.48**	**1.164**						

The results in Table 7.12 show that the pooled mean and pooled standard deviation were 3.48 and 1.164, respectively. The pooled mean was marginally greater than 3, depicting a slightly above-average positive sample perception on the Woolworths grocery retailer overall brand equity. In addition, the standard deviation was higher than 25 % of the mean of 0.87, reflecting a high dispersion of the collected data from the means because of data outliers. The individual measures' mean scores range of 3.38 to 3.57 are very close to 3. The individual standard deviations were between 1.090 and 1.242, which were above 0.87, signifying high dispersion of data in the different measures.

The percentage distribution of responses across the different measures of retailer overall brand equity was as follows: The modal option in this construct was the agree option with percentage frequencies of 35.6% to 41.5%, suggesting a positive impression of the respondents on the Woolworths grocery retailer brand equity. This interpretation is supported by the percentage frequencies of the agree and strongly agree options, in which each measure scored over 54% of the responses. In terms of ranking, the agree option was followed by the neutral option whose range of results was in the order of between 20% and 20.3%, followed by strongly agree with responses between 18.8% and 20.8%, followed by the disagree option with 11.7% to 17.1% of the responses across the four measures. Finally, the least ranked option was the strongly disagree option, with results ranging from 5% to 10.6% of the responses in different measures.

7.3.2.12 Retailer Brand Preference

The above sections examined the mean scores of the sources of retailer brand equity, and the sections below further analysed the mean scores and standard deviation of the outcomes of retailer brand equity. In the research, brand preference and retailer repurchase intentions are the outcomes of the retailer brand equity.

The pooled mean score of brand preference was 3.52, whilst the standard deviation was 1.164. The pooled mean is above the 5-point Likert mean of 3, showing a high perception of the sample's view of the brand preference of the Woolworths grocery retailer brand. However, the pooled deviation was considerably higher than the 25% of the sample mean of 0.88, meaning the data was highly dispersed away from the sample mean. The mean of each measure was between 3.22 and 3.87, reaffirming a slightly higher perception of the sample view of brand preference of the Woolworths brand. The standard deviation of individual measures was in the range of 1.047 to 1.252, which were all above 0.88, suggesting highly dispersed data.

The percentage distribution of the data across the 5-point Likert scales was as follows: The Agree option had a percentage representation of 33.7% to 46.3% of responses across the different measures. The other option that had a fair representation was the strongly agree option, with percentages of between 19.6% and 28.5% of the responses in the different measures. The neutral option had a percentage representation of 13.8 to 20.9% responses across the different measures, while the disagree option had responses of

between 6.9% and 31.3%. The last option of strongly disagree had the least responses representations of between 4.6% and 10.8% across the four measures.

Table 7.13: Descriptive Analysis: Brand preference

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Woolworths is my preferred brand for grocery shopping.	3.55	1.151	32	61	97	189	1101	480
			6.7%	12.7%	20.2%	39.4%	21%	100.0%
I will not buy from another brand if Woolworths is open.	3.22	1.251	54	100	98	152	78	480
			10.8%	20.8%	20.4%	31.7%	16.3%	100.0%
I am committed to shopping at Woolworths.	3.44	1.207	44	64	105	173	94	480
			9.2%	31.3%	21.9%	36%	19.6%	100.0%
I prefer my Woolworths if everything else is equal.	3.87	1.047	22	33	66	222	137	480
			4.6%	6.9%	13.8%	46.3%	28.5%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.52**	**1.164**						

The section below analyses the repurchase intentions construct of the model by examining its mean, standard deviation and percentage frequencies.

7.3.2.13 Repurchase Intentions.

Table 7.14 illustrates the mean, standard deviation and percentages scores of the repurchase intentions as outcomes of the retailer brand equity. The pooled mean of the repurchase intention construct was 3.80, which was quite higher than 3, suggesting that the sample views were much aligned towards repurchasing of the Woolworths grocery brand offerings. However, the pooled standard deviation was 1.026, which was higher than the 25% of the mean of 0.95, depicting a high dispersion of the data away from the mean.

Table 7.14: Descriptive Analysis: Repurchase Intentions

Construct Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I see myself still shopping at Woolworths in the future.	3.95	.917	15	14	83	238	130	480
			3.1%	2.9%	17.3%	49.6%	27.1%	100.0%
I am motivated to continue shopping at Woolworths.	3.83	.993	18	24	103	210	125	480
			3.8%	5%	21.5%	43.8%	26%	100.0%
I would buy from Woolworths for all my grocery purchases.	3.46	1.231	36	82	99	150	113	480
			7.5%	17.1%	20.6%	31.3%	23.5%	100.0%
I am likely to buy from Woolworths in future.	3.96	.962	19	10	88	218	145	480
			4%	2.1%	18.3%	45.4%	30.2%	100.0%
Pooled Statistics	**3.80**	**1.026**						

The analysis of individual measure means scores showed that the range of the computed means was from 3.46 to 3.96, confirming a high perception of the sampled customers' high repurchase intentions of the Woolworths grocery brand. Similarly, the standard deviation of individual measures ranged from 0.917 to 1.231 with measures of "I am likely to buy from Woolworths in future", "I am motivated to continue shopping at Woolworths" and "I see myself still shopping at Woolworths in the future" having lowly dispersed data, whilst one measure of "I would buy from Woolworths for all my grocery purchases" had highly dispersed data. The repurchase intentions data had the agree option with the greatest percentage of responses between 31.3% and 49.6%. This option was followed by the strongly agree option with between 23.5 and 30.2% of the responses per indicator. The agree to strongly agree options accounted for the most responses ranging from 54.8% to 76.7% in different measures. The neutral option had a percentage representation of responses of 17.3% to 21.5%, whilst the agree option had responses of

between 2.1 and 17.1%. The least represented category was the strongly disagree option with 3.1% to 7.5% of responses in various measures.

7.4 Inferential Statistics Analysis

To test the hypotheses, PLS-SEM data analysis was applied, using SMART PLS 3. Both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model) were computed accordingly.

7.4.1 Measurement Model

The first stage of data analysis in PLS-SEM is the evaluation of the model in terms of reliability, validity and model fit. This was done to check the suitability of the model by assessing the relationships between constructs with their indicators to compute the model reliability and validity. The examination of the measurement model was used to validate and qualify the collected data through the use of reliability and validity tests. The process of computing the outer model was done by selecting the PLS algorithm menu in the Smart PLS 3 workspace, and a path model with factor loadings, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, AVE and HTMT were computed.

7.4.1.1 Reliability Tests

Cronbach alpha (CA) was used to estimate the internal consistency of measurement instruments (Hair et al., 2014). Composite reliability (CR) was used to test how consistently individual items responded to each other within a scale (Hsiao et al., 2018). Table 7.15 shows that the CA and CR of constructs ranged from 0.803 to 0.953. These computed CA and CR values are above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). Thus, the scales used to measure the constructs were reliable.

7.4.1.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a validity test that assesses whether the measures for constructs are related to their measurement of a construct. This is normally achieved by factor loadings and AVE computation (Henseler et al., 2015). Thus, convergent validity was tested for this study with factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 7.15 has the AVE and factor loadings results.

Table 7.15: Assessment of Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct	Construct Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach alpha (α)	CR	AVE
Retailer Brand Awareness	BA1	0.760	0.872	0.907	0.660
	BA2	0.825			
	BA3	0.808			
	BA4	0.825			
	BA5	0.832			
Retailer Brand Image	BI1	0.677	0.803	0.864	0.561
	BI2	0.706			
	BI3	0.763			
	BI4	0.817			
	BI5	0.776			
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.769	0.835	0.885	0.607
	PQ2	0.660			
	PQ3	0.833			
	PQ4	0.817			
	PQ5	0.811			
Retailer Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.890	0.940	0.953	0.772
	BL2	0.925			
	BL3	0.730			
	BL4	0.922			
	BL5	0.914			
	Bl6	0.877			
Retailer Brand Sincerity	BS1	0.848	0.881	0.918	0.736
	BS2	0.857			
	BS3	0.865			
	BS4	0.865			

Retailer Customer Excitement	BE1	0.760	0.803	0.912	0.674
	BE2	0.814			
	BE3	0.827			
	BE4	0.858			
	BE5	0.842			
Customer Services	CS1	0.830	0.879	0.911	0.673
	CS2	0.847			
	CS3	0.823			
	CS4	0.803			
	CS5	0.801			
Perceived Price	PP1	0.850	0.831	0.883	0.619
	PP2	**0.327**			
	PP3	0.869			
	PP4	0.848			
	PP5	0.879			
Brand Trust	BT1	0.815	0.818	0.878	0.643
	BT2	0.795			
	BT3	0.834			
	BT4	0.760			
Distribution	DI1	0.882	0.819	0.874	0.588
	DI2	0.882			
	DI3	0.791			
	DI4	0.586			
	DI5	0.648			
Overall Retailer Brand Equity	BEQ1	0.866	0.910	0.937	0.787
	BEQ2	0.885			
	BEQ3	0.913			
	BEQ4	0.886			
Brand Preference	BP1	0.892			
	BP2	0.892			

	BP3	0.903	0.873	0.914	0.728
	BP4	0.709			
Repurchase Intention	RP1	0.874	0.894	0.926	0.757
	RP2	0.886			
	RP3	0.873			
	RP4	0.847			

The factor loading values should be greater than 0.5 but values greater than 0.4 are also accepted. However, if there are indicators with values below 0.4, but the AVE of the equivalent constructs are equal to or above 0.5, such factors are retained (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). According to the values in Table 7.15, all the factor loading values are above 0.5, except the PP2 indicator of perceived price. The perceived price had an AVE of 0.619. Therefore, convergent validity was obtained. Convergent validity was also confirmed with the AVE values in Table 7.15, as all values were greater than the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2016).

7.4.1.3 Discriminant Validity Tests

Ringle, da Silva and Bido (2014) noted that for constructs to pass the validity test of the measurement model assessment, both convergent and discriminant validity should be tested. For computing discriminant validity, the guidelines of Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) recommend the use of the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the HTMT criterion. The decision rule for the Fornell-Larcker criterion is √AVE>correlation matrixes values (Hamid et al., 2017). The figures in Table 7.19 show that the values of √AVE were between 0.749 and 0.853, which were greater than the values in the correlation matrixes, thus indicating significant discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Table 7.16: Application of Fornell-Larcker Criterion and AVE

	BA	BP	BT	CS	DI	BEQ	PQ	PP	RP	BE	BI	BL	BS
BA	**0.813**												
BP	0.281	**0.853**											
BT	0.397	0.646	**0.802**										
CS	0.417	0.612	0.693	**0.821**									
DI	0.308	0.651	0.538	0.527	**0.767**								
BEQ	0.274	0.847	0.636	0.576	0.631	**0.887**							
PQ	0.536	0.553	0.643	0.606	0.433	0.528	**0.779**						
PP	0.304	0.725	0.567	0.544	0.643	0.738	0.492	**0.787**					
RP	0.361	0.803	0.637	0.599	0.534	0.735	0.559	0.615	**0.870**				
BE	0.514	0.626	0.704	0.652	0.504	0.603	0.713	0.584	0.675	**0.821**			
BI	0.620	0.339	0.539	0.480	0.338	0.327	0.643	0.328	0.415	0.572	**0.749**		
BL	0.422	0.789	0.600	0.515	0.649	0.754	0.580	0.688	0.677	0.634	0.399	**0.879**	
BS	0.511	0.500	0.677	0.659	0.433	0.482	0.722	0.471	0.597	0.781	0.607	0.528	**0.858**

Discriminant validity can also be assessed using HTMT for reflective construct. This is done to assess whether there are strong relationships between constructs in a PLS path model (Hair et al., 2017). Table 7.17 has the test results for discriminant validity using the HTMT method.

Table 7.17: Application of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	BA	BP	BT	CS	DI	BEQ	PQ	PP	RP	BE	BI	BL	BS
BA													
BP	**0.319**												
BT	**0.472**	**0.752**											
CS	**0.468**	**0.698**	**0.813**										
DI	**0.377**	**0.753**	**0.648**	**0.626**									
BEQ	**0.297**	**0.944**	**0.724**	**0.643**	**0.724**								
PQ	**0.620**	**0.645**	**0.778**	**0.701**	**0.517**	**0.597**							
PP	**0.395**	**0.820**	**0.695**	**0.659**	**0.761**	**0.828**	**0.602**						
RP	**0.407**	**0.903**	**0.738**	**0.673**	**0.614**	**0.805**	**0.642**	**0.703**					
BE	**0.579**	**0.718**	**0.829**	**0.742**	**0.596**	**0.670**	**0.826**	**0.707**	**0.757**				
BI	**0.733**	**0.418**	**0.672**	**0.572**	**0.422**	**0.381**	**0.779**	**0.434**	**0.488**	**0.675**			
BL	**0.472**	**0.858**	**0.666**	**0.566**	**0.724**	**0.812**	**0.650**	**0.744**	**0.732**	**0.700**	**0.464**		
BS	**0.574**	**0.575**	**0.801**	**0.751**	**0.512**	**0.537**	**0.839**	**0.571**	**0.672**	**0.890**	**0.714**	**0.587**	**1**

For computing discriminant validity for reflective constructs, the HTMT values should be less than one (1) in conservative models and below 0.90 in normal models. The results in Table 7.17 show values ranging from 0.319 to 0.890, which were less than 0.90, thus establishing the qualifying condition of discriminant validity. However, two of the correlation coefficients between RP and BP, BEQ and BP were 0.903 and 0.944, respectively. Thus, they were marginally greater than 0.90 but still lower than one (1), satisfying the discriminant validity for conservative models.

The following analysis of the measurement model examined the model fit analysis. Hair et al. (2017) cautioned on applying model fit parameters on PLS-SEM analysis as their application contradicts the fundamental operation of SMART PLS 3. It is important, therefore, that the application of these parameters be treated with great care. However, some research evaluation insists on having a model fit test. Therefore, model fit tests were computed using SMMR and rms Theta. Henseler et al. (2014) suggest that SRMR values less than 0.10 for conservative models or 0.08 for normal models are significant, and rms Theta values below 0.12 indicate good model fit. Table 7.18 has the model fit results.

Table 7.18: Model Fit Result

Method	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,065	0,188
d_ULS	7,953	67,008
d_G	1,990	2,899
Chi-Square	5392,533	6682,172
NFI	0,778	0,725
Model fit analysis using rms Theta		
Rms Theta		0.103

Table 7.18 indicates that the SRMR value for the saturated model is 0.065, which is below the cut off threshold of SRMR<0.10. The rms Theta result is 0.103, which is again below the cut off threshold of rms Theta < 0.12. Thus, the two methods of computing model fit indicate a well-fitting model. In summary, the measurement model meets both the reliability validity tests and model fit criteria. The next stage assessed the structural model specifications.

7.4.2 Structural Model and Hypotheses Test Results

The structural model illustrates relationships between both exogenous and endogenous constructs within a model, using path diagram and arrows showing the direction and size of the relationships. The hypothesis testing was computed using the bootstrapping methods in the SMART PLS 3 software. The bootstrapping procedure is a non-parametric inferential technique that uses subsamples of 5,000 withdrawn from the original dataset to estimate the underlying PLS path model that is employed to test hypotheses. In this research, complete bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples at a 0.05 significance level was utilised. Figure 7.2 presents the structural model results computed.

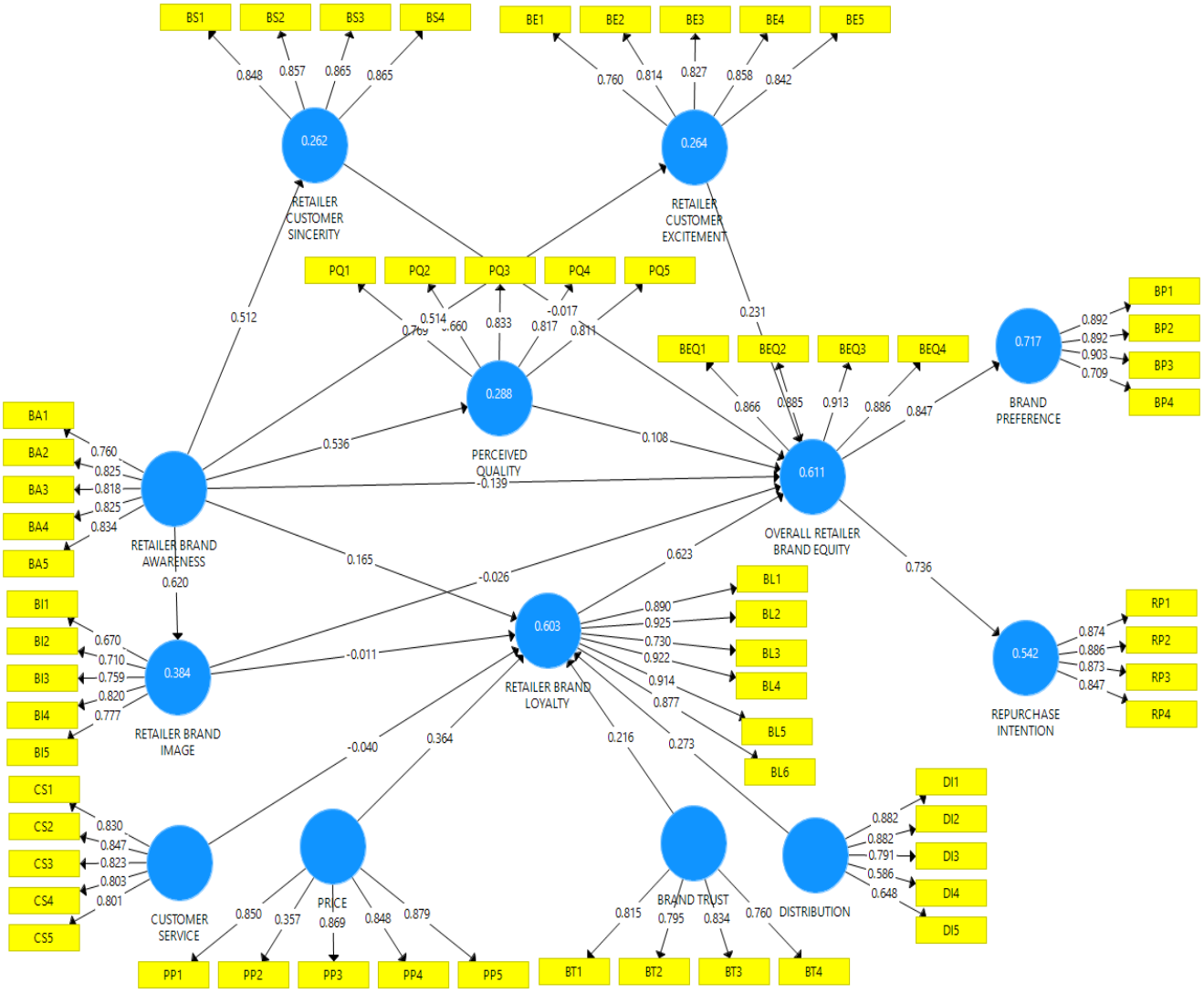


Figure 7.2: Structural model with paths coefficients and R^2

Aguirre-Urreta and Ronkk (2017) postulate that when using a path coefficient to test for significance, the 5% probability of error level can be used. The hypotheses are accepted when zero does not fall into the 95% confidence of interval. The significance of the co-efficient of path relationships is also assessed with T-statistics results. This was obtained by running a bootstrapping with subsamples of 5000 or more and a significance level set at 95%. A comparison of calculated T-statistics and the 1.96 for 95% confidence intervals was done to decide the hypotheses. If the T-statistic values are greater than 1.96, then the hypotheses are supported. On the other hand, if the T-statistic values are below 1.96, then the hypotheses are not supported. A summary of the results obtained from the path model or from testing the hypotheses is in Table 7.19.

Table 7.19: Hypotheses Testing

H	P	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	T Values	2.5%	97.5%	P Values	Comment
H_1	BA ->BS	0.511	0.513	8.876	**0.383**	**0.620**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_2	BA->BE	0.514	0.516	8.955	**0.390**	**0.619**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_4	BA ->PQ	0.536	0.537	9.514	**0.417**	**0.643**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_5	BA->BI	0.620	0.622	11.828	**0.511**	**0.718**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_6	BA->BL	0.161	0.158	3.859	**0.081**	**0.236**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_7	**CS->BL**	**-0.041**	**-0.039**	**0.790**	**-0.141**	**0.063**	**0.429**	**Not supported**
H_8	PP-> BL	0.365	0.362	6.906	**0.260**	**0.464**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_9	BT->BL	0.211	0.212	4.506	**0.122**	**0.305**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_{10}	DD->BL	0.271	0.272	6.088	**0.183**	**0.360**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_{11}	BI->BL	**-0.011**	**-0.011**	**0.237**	**-0.105**	**0.083**	**0.813**	**Not Supported**
H12	**BA->BEQ**	**-0.141**	**-0.142**	**2.803**	**-0.242**	**-0.054**	**0.004**	**Not Supported**
H_{13}	**BS->BEQ**	**-0.019**	**-0.019**	**0.220**	**-0.161**	**0.125**	**0.797**	**Not Supported**
H_{14}	BE->BEQ	0.233	0.238	3.074	**0.085**	**0.367**	**0.002**	**Supported**
H_{16}	**PQ->BEQ**	**0.104**	**0.100**	**1.558**	**-0.033**	**0.228**	**0.119**	**Not Supported**
H_{17}	**BI->BEQ**	**-0.023**	**-0.023**	**0.416**	**-0.129**	**0.082**	**0.677**	**Not Supported**
H_{18}	BL->BEQ	0.625	0.626	14.101	**0.536**	**0.708**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_{19}	BEQ->BP	0.847	0.847	37.664	**0.802**	**0.884**	**0.001**	**Supported**
H_{20}	BEQ->RP	0.736	0.736	23.830	**-0.129**	**0.785**	**0.001**	**Supported**

BA: retailer brand awareness, CS: customer services, CE: customer brand excitement, PQ: retailer perceived quality, BI: retailer brand image, BL: retailer brand loyalty, BT: brand trust, PP: retailer perceived price, DD: distribution, BS: retailer brand sincerity, BEQ: overall retailer brand equity, RP: repurchase intention and BP: brand preference

H_1: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand sincerity.

The results in Table 7.19 show that H_1 has a T statistic value of 8,876, which is greater than 1,96. Furthermore, the results have $\beta = 0.511$; $p<0.001$, denoting that brand awareness influenced Woolworths brand sincerity. This means that through the use of brand awareness, the Woolworths' brand characteristics of being genuine, honest, wholesome and dependable were promoted, and customers perceived improved brand sincerity through the use of brand awareness interventions. (Zainudin, Haji & Othman, 2019).

H_2: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' brand excitement.

H_2 results in Table 7.19 reveal a T-statistic value of 8.955, which is greater than 1.96 and $\beta = 0.514$; $p<0.001$. Thus, the results demonstrated that brand awareness was a source of Woolworths' brand excitement. This means that Woolworths' brand awareness generated customer feelings of the brand being creative, imaginative, daring and up to date (Zainudin et al., 2019).

H_4: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' customer perceived quality.

The findings indicated that the relationship between retailer brand awareness and Woolworths' perceived quality is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.536$; $p<0.001$ and T-statistic value of 9.514). This means that the application of retailer brand awareness enhanced Woolworths customers' perception of brand quality.

H_5: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer brand image.

The results of H_5 showed that retailer brand awareness positively influenced Woolworths' retailer brand image ($\beta = 0.620$; $p<0.001$) and T-statistic value of 11.828, which is greater than 1.96. The results supported H_5. This means Woolworths retailer's brand awareness programmes were effective and positively impacted its brand image during the research period.

H_6: Retailer brand awareness positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.

The findings showed that H_6 was supported ($\beta = 0.161$; $p<0.001$ and T-statistic value of 3.859). The results corroborated that if Woolworths grocery stores use brand awareness programs, there are high chances of forging brand relationships and brand loyalty with their customers.

H_7: Customer service positively influences Woolworths' retailer customer brand loyalty.

The results for H_7 showed that β =-0.041; p>0.001 with a T-statistic value of 0.790. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported. It is surprising that Woolworths' customer services negatively affected brand loyalty, signifying that customer services plummeted to their lowest level during the study period due to the adverse effects caused by the COVID 19 pandemic that knocked down direct customer services initiatives.

H_8: Woolworths' grocery retailer prices positively influence its customer brand loyalty.

The results for H_8 indicated that Woolworths' grocery retailer prices positively influenced its customer brand loyalty (β =0.365; p<0.001, T-statistic value is 6.906). H_8 was accepted. This indicates that even though Woolworths' retailer prices are high, customers remain loyal to the grocery retailer because of the brand perceived quality and its brand image.

H_9: Woolworths' grocery retailer customer trust positively influences its brand loyalty.

The results supported that retailer customer trust positively influenced Woolworths retailer brand loyalty. Furthermore, these results showed that H_9 was accepted (β =0.211; p<0.001 and T-statistic value of 4.506) and that the Woolworths grocery stores effectively implemented brand trust methods to influence customer brand loyalty for their grocery retailers.

H_{10}: Woolworths' grocery retailers' distribution network positively influences customer brand loyalty.

For H_{10} results, the T-statistic value was 6.088 and β =0.271; p<0.001. These results support the hypothesis. This means that Woolworths' customers were happy with the number of stores available in the country to the point of keeping them loyal.

H_{11}: Woolworths' grocery retailer brand image positively influences its brand loyalty.

The H_{11} hypothesis obtained a T-statistic value of 0.237 and β =-0.011, ns. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported. The results show that the Woolworths brand image negatively impacted customers' loyalty to the brand. Considering the context of the research, the high brand image of Woolworths grocery affected its brand loyalty because, during the challenging circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic, grocery

customers demanded basic products and services that matched their dwindling disposable income. The high brand image tended to increase the cost of ownership of products and services, hence its unpopularity with customers.

H_{12}: Brand awareness of the Woolworths grocery retailer has a positive impact on its overall retailer brand equity.

For $H_{12,}$ the T-statistic value was 2.803. Although this figure is greater than 1.96, the relationship between brand awareness and overall retailer equity was insignificant with β =- 0.141; p<0.001. This shows that hypothesis H_{12} was not supported. It is questionable why brand awareness, a good positive predictor of brand equity, would negatively and insignificantly impact it. These conditions might have been caused by the high mediated effect of brand awareness with other indirect relationships with overall retailer brand equity. The indirect relationships with perceived quality and brand excitement were high and might have affected the direct effect of brand awareness with overall retailer brand equity.

H_{13}: The Woolworths grocery retailer brand sincerity has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.

The results in Table 7.19 show that H_{13} was not supported with a T-value of 0.220 and with β =- 0.019: ns. Even though not significant, it is questionable why brand sincerity might negatively affect brand equity. The discussion chapter will investigate this.

H_{14}: Woolworths' brand excitement has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.

The results for H_{14} had a T-statistic value of 3.074, which is greater than 1.96 and with β =0.233; p<0.001. These results supported the hypothesis. This means that the brand personality dimension of excitement influenced the overall brand equity of Woolworths (Zainudin et al., 2019). The results imply that Woolworths stores effectively used brand excitement strategies to ensure customers noted its high brand equity and value.

H_{16}: Perceived quality of the Woolworths grocery retailer brand has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.

The H_{16} hypothesis obtained a T-statistic value of 1.558 and β =0.104; ns and was not supported. This means that even though the respondents agreed that they perceived Woolworths' product quality to be high with M =4.07, the level of perceived quality was not strong enough to impact its overall brand equity significantly.

H_{17}: The brand image of Woolworths has a positive impact on its overall grocery retailer brand equity.

The relationship for H_{17} was negative and not significant with β = - 0.023; ns and a T-statistic value of 0.416. As a consequence, these results showed that the hypothesis was not supported. Another surprising finding is that Woolworths' brand image, a vital driver of brand equity, negatively impacted Woolworths' overall brand equity. The possible cause of the negative impact will be explored in the next chapter.

H_{18}: The brand loyalty of the Woolworths grocery retailer has a positive impact on overall grocery retailer brand equity.

The test results of H_{18} produced a T-statistic value of 14.101 at 95% confidence interval. The results demonstrated that brand loyalty positively influenced overall retailer brand equity (β =0.625; p<0.001). Therefore, hypothesis H_{18} was supported. This means that Woolworths' overall brand equity was highly driven by its loyal customers.

H_{19}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact its brand preference.

The results of H_{19} are β =0.847; p<0.001 and with a T-statistic value of 37.664.101. Thus, the T-statistic value is greater than 1,96, indicating that Woolworths' overall brand equity highly influences brand preference. Furthermore, the results signify that Woolworths grocery stores used their brand equity strategies effectively to capture its customer brand preference.

H_{20}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will positively impact repurchase intention.

The testing of H_{20} produced β =0.736; p<0.001 and a T-statistic value of 37.664.101, which is greater than 1,96. The results showed that Woolworths' overall brand equity strongly impacted repurchase intention.

Woolworths grocery stores managed to capitalise on their high brand equity to increase customer repurchase intentions for their products and services during the research period.

7.4.3 Testing of mediation

Nitzl et al. (2016) and Cepeda et al. (2017) explain mediation as the change in the endogenous construct due to the application of a third intervening variable between the independent and dependent constructs. In this study, the mediating effect of overall brand equity in the relationship between the sources (brand awareness, brand image, brand sincerity, brand excitement, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) and the two outcomes (brand preference and repurchase intention) were tested. In addition, two mediating hypotheses were formulated. Table 7.20 provides the results for testing mediation.

Table 7.20: Results from Testing Mediation Effects

H	Indirect Mediation	Std Beta	Sample Mean (M)	Std Error	T Value	P Values	Bias	Confidence Interval (BC)		Decision
								LL	UL	
								2.5%	97.5 %	
H_{21a}	BA -> BEQ -> BP	**-0,146**	**-0,145**	**0,045**	**3,253**	**0,001**	**0,001**	**-0,243**	**0,065**	**Supported**
H_{21b}	BS -> BEQ -> BP	-0,006	-0,007	0,065	0,099	**0,921**	-0,001	-0,120	0,110	Unsupported
H_{21c}	BE -> BEQ -> BP	**0,231**	**0,239**	**0,071**	**3,267**	**0,001**	**0,008**	**0,094**	**0,368**	**Supported**
H_{21d}	PQ -> BEQ -> BP	0,121	0,115	0,063	1,928	**0,057**	-0,005	-0.006	0,248	Unsupported
H_{21e}	BI -> BEQ -> BP	0,005	-0,001	0,054	0,088	**0,930**	-0,005	-0,072	0,099	Unsupported
H_{21f}	BL -> BEQ -> BP	**0,479**	**0,482**	**0,050**	**9,552**	**0,001**	**0,003**	**0,375**	**0,571**	**Supported**
H_{22a}	BA -> BEQ -> RP	**-0,130**	**-0,129**	**0,040**	**3,230**	**0,001**	**0,001**	**-0,219**	**-0,058**	**Supported**
H_{22b}	BS -> BEQ -> RP	-0,006	-0,006	0,058	0,099	**0,921**	0,000	-0,121	0,108	Unsupported
H_{22c}	BE -> BEQ -> RP	**0,207**	**0,214**	**0,064**	**3,215**	**0,001**	**0,007**	**0,083**	**0,333**	**Supported**
H_{22d}	PQ -> BEQ -> RP	0,108	0,103	0,057	1,894	**0,058**	-0,005	-0,005	0,224	Unsupported
H_{22e}	BI -> BEQ -> RP	0,004	0,000	0,048	0,088	**0,930**	-0,005	-0,081	0,106	Unsupported
H_{22f}	BL -> BEQ -> RP	**0,428**	**0,430**	**0,044**	**9,732**	**0,001**	**0,002**	**0,338**	**0,510**	**Supported**

H_{21a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources ([a]brand awareness, [b]sincerity, [c]excitement, [d]perceived quality, [e]brand image, [f]brand loyalty) and its outcome of brand preference.

The results in Table 7.20 show that the overall brand equity significantly mediated in the relationships between brand awareness (T-value = 3253; p<0.001), brand excitement (T-value = 3267; p<0.001), brand loyalty (T-value = 9552; p<0.001) and brand preference. Overall brand equity did not significantly mediate in the relationships between brand image (T-value = 930; ns), brand sincerity (T-value = 921; ns), perceived quality (T-value = 057; ns) and brand preference. This means that when Woolworths stores create brand awareness, they can create excitement in customers and build a loyal customer base. The results imply that if customers are both excited and loyal to the Woolworths brand, customers will prefer the brand as the customers perceive high brand value and equity.

H_{22a-f}: Woolworths' overall brand equity will mediate in the relationship between its sources ([a]brand awareness, [b]sincerity, [c]excitement, [d]perceived quality, [e]brand image, [f]brand loyalty) and its outcome of repurchase intention.

The results in Table 7.20 show that the overall brand equity significantly mediated in the relationships between brand awareness (T-value = 3230; p<0.001), brand excitement (T-value = 3215; p<0.001), brand loyalty (T-value = 9732; p<0.001) and repurchase intention. Overall brand equity did not significantly mediate in the relationships between brand image (T-value = 088; ns), brand sincerity (T-value = 099; ns), perceived quality (T-value = 1894; ns) and repurchase intention. This means that when the Woolworths brand invests in brand awareness, its customers get excited about the brand and can significantly influence their customer repurchase intentions.

Further analysis is needed to assess the size and direction of the mediation that tested positive by using the Variance Accounted For (VAF) approach. The VAF is calculated from the ratio of the indirect-to-total effect, and it helps decide the extent of mediation in the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables (Hair et al., 2017). The formula below and Figure 7.3 were used in these computations.

VAF= $\frac{ab}{(a*b)+c}$, where ab = indirect effect, c is direct effect; a= regression coefficient between sources of retailer brand equity and overall retailer brand equity (mediator); b= regression coefficient between the

overall retailer brand equity (mediator) and outcomes of retailer brand equity (brand preference and repurchase intention).

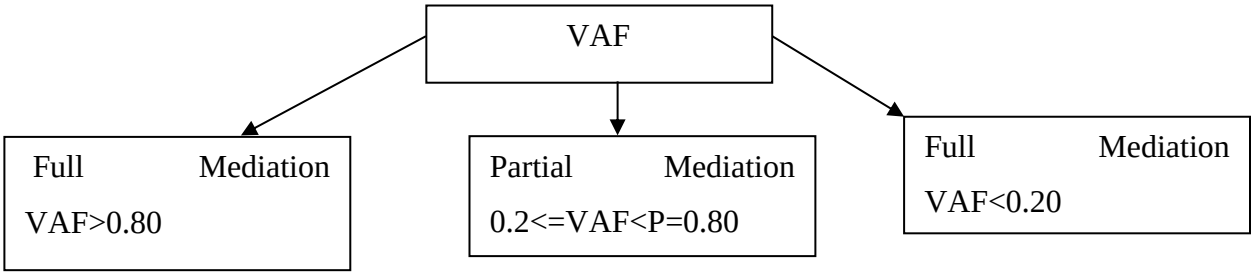


Figure 7.3: Formulae to Calculate the Level of Mediation **Source: Hair et al. (2017)**

In Table 7.20, a set of six hypotheses qualified for mediation and were analysed further to assess whether there was full or partial mediation. Finally, Table 7.21 shows the calculations involved in making the mediation decisions.

Table 7.21: Mediation Calculations

Hypotheses	**a**	**b**	**c**	**ab**	**ab+c**	**VAF**	**Decision**	**Conclusion**
H_{21a}BA -> BEQ -> BP	-0.172	0.850	0.088	0,146	0.234	0.627	Competitive, Partial Mediation	
$H_{21c:}$BE -> BEQ -> BP	0.272	0.850	0.197	0,207	0.404	0.512	Complementary, Partial Mediation	
$H_{21f:}$ BL -> BEQ -> BP	0.563	0.850	0.530	0.428	0.958	0.447	Complementary, Partial Mediation	
H_{22a}: BA -> BEQ -> RP	-0.172	0.760	0.081	0,146	0.229	0.638	Competitive, Partial Mediation	
H_{22c}:BE -> BEQ -> RP	0.272	0.760	0.117	0,207	0.324	0.639	Complementary, Partial Mediation	
H_{22f}: BL -> BEQ -> RP	0.563	0.760	0.460	0.428	0.888	0.482	Complementary, Partial mediation	

H_{21a}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates the relationship between retail brand awareness and its brand preference by customers.

The results in Table 7.21 for H_{21a} show that overall brand equity had 62.7% competitive, partial mediation for the relationship between brand awareness and brand preference. This means that the mediation effect of overall brand equity had a suppressing effect on the direct impact of brand awareness on brand preference (a*b*c is negative) (Nitzl et al., 2016). The results imply that as the mediation role of overall brand equity takes effect, the impact of retailer brand awareness on brand preference is reduced.

H_{21b}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates the relationship between customer brand excitement and customer brand preference.

H_{21b} indicate that overall brand equity had 51.2% complementary, partial mediation for the relationship between customer brand excitement and brand preference. This means that as the mediation of overall brand equity increases, the direct impact of customer brand excitement on brand preference increases as well (a*b*c is positive) (Nitzl et al., 2016).

H_{21f}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates the relationship between retail brand loyalty and brand preference of its customers.

The results for H_{21f} showed that overall brand equity had 44.7% complementary, partial mediation for the relationship between brand loyalty and brand preference. This means that as the mediation of overall brand equity increases, the direct impact of brand loyalty on brand preference increases in rhythm to the changes in the mediation (a*b*c is positive) (Nitzl et al., 2016).

H_{22a}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates in the relationship between retail brand awareness and repurchase intentions of its customers.

The hypothesis [H_{22a}] results showed that overall brand equity had 63.8% competitive, partial mediation in the relationship between brand awareness and repurchase intentions. This means that the mediation effect of overall brand equity had a suppressing effect on the direct impact of brand awareness on repurchase intentions, thus creating a ‘negative confounding’ model (a*b*c is negative) (Nitzl et al., 2016).

H_{22b}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates the relationship between retail brand excitement and repurchases intentions of its customers.

For H_{22b}, the results denoted that overall brand equity had 63.9% complementary, partial mediation in the relationship between customer brand excitement and repurchase intentions. This means that the mediation effect of overall brand equity had an incremental effect on the direct impact of customer brand excitement and repurchase intentions (a*b*c is positive) (Nitzl et al., 2016).

H_{22f}: Woolworths' overall grocery retailer brand equity mediates the relationship between retail brand loyalty and repurchase intentions of its customers.

The results for H_{22f}: demonstrated that overall brand equity had 44.8% complementary, partial mediation in the relationship between brand loyalty and repurchase intentions. This means that the mediation effect of overall brand equity had an incremental effect on the direct impact of brand loyalty and repurchase intentions (a*b*c is positive) (Nitzl et al., 2016).

7.4.4 Explanatory Power of the Model

The other parameter that is shown in the path coefficient model is R^2 and was evaluated according to the guidelines given by Fuchs (2011) and Chin (2010), who state that results which are equal to or greater than 0.67 are regarded as excellent, results above 0.33 are generally good and those below 0.19 are regarded as weak. Table 7.22 shows the explanatory power of the model to the outcome variables. In addition, it articulates the explanatory power of the model for constructs such as brand preference, repurchase intentions, overall brand equity and brand loyalty.

Table 7.22: Explanatory Power of the Model

Independent Constructs	**Dependent Constructs**	**R^2**
All Constructs as per Model	Brand Preference	71.7
All Constructs as per Model	Repurchase intention	54.2%
Brand awareness, Perceived quality, Brand image, Brand sincerity, Brand excitement and Brand loyalty	Overall Brand equity	61.1%
Perceived price, Distribution, Brand trust and Customer services	Brand Loyalty	60.3%

The R^2 value of brand preference (outcomes of brand equity) was 0.717, showing that the model explained 71.7% of changes in brand preference (outcomes of brand equity). Additionally, R^2 for repurchase intentions was 0.524, denoting that the model explained 54.2% of changes in repurchase intentions. The constructs of perceived quality, brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, customer excitement and customer sincerity explained 61.1% of the changes in overall brand equity. Last, the factors of perceived price, distribution, brand trust and customer services explained 60.3% changes in brand loyalty.

7.4.5 Model Predictive Accuracy

Blindfolding procedure is a sample re-use technique employed to compute Q^2 values, which can be used to evaluate the cross-validated predictive relevance of the PLS path model. The procedure starts with the running of the blindfolding procedure, which computes Q^2. This was followed by the PLS predict, which computed the Q^2 predict parameters. As a rule of thumb, Q^2 values larger than zero for endogenous constructs show that the path model's predictive accuracy is acceptable for the construct. As recommended by Hair et al. (2017), results above 0 have a good prediction, whilst results below 0 have an insignificant effect on predicting the PLS-SEM model. Fuchs (2011) give definite figures as criteria for making decisions of the predictive values. He states that values of 0,02 or lower have a very low prediction, whilst values of 0.15 or lower but greater than 0.002 have a moderate prediction level. The values with a large predictive effect are equal to or greater than 0.35. The decision rule for predictive relevancy is that when $Q^2 > 0$ and will signify a generally predictive power model. Hair et al., (2014) detail the decision parameters for weak predictive models ($0.02 \leq Q^2 = 0.15$), for moderate predictive models ($0.15 \leq Q^2 = 0.35$) and for strong predictive models ($Q^2 > 0.35$).

T**able 7.23: Predictive Power of the Model**

Constructs	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)	Q^2_predict
Brand Awareness	2400,000	2400,000		
Brand Preference	1920,000	925,462	0,518	0.460
Brand Trust	1920,000	1920,000		
Customer Services	2400,000	2400,000		
Distribution	2400,000	2400,000		
Overall Retailer Brand Equity	1920,000	1010,319	0,474	0.502
Perceived Quality	2400,000	1988,132	0,172	0.277
Price	2400,000	2400,000		
Repurchase Intention	1920,000	1155,808	0,398	0.364
Retailer Brand Excitement	2400,000	1983,845	0,173	0.253
Retailer Brand Image	2400,000	1900,737	0,208	0.374
Retailer Brand Loyalty	2880,000	1553,001	0,461	0.586
Retailer Brand Sincerity	1920,000	1561,213	0,187	0.249

Table 7.23 shows that the model had high predictive relevance for brand preference (Q^2 = 0.518; Q^2_predict = 0.460), overall brand equity (Q^2 = 0.474; Q^2_predict = 0.502), repurchase intention (Q^2 = 0.398; Q^2_predict = 0.364), brand image (Q^2 = 0.208; Q^2_predict= 0.374) and brand loyalty (Q^2 = 0.461; Q^2_predict = 0.586). The model further demonstrated moderate predictive relevancy for perceived quality (Q^2 = 0.172; Q^2_predict = 0.277), retailer brand excitement (Q^2 = 0.173; Q^2_predict = 0.253), and retailer brand sincerity brand image (Q^2 = 0.187; Q^2_predict = 0.249). It can therefore be concluded that the model had high predictive relevancy for brand preference, overall brand equity, repurchase intention and brand loyalty.

7.5 Conclusion

The chapter examined demographic statistics and descriptive scores of each construct to give a general picture of the response distribution in terms of central tendency and standard deviation. The PLS-SEM analysis was computed using SMART PLS 3 to assess both the measurement and structural model. The measurement model was used to assess the reliability and validity of the research instruments. The structural model tested the hypotheses, explanatory and predictive power of the model.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the findings of the research study by linking the results to previous findings. It starts by recapping the theoretical and empirical objectives and discussing how they were achieved. The chapter then makes conclusions on the findings, recommendations and provides the study's theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. Finally, the chapter ends with highlights of the limitations.

8.2 Discussion on the Achievement of Theoretical Objectives

The section explains how the research empirical findings and literature achieved the research objectives set in chapter one.

8.2.1 Achievement of theoretical objective 1

The first theoretical objective was to review the literature on grocery retailers' nature, number, market performances, and challenges. This objective was achieved through the extensive literature, reviewing the global and local grocery sector in Chapter 2. At the global level, Fung Business Intelligent Centre (FBI, 2015) and the Deloitte Global Powers of Retailing (2019) find that the African grocery retailer establishments had consistently achieved a growth rate of 9.8 %, and Eastern Europe, South America and the Asian grocery market had a sales growth rate of 8.4 % in the past decade. Surprisingly, the European markets achieved a lower fixed growth rate of 2%. Despite these statistics showing a dim outlook for the grocery retail sector in Europe, the European market is still the powerhouse for the most prominent grocery retailer establishments globally. The USA grocery retailers are leading in this regard. Grocery retailers in Germany follow the USA grocery market, followed by France, the UK and China when the overall retailer market value per country is computed and compared (Kuijpers et al., 2018).

Chapter 2 also assessed the global grocery brands in terms of their brand strategy, grocery retail operating models, and retailing strategies at both the local and global levels. At the local level, the *South African* Customer Satisfaction Index (SA-CSI) score chart is used to measure customer value and satisfaction within the South African retailer grocery sector (SA-SCI, 2019). The SA-CSI is a causal model that links customer expectations, perceived quality and perceived value to customer satisfaction, grocery

brand equity building and management processes (SA-SCI, 2019). Using these metrics, it was found that the Woolworths grocery brand has been the leading South African grocery brand in areas related to building customer brand equity and value propositions processes (Woolworths Integrated Financial Report, 2019). At the global level, the 7-Eleven retailer was found to be the leading retailer excelling in brand equity building activities of modernisation and revitalisation of existing small- and medium-sized stores into a world-class brand (7-Eleven Financial Report, 2020).

Lastly, Chapter 2 provided the global and local challenges faced by international and local grocery players. In this domain, Simmons and Wamelen (2018) conclude that the global grocery retailers are faced with a drastic fall in their sales and margins due to changing consumer habits and preferences, shifting of grocery retailer revenue to the new virtual format of grocery e-retailing, the organic trend, Quatrro's (2017) top-5 grocery retailer challenges, and Vader's (2020) COVID 19 grocery retailer management challenges. At the local level, challenges such as Kanya's (2018) local grocery retailer challenges, Hinton's (2020) five critical issues for South African retailers and Wright's (2018) grocery store challenges are rife.

8.2.2 Achievement of theoretical objective 2

The second objective was to discuss literature on the conceptualisation, antecedents and outcomes of retailer brand equity. Chapter 3 covered this objective. The underpinning theories and empirical literature on repurchase intentions and brand preference were expounded in this chapter. The literature first examined the retailer brand concepts. It then covered antecedents, the evolution and the origin of the retailer brand equity concepts. In these discussions, the benefits of retailer brands in managing different products and services with different aspects of price and quality into a single, synchronised branding model with a single image were emphasised (Pappu & Quester, 2017). It was found that the retailer brand equity is a developing concept composed of similar elements from other brands (manufacturer brand) and has additional service-related components (Burt & Sparks, 2012). The reported antecedents of retailer brand equity found from the literature review were components of convenience, interactive stores, and physical facilities, perceived price, employee service brand retailer image, retailer physical attributes, customer experiences, and other characteristics associated with a service brand such as intangibility, non-durability and the inability to separate the processes of service manufacturing and the service delivery.

The outcomes of retailer brand equity observed from the literature review encompass aspects of customer, the market and the financial benefits (Basgoze, Yiddish & Cargo, 2016). The customer benefits perceived

in the literature reviews were improved brand attitude, awareness, brand liking, or credibility. The market and financial benefits noted were improved revenue, better liquidity, sales growth, market share, and market penetration (Stah, Heitmann, Lehmann & Neslin, 2011). One of the brand equity outcomes found was repurchase intention, a multi-stage process in which consumers intentionally collect information on brands' attributes to evaluate and compare their perceived satisfaction level (Long-Yi, Jui-chi, 2012). This evaluation process can yield positive cognitive dissonance that reinforces the customer repurchase intentions of products and services. Brand preference was also one of the outcomes of retailer brand equity perceived. Literature showed that it is hinged upon the Lancaster theory, utility theory, economic theory and the expectancy-value theory (Xie, Poon & Zhang, 2017). For example, the Lancaster theory states that consumers buy certain brands because of the sets of attributes the brands possess, such as freshness in fast-moving food products, taste in purchasing flavoured meat, flavours in purchasing perfumes, and convenience in buying a standard car (Ben-Othmen, Asma &Mariia, 2019).

8.2.3 Achievement of theoretical objective 3

The third objective was to review the literature and report on the theories and models providing the sources and outcomes of CBBE in general and retail CBBE in particular. This objective was achieved in Chapter 4, which described the underpinning theories of sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity. It was found that Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1993) models were the commonly used CBBE models. Thus, they were applied and discussed as the basic/grounding and starting theoretical framework of the retailer brand equity. The two models provide brand equity components using perceptual and market behaviour measures (Aaker, 1996; Hsu, 2011) and are very comprehensive in assessing retailer brand equity (Rodrigues & Martins, 2016). However, these two models were limited in the scope of CBBE sources, especially in the context of retailers and did not provide for outcomes. Some of the contemporary brand equity models found to provide additional sources and outcomes of brand equity were those of Yoo and Donthu (2002), Jara and Cliquet (2012), Buil et al. (2013), Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca (2017), Lee and Lee (2018) and Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Bogaa and Levy-Mangin (2013).

8.2.4 Achievement of theoretical objective 4

The fourth objective was to identify models relevant to the current study and develop a unified retailer brand equity model and its accompanying hypotheses. This objective was achieved in Chapter 5. In this respect, the CBEE models by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) were used to build the foundation of the

model by giving guiding principles and guidelines. Considering the limitations of these two traditional and commonly used models as mentioned before, contemporary models that provide unique sources and outcomes of brand equity, especially related to retailers, were integrated into the traditional models to develop this study's unified conceptual model. Aaker's (1991) model confirmed four CBBE sources (brand awareness, brand association/image, perceived quality and brand loyalty). Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE model, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model, and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity model were integrated to capture marketing (Yoo & Donthu, 2002) and retailer related factors (Anselmsson, Burt &Tunca, 2017), to get ideas on how the sources interrelate (Buil et al., 2013). The model included CBBE outcomes from Jara and Cliquet's (2012) and Buil et al.' s (2013) models. From the resultant unified conceptual model, hypotheses falling into four categories were developed. The first set of hypotheses was to test the relationships between the retailer brand equity sources. Brand awareness was the first port of action in retailer brand equity building processes (Keller, 2013), so it was the first predictor. Therefore, hypotheses related to the relationships between retailer brand awareness and other retailer brand equity sources were developed. The second set of hypotheses appraised the relationships between retailer brand equity sources and overall retailer brand equity. The third probed the relationships between antecedents of brand loyalty (perceived price, brand trust, distribution and customer services) with the level of retailer brand loyalty. The fourth set examined the relationships between overall brand equity and its outcomes. The final set was to test the mediation of overall retailer brand equity in relationships between the sources of retailer brand equity (retailer brand loyalty, retailer brand awareness, retailer perceived quality, retailer brand image and retailer brand personality dimensions) and the outcomes of retailer brand equity (brand preference and repurchase intention).

8.2.5 Achievement of theoretical objective 5

The last theoretical objective was to review the research methods literature and discuss the appropriate data collection and analysis methods. This objective was accomplished in Chapter 6. The chapter applied the research onion to chart the research roadmap. The research onion was used to make choices during the research study. Research processes consisted of six layers of research philosophies, approaches, methodological choices, research strategies, time horizons and techniques and data collection and analysis procedures guided by the research onion. A research philosophy defines the set of beliefs concerning how scientific investigations can be undertaken, depending on the nature of the research problem at hand

(Bryman, 2012). The research approaches reflect on whether the deductive and inductive research approach was adopted in the research processes (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). The research methodology choices include the mono method, mixed-method, multi-method, and mixed methods (Sauders et al., 2016).

Dinner (2014) explains research strategy as step-by-step plans of action that give direction towards applying thoughts and efforts in facilitating the conduct of research studies into a systematic process. This enables the research to produce quality results and detailed reporting. The time horizon expresses the time the research will last, and, according to Saunders et al. (2016), time horizons in research can be either longitudinal or cross-sectional. The rest of the research methodology sections discussed the research instrument, sampling methods and data analysis methods used in the research. From these descriptions, the research philosophy that was found useful for this study was the positivist philosophy and the deductive research approach. The positivist philosophy was applied in this research because of the nature of the research problem and objectives that seek to understand the impact of sources of brand equity on customer behaviour outcomes. In line with the positivist philosophy, the research strategy was quantitative, and the time horizon was cross-sectional. Non-probability convenience and snowballing were the appropriate sampling methods, and structural equation modelling was the primary data analysis method.

8.3 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objectives

The empirical objectives were achieved in Chapter 7. The measures that were used in data collection were adapted from previous research studies by Chuma (2018) for retailer brand image, Yoo et al. (2000) for retailer brand awareness, Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuman (1996); Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) for retailer brand loyalty, Arnett et al., (2003); Pappu and Quester (2006); El Hedhli and Chebat, (2009); Anselmsson et al., (2017); Londono et al., (2017) for perceived quality, Austin., Siguawand Mattila (2003)**;** Aaker (1997)**;** Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka and Valette-Florence (2005) for retailer brand personality, Delgado et al., (2003) for retailer brand trust, Chen(2008); Chan et al., (2009); Brandley, (2002); Jaafar; Naba and Lalp (2012) for perceived price and Smith (1992); Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) for retailer distribution. After the online battery test of the questionnaire was administered, data were analysed using both descriptive and PLS-SEM analyses.

8.3.1 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 1

The first empirical objective was to determine the extent to which retailer brand awareness impacted brand image, perceived quality, brand personality (brand competence, brand excitement, brand sincerity), brand loyalty and Woolworths' overall brand equity in the South African grocery industry. Apart from brand competence that was deleted from further analysis because of poor reliability of the construct and the negative relationship between brand awareness and overall brand equity, it was found that retailer brand awareness positively and significantly impacted all the other constructs. Thus, in addition to Buil et al. (2013), who also find that brand awareness significantly impacts the perceived quality and various brand associations, including brand image and personality, the current results are also in support of Jara and Cliquet's (2012) findings that show that brand awareness is a positive driver of perceived quality, brand image and various types of brand personalities.

The positive relationship between brand awareness and loyalty found in this study is in support of Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) research conducted in the UK. While Tran et al. (2020) find a positive and significant relationship between brand awareness and overall brand equity in their study conducted in Vietnam and in the context of higher education, this study instead identified a negative relationship between brand awareness and even brand image (i.e., brand knowledge structure) and overall brand equity. Ansary and Hashim (2018) also find a negative relationship between brand awareness and overall brand equity. For this study, the findings could be a result of the fact that when data was collected (i.e., 2019–2020), there was a protest against Woolworths and a call to boycott their products for trading with Israel after its capital was moved to Jerusalem. These results imply that retailer brand awareness has a more significant impact when applied to influencing other brand equity dimensions than applied directly to influence retailer brand equity. The findings are in line with Keller's (1993) CBBE model that emphasises that brand awareness intervention should be implemented first in a retailer brand equity program so that other brand equity dimensions can have a high impact on overall retailer brand equity. Furthermore, the results align with the hierarchical application of brand dimensions as concluded by Build et el., (2013), Jara and Cliquet (2012), and Farjam and Hongyi (2015) in their various research streams.

8.3.2 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 2

This objective was to determine how retailer-related sources such as retailer brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand personality (brand competence, brand excitement, brand sincerity), and

brand loyalty impacted Woolworths' overall brand equity in the South African grocery industry. Unlike previous studies showing that perceived quality (Buil et al., 2013), brand awareness (Tran et al., 2020) and brand image (Liu, 2020; Pappu & Quester, 2017) have significant positive relationships with overall brand equity for physical products and services respectively, the current research did not support these previous findings in the case of a grocery retailer brand. However, it supported the impact of brand excitement (Luffarelli, Stamatogiannakis & Yang, 2019) and brand loyalty (Buil et al., 2013; Liu, 2020) on overall brand equity. The current study is also in line with Yoo et al. (2002) research findings, who conducted a study in the USA and at Korean universities and found that brand loyalty impacted overall brand equity. This is an indication that out of Aaker's (1991) sources of brand equity (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty), examined in the context of grocery retailers in the current study; it was only brand loyalty that positively and significantly impacted overall brand equity. While Fernando (2015) and Supphellen (2011) in Sri Lanka found that brand excitement impacted brand loyalty, the current study revealed that it could directly impact overall brand equity. Considering that brand loyalty was the strongest driver of overall brand equity, it was important to study the predictors of brand loyalty. Therefore, the third empirical objective was to find the brand loyalty predictors as discussed in the following subsection.

8.3.3 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 3

This objective was to examine the impact of customer service, perceived price, brand trust, brand image and distribution on Woolworths' brand loyalty. The results revealed that out of the grocery retailer's marketing offerings of price, service and distribution, the offerings that significantly impacted brand loyalty were price and distribution. Brand trust also significantly impacted brand loyalty, supporting Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) study in Sweden. Customer service did not significantly have an effect on brand loyalty. Even though surprising, the positive relationship between price and negative relationship between customer service and brand loyalty were also found by Anselmsson et al. (2017) in their Swedish study in the grocery retailers' context. This could be an indication that since groceries are not durable but routine buying essential products, consumers somewhat defy the demand law and stay loyal to the retailer they prefer, irrespective of the price.

With the nature of grocery buying (i.e., self-service), customer service is usually not important in building brand loyalty and therefore was not significant in this study and that of Anselmsson et al. (2017). As also

found by Anselmsson et al. (2017), brand trust had a positive impact on brand loyalty because customers want the grocery retailers which they shop with to reliably provide the quality and quantity of products they need daily. The current findings also support Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) study in terms of the relationship between distribution and brand loyalty. This implies that grocery stores' proximity to customers drives brand loyalty. As with the case of overall brand equity, brand image negatively impacted brand loyalty. This, as mentioned before, could be attributed to the time the data was collected because there was negative sentiment about Woolworths supporting and stocking Israeli products even after protests.

8.3.4 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 4

This objective was to assess the extent to which Woolworths' overall brand equity impacted outcomes such as brand preference and repurchase intention. The results showed that this hypothesis was strongly supported. These results support earlier research findings by Buil et al. (2013), which show that overall brand equity strongly influences brand preference at $\beta = 0.814$, $p<0.001$ and overall brand equity influences repurchase intentions at $\beta = 0,175$, $p<0.001$. Even on laptop and mobile phone buying among Iranians, Moradi and Zarei (2011) also found overall brand equity positively and significantly impacted brand preference and repurchase intention. While A-Qade, Omar and Rubel (2017) note that overall brand equity supports brand preference at a much higher level than its effects on repurchase intentions, Ajini (2012) sees brand equity to be better at impacting repurchase intentions.

8.3.5 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 5

For this objective, it was hypothesised that Woolworths' overall brand equity would mediate in the relationship between its sources ([a]brand awareness, [b]sincerity, [c]excitement, [d]perceived quality, [e]brand image, [f]brand loyalty) and its outcome of brand preference and repurchase intention.

The mediation results showed that overall brand equity was significantly mediated in brand awareness-brand preference, excitement-brand preference, and loyalty-brand preference relationships. Overall brand equity is also significantly mediated in the brand awareness-repurchase intentions, brand excitement-repurchase intentions and brand loyalty-repurchase intentions relationships. This means that brand preference and repurchase intention will be enhanced from brand awareness, brand excitement and brand loyalty when these three constructs impact overall brand equity. Das et al. (2013); Pappue and Quester

(2018), in their studies on the impact of retail stores' personalities on customer-based retailer equity, conclude that brand equity mediates the relationship between brand personality and outcomes of brand equity (brand preference and repurchase intentions). In terms of destination marketing, Zhang et al. (2021) also find that before outcomes such as brand value are generated from brand experience, they have to first lead to overall brand equity. This study also supports Jara and Cliquet's (2012) study that before consumers differentially respond and develop repurchase intention from brand awareness, the latter has first to impact brand equity dimensions, such as perceived quality and brand image. While Chang and Liu (2009) show that brand equity mediates in the relationship between brand image and brand preference, this current study revealed that the mediating effect is between brand awareness and brand preference.

8.3.6 Discussion on the Achievement of Empirical Objective 6

This objective was to develop and test a unified retailer brand equity model for the grocery retail industry. This was achieved by developing a unified retailer brand equity tested empirically to assess its explanatory power and predictive relevancy to the outcome variables of brand preference and repurchase intentions. The research results found that the model could explain 60.3% (R^2= 0.603) of brand loyalty, 61.1% (R^2= 0.611) of overall brand equity and 71.7% (R^2=0.717) of the changes in brand preference. Conversely, the results showed that the model could explain 54.2 % (R^2=0.542) of the changes in repurchase intentions. Considering Hair et al.'s (2017) suggestion that models' explanatory powers of between 10% and 25% are weak, 26 and 50% are moderate, and 51% and 75%+ are strong in consumer behaviour studies, it can be concluded that the explanatory power of the unified retailer model developed and tested with a grocery retailer in this study was strong. In addition, the model predictive relevancy (Q^2) for brand preference and repurchase intentions was also assessed. The Q^2 predicted for the outcome variables, brand preference, and repurchase intention were 0.460 and 0.364, respectively, signifying a strong predictive model as their values were more than the recommended 0.35 (Kumar et al., 2013).

It can be seen from these results that the unified model of retailer brand equity relatively improved the explanation of overall retailer brand equity and its outcomes of brand preference and repurchase intentions. From Table 8.1, it can be seen that the majority explanatory power of customer brand preference and repurchase intentions falls at 20 to 50%. For example, Anselmsson (2017) finds that 52% of the variance in brand loyalty was explained in the model; Troiville et al. (2019 concluded that 50% of the variance in brand loyalty was explained in the model. In addition, Sasmita et al. (2020) perceive 48% of the variance

explained behavioural intentions. These few examples show that the current model improved the explanatory power of customer output components of brand preference (71.7%) and repurchase intentions (54.2%) relative to previous research studies.

Table 8.1 summarises studies that have been undertaken on sources and outcomes of brand equity behaviour.

Table 8.1: Summary of variance explained in retailer brand equity and customer responses studies.

Theoretical framework Model(s)	Authors	Country	Variance explained in	
			Overall Brand Equity	Outcomes
Retail brand equity	Jara and Cliquet (2011)	France	51.6% of the variance in customer responses	Customer responses
Overall Band Equity Model	Balaji (2015)	India	17.19 % of variance explained in repurchase intention	Brand Preference
Retailer Brand equity	White, Joseph-Mathews and Voorhees (2013)	USA	23% of the variance in retailer brand equity	Retailer brand equity
Stores Brand Equity	Gil-Saura et al. (2013)	Spain	33.8% of the variance in store equity	Brand loyalty and satisfaction
Retailer brand equity	Takahashi (2014)	Japan	69.11% of the variance in brand equity	Emotional and attitudinal loyalty and distinctiveness association
Consumer-based retailer brand equity	Beneke, Chamberlain, Chohan and Neethling (2015)	South Africa	79.2% of the variation in the CBRBE was explained	Consumer-based retailer brand equity
Retail brand equity and retail brand image	Martinelli and De Canio (2017)	Italy	For behavioural loyalty towards the retailer, R^2 is 0.431; conative loyalty towards the retailer, R^2 is 0.435; retail brand equity, R^2 is 0.486; retail brand image, R^2 is 0.426 and retail perceived value. R^2 is 0.172.	Behavioural loyalty towards the retailer
Retailer brand equity	Butt, Yu, Mohd-Any, Mutum, Ting, & Khong, (2018)	China	The model explains 31,2% variance in retailer brand equity, 44,1% variance in customer satisfaction and 31% variance in trust.	Retailer brand equity & customer satisfaction
Retailer equity	Lee & Lee (2018)	Korea	Their model explained 64% of the variance in customer usage intentions	Usage Intentions

Retailer Brand Equity Model	Troiville et al. (2019)	France	Loyalty (50%), WoM (22%) and Attitude (40%)	Loyalty, WoM and Attitude
Overall retail store brand equity model	Mallikraj; Alagarsamy & Sekar (2019)	India	The predictors of overall retail store brand equity (brand equity dimensions) explain 62.2 percent of its variance.	Overall retail store brand equity
Retail brand equity	Gallart-Camahort, Fiol & García (2020)	Spain	77.7 % of the variance in retailer brand equity	Retail brand equity
Retail brand equity	Martinelli & De Canio (2020)	Italy	44.4% variance in retail brand equity	Retail brand equity
Brand equity in convenience stores	Nguyen et al. (2020)	France	63.2% of the variance in purchase intentions	Purchase intentions
Stores equity	Marín-García, Gil-Saura, Ruiz-Molina & Berenguer-Contrí (2021)	Spain	The model calculated R^2 of 0.537 for store equity and R^2 of 0.360 for satisfaction.	Satisfaction and Stores equity

8.4 Conclusions on Theoretical and Empirical Findings

The sections below make conclusions on both theoretical and empirical findings.

8.4.1 Conclusions on theoretical findings

Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) underline the importance of brand awareness and view this dimension as a prerequisite towards building strong brands. Keller (1993) considers the perceived quality a component of the brand image, formulated at a much abstract level through brand image attributes and benefits. In Yoo et al.'s (2002) brand equity model, marketing activities were integrated into the broad brand equity building activities. The Luming Wang and Adam Finn (2013) brand equity model extended the current CBBE models by integrating cognitive and non-cognitive factors and their effects on future brand equity outcomes, such as future price premiums and future brand loyalty. The model emphasises the need to understand the current dimensions of specific brand equity dimensions (current brand awareness, current brand association, current perceived value, current perceived quality) because they have a maximum effect

on brand equity in the present period. On the other hand, brand equity dimensions (past brand loyalty) have a lagging effect on brand equity, meaning their effects are achieved in retrospect. The brand equity model by Buil and Martınez and Chernatony (2013) studied the whole input-output spectrum of brand equity.

Jara and Cliquet (2012) model's most significant value in the retailer brand equity is anchored in its effort to give a balanced account of brand equity sources in the consumer value chain. This balanced approach is achieved by including unique retailer brand equity drivers such as symbolic and experimental dimensions in their model and combining them with other factors from the traditional models of brand equity and the retailer brand domain elements. Calvo-Porral, Martinez-Fernandez, Juanatey-Boga, and Levy-Mangín (2013) model depicts that value for both the company and the customer can be enhanced through using a store brand equity source. The brand value to the customer can influence the intention to buy from the store brands.

8.4.2 Conclusion on empirical findings

The first set of findings was on how retailer-related sources such as brand awareness, image, perceived quality, personality (brand excitement, brand sincerity), and brand loyalty impact Woolworths' overall brand equity in the South African grocery industry. It can be concluded that these sources strongly (61.1%) explained Woolworths' overall brand equity. The strongest driver of overall brand equity was brand loyalty with β =0.623, followed by brand excitement (β =0.231) and perceived quality (β =0.108). Out of then commonly tested sources in the Aaker's (1991) CBBE model, only perceived quality and brand loyalty made a significant impact in the context of grocery retailer brand equity. Brand loyalty was driven by brand awareness, perceived price, distribution, brand trust but not customer services. This greatly validates Anselmsson et al.'s (2017) model. Brand awareness was a good originator of both brand loyalty and perceived quality which was the strongest sources of overall brand equity in the grocery retailer context. While Jara and Cliquet (2012) show that brand personalities are important retailer differentiators and drivers of consumers' differential responses (brand equity), the current study revealed that brand personality is brand excitement to make this impact, especially in the context of a grocery retailer. Lichtenstein (2014) notes that brand knowledge components (brand awareness and brand image) determine how consumers resonate between enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment of the

grocery retailer brand. For Woolworths, unfortunately, brand knowledge during the data collection period was an aspect of disenchantment.

Another concerning source of overall brand equity or element of disenchantment was the negative relationship between customer services and brand loyalty. This result could align with the changes that besieged the grocery retailer during COVID 19 restrictions, where rules related to social distancing affected customer services provided through direct engagement methods. However, despite these challenges, perceived price, distribution, brand trust and customer services explained up to 60.3% of the Woolworths retailer brand loyalty, which, as mentioned before, contributed to the Woolworths retailer brand equity.

Woolworths' overall brand equity made strong impacts on brand preference (β =0.847) and repurchase intentions (β =0.736). From these findings, it can be concluded that the efforts to build and measure retailer brand equity can be rewarding, especially in influencing how customers make their grocery buying choices. Choices like brand preferences and repurchase intentions emanating from brand equity can, according to Chang and Liu (2009: 1687), enable the purchasing of 'the same products or brands or by showing preference toward a particular brand, bringing firms higher market share, higher profits, or share value.' All of these confirm that it pays to build and measure the sources and outcomes of brand equity. This necessitated the development of a unified retail brand equity model.

The unified retailer brand equity was developed using traditional, contemporary and retailer brand equity models to form a composite model that accommodated ideas from the different brand equity perspectives and for both sources and outcomes. The unified model did not only explain a high percentage of overall brand equity and its outcomes. It also further explained individual retailer brand equity models such as brand loyalty and the model contribution in brand loyalty-building and in explaining brand loyalty drivers as important components in building brand equity. The unified model could also predict future customer behaviour, such as repurchase intentions and profiling customer choices such as brand preference.

8.5 Research Contributions

This study made theoretical, contextual and practical contributions as discussed in the ensuring subsections.

8.5.1Theoretical contribution

This study makes a theoretical contribution to the fields of retail management, brand management and consumer behaviour. The study developed a unified retailer brand equity that integrated the traditional customer-based brand equity (CBBE) models, contemporary CBBE models, and retailer brand equity models to identify grocery retailer brand equity sources and outcomes. Previous research studies mainly applied the classical models to understand sources of CBBE. In most of these studies, the retailer-specific or grocery retailer-specific sources and mostly outcomes are lacking. This study theoretically contributes by closing these gaps. This enriches the most popular CBEE models of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) that do not include brand equity outcomes. The research study adds value by adding marketing sources to the brand factors to explain brand loyalty and overall brand equity and its outcomes of brand preference and repurchase intentions more holistically. The adding of marketing factors, such as price, distribution and customer service, broadens the study of how brand equity can be built, and consumer behaviour can be widely studied. The testing of the model in the context of a grocery retailer advances the study of retail marketing by exposing the pathway of gaining differential response and preference in an era of high competition.

8.5.2 Contextual contribution

The research study was carried out in the grocery retailer environment during the turbulent economic climate caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic had diminished most economic and productive activities, leaving customers with minimal disposable incomes to make purchases in a slightly more expensive grocery retailer like Woolworths. This is the context in which the research study was conducted. The study, therefore, exposes retailer brand equity and customer behaviour builders under challenging times. This situation makes the study unique as previous research studies were undertaken during normal economic circumstances; hence this study can give unique insights into grocery retailer brand equity from a customer perspective. For example, the testing of the unified retailer model revealed that even during a challenging pandemic and economically difficult times, the creation of brand awareness could generate a stream of benefits, including brand loyalty, which was found to be a strong driver of overall retailer brand equity.

Previous studies used student samples. For example, the study by Yoo et al. (2002) incorporated undergraduate students from the USA and South Korean universities. However, the current research study

added value by sampling non-students who were mainly decision-makers of grocery purchases. While students are grocery customers, the literature argues that parents are the primary decision-makers for family purchases such as groceries (Philomena, 2015). In addition, the children's role in initiating purchases by their parents is acknowledged in the literature (Philomena, 2015). However, parents do not implement all that their children initiate.

8.5.3 Practical Contribution

In business circles, a model able to explain what is happening in the organisation and at the same time predict customer behaviour towards their product and services can be employed as a cornerstone for making business decisions (Shackman, 2013). In this case, the grocery retail industry can embrace the developed and tested unified model using data related to its context and utilise it to leverage their operations by using research-based evidence to assess their current business operations' strengths and weaknesses. This ensures that situational factors are considered in developing a model that is unique to the African context. Furthermore, testing the unified retailer brand equity model and assessing the inter-relationships between the sources provide retail grocery managers with a guiding model when implementing and assessing the effectiveness of their brand equity building programs and strategies.

The study showed that retailer brand loyalty has a high direct impact on retailer brand equity. In contrast, brand awareness had a negligible direct effect on retailer brand equity but has a high indirect effect. These findings have practical implications for the sequencing of brand equity programs. The findings suggest that retailer brand awareness such as promotion and training should be applied at the initial stages of brand equity building programs to build a base for those dimensions which have a high and positive impact on retailer brand equity, especially brand loyalty. Since brand loyalty directly affects overall brand equity, this study practically contributes by revealing to grocery retailers the pathway to building brand loyalty with marketing and brand factors. The exposure of the sources of brand loyalty, a strong driver of retailer brand equity, can cause a ripple impact on customer buying metrics. This will guide how practitioners can work around issues of fading customer loyalty in the face of challenges of the expansion of e-commerce, threatening the brick-and-mortar stores, the trend for healthy food choices, and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The tested unified model showed high explanatory power of brand preference (71.7%) and repurchase intentions (54.2%), thus giving great insights into brand preference and repurchase intentions and serving

as a bedrock of driving these consumer outcomes in the retail grocery industry. Furthermore, according to Chang and Liu (2009), these two outcomes are good sources of profits, market share, and brand value. Therefore, they can help the management of grocery retailers prepare for the predicted customer behavioural outcomes and proactively manage both positive and negative predictors of these outcomes for the mutual benefit of customers and retailers.

The results of this study provide retail managers insights into developing evidence-based marketing action plans instead of using their intuition to make awareness building and other marketing decisions that usually require high cash investment. Exposing the strongest predictors of brand loyalty and overall retailer brand equity can help management select and prioritise the essential areas of committing their resources. For example, the results found that brand loyalty has the strongest impact on overall retailer brand equity, followed by retailer brand excitement and perceived quality. These statistics show that resources can be prioritised towards various brand loyalty enhancing programs to impact retailer brand equity significantly.

8.6 Theoretical and Practical Recommendations

The section makes recommendations for improving Woolworths' brand equity, its customers' brand preference and purchase intentions, and improving theory in the retailer brand equity domain.

8.6.1 Recommendations on improving sources and outcomes of Woolworths' overall brand equity.

Since brand loyalty and brand excitement directly and strongly impacted Woolworths' overall brand equity, Woolworths' brand managers and marketing specialists should find various ways of identifying and enhancing more drivers of brand loyalty and excitement. Perceived quality, which Woolworths is known for, also directly impacted overall brand equity. Therefore, the provision of quality products and services should be maintained and even further improved. Considering that the two elements of brand knowledge (i.e., brand awareness and brand image) showed a negative direct effect on overall brand equity, which are usually strong drivers of brand equity (Chang & Liu, 2009), Woolworths should engage their public relations team to educate the public about the suppliers of their merchandise and the ethical procurements of such supplies. In addition, the retailer should create awareness of the many charities and corporate social responsibility projects it is involved in to improve its image.

Customers are aware of and appreciate the quality of Woolworths' products. This could have resulted in the significant mediation effect of overall brand equity in the relationship between brand awareness, brand preference and repurchase intentions. The indirect effect of brand awareness on overall brand equity emphasises the need to implement brand awareness programs that ensure that Woolworths' customers are familiarised with all the brand attributes and benefits in order to develop affective and conative brand attitudes. According to Ansary and Hashim (2018), brand attitudes are important drivers of overall brand equity. Since the overall brand equity strongly predicts brand preference and repurchase intentions, Woolworths should develop strategies that prioritise the significant drivers of overall brand equity, such as brand loyalty and its drivers, perceived quality and brand excitement. In addition, other direct drivers of brand preference and repurchase intentions, such as brand attitudes and brand experiences, should be studied, especially as brand preference and repurchase intentions are important behavioural tendencies that engender product purchases and sustainable competitive advantages (Ebrahim et al., 2016). While the Covid 19 situation prevented adequate services, Woolworths should seek e-retailing ways to improve services. This can particularly be successful because Woolworths' large middle- and high-income earners can afford to shop online or through mobile marketing. Since customers are willing to pay the higher price that Woolworths charges for its products, the retailer should continue improving its distribution networks and trust, found to be good drivers of brand loyalty.

8.6.2 Recommendations on improving theory in the areas of retailer brand equity building and measurement.

Even when it relates to choosing brands, consumer behaviour is a complex phenomenon that needs integrated models to predict. While some studies have integrated models to identify the sources and outcomes of brand equity, there was a need for their unification. This study developed a unified model to examine the sources and outcomes of overall brand equity, especially as Moradi and Zerai (2011) suggest that identifying the various drivers of brand equity would increase the probability of consumer brand choices and brand preference and purchase intent. According to Puaschunder (2017), if consumers perceive high brand equity, then a positive attitude towards the products or services is developed in their minds. This has a high bearing on future purchase intentions and future brand choices of customers. While this study examined brand and marketing factors to achieve these goals by developing overall brand equity, consumer behaviour models also suggest psychological, external and contextual factors that may impact how consumers embrace brands and differentially act towards them. For example, Ebrahim et al.

(2016) contend that not only the functional attributes of brands create brand preference. Consumers also seek brands that provide intriguing, sensory, symbolic and emotional benefits or experiences. Thus, this study's unified model can be expanded by examining these psychological factors as sources of overall brand equity.

According to Boukis and Christodoulides (2020), and in the context of studying the sources and outcomes of employee-based brand equity (EBBE), cognitive (brand awareness and image) and affective (brand identification and brand personality) routes of building brand equity have to be grouped and the unique contributions examined. Therefore, future studies should separate the sources of overall grocery brand equity into the cognitive and affective routes to assess unique contributions. Besides brand trust, additional relational factors, such as brand love and brand satisfaction, may enrich the investigation into the sources. In fact, Ha, Janda and Muthaly (2010) find that brand satisfaction improved how many traditional sources (brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and brand loyalty) impacted overall brand equity. Boukis and Christodoulides (2020) contend that internal factors (EBBE sources) and brand leadership can enhance the development of cognitive and affective processes for overall brand equity. They further suggest that the resultant brand equity can generate benefits such as brand value and customer orientation. These additional outcomes can be integrated into this study's unified model to enrich its strong explanatory power.

8.7 Limitations of the Study and Areas of Further Research

Despite the theoretical, contextual and practical contributions of this study, there are some limitations. The study was conducted with Woolworths grocery customers only considering the retailer's high ranking in terms of brand value. However, Woolworths attracts medium to high-income customers, whose perceptions about the sources and outcomes of brand equity may differ from customers of the low-cost grocery retailers. Further research should test the applicability of the unified model with other grocery retailers, especially the low-cost retailer brands. The study was also commissioned in the Gauteng province of South Africa, which is the country's economic hub with more liberal and opinionated customers. The model should be tested in other provinces, such as the Western Cape province that hosts more White and conservative South Africans.

The data of this study were collected with a cross-sectional survey. Even though care was taken to test the construct reliability and validity, cross-sectional studies may suffer from social desirability bias and

common method variance (CMV) issues emanating from a single response style. While this study tried to eliminate the CMV bias through factor analysing the items and confirming that they did not load in a single factor with variance explained of up to 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003), further research should replicate this study with a longitudinal or experimental design to eliminate the social desirability bias issue. Although Rindfleisch et al.'s (2008) results from cross-sectional data exhibit validity that is comparable to that obtained from longitudinal data, Ostroff, Kinicki and Clark (2002) find that, compared to a cross-sectional study, the degree to which predictors impact outcome variables is lower by 32% when measurements are made longitudinally. A longitudinal study may therefore be applied for future studies. Future studies should use a larger sample size for more confident generalisation, considering that this study's sample size was 480. While this sample size was large enough for all the statistical analyses, its representation of all Woolworths' grocery customers should be cautiously made.

8.8 Conclusion

Shackman (2013) contends that business and marketing researchers should embrace and develop theories and models with high explanatory and predictive power. This study integrated elements of Aaker's (1991) and Yoo and Donthu's (2002) CBBE models, Jara and Cliquet's (2012) retail brand equity model, Buil et al.'s (2013) CBBE response model, and Anselmsson, Burt and Tunca's (2017) retailer brand equity to develop a unified model for the examination of the sources and outcomes of Woolworths' brand equity in the South African grocery retailer sector. The testing of the unified retailer brand equity model produced a high explanatory power of brand preference (71.7%) and medium, but strong explanatory power of repurchase intentions (54.2%) and strongly explained 61.1% of overall brand equity. With these explanatory powers, there is room to incorporate other sources and outcomes of retailer brand equity and test the model against other grocery retailers in South Africa, in other emerging markets and even in developed markets. From the empirical testing of the model, practical and theoretical contributions were made. However, these contributions can be enhanced if the limitations are addressed in further studies.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondents

My name is Oliver Pwaka, and I am currently studying towards a Doctoral Degree of Philosophy in Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand. The study involves conducting a scientific research and analysis on an academic topic "Sources and Outcomes of Retailer Brand Equity in the South African Grocery Sector: A Study towards a Unified Retailer Brand Equity Model".

The study is in partial fulfilment of the degree requirements. Primary data needs to be collected from Woolworths customers on the brand and retailer factors impacting their differential choice (brand equity). The process starts by your acceptance of having shopped at Woolworths before fully participating in the study. With reference to this background, I cordially invite you to participate in this study. The process of completing the questionnaire will take about 20-30 minutes of your time. The research process is solely done for academic purposes and supplied information will be treated with strict confidentiality. Furthermore, participation in this research is voluntary and participants can opt out at any stage of the research at their own terms.

I thank you in advance for accepting to participate in this research process and for your effort to fill in all the required information. Kindly note that by completing this questionnaire it will be taken as your given consent to participate in this study.

For any enquiry about the research, kindly contact the below details.

University of the Witwatersrand Representative/Supervisor
Prof Helen Duh
Contact Details: 0834452540
Email: Helen.duh@wits.ac.za

For coordination purpose
Contact Oliver Pwaka
Telephone: 0764067871
oliverpwaka@gmail.com

QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read each question carefully and complete the whole questionnaire.
PLEASE NOTE: This questionnaire will not be analysed on an individual basis – it is therefore important that you provide honest answers.

SECTION A - BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR RESPONSE BY TICKING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER.

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age

18 -25 Years	1	36-45 Years	3	56 – 65 Years	5
26 - 35 Years	2	46 - 55 Years	4	65+ Years	6

3. Marital status

Never married	1	Separated/Divorced	3
Married	2	Not married but living with partner	4

4. Population group

White	1	Indian/Asian	4
Black	2	Other, Specify…….....	5
Coloured	3		

5. In your opinion, how financially well-off is your household

Not well-off at all	1	Somewhat well-off	3
Not so well-off	2	Very well-off	4

6. Which of the grocery retailer stores do you more frequently shop?

Woolworths	1
Other brand	2

If other brand ,specify	

7. Which of the grocery retailer stores do you most prefer?

Woolworths	1
Other brand	2

If other brand ,specify	

8. Have you shopped in any of Woolworths grocery stores?

Yes	1
No	2

If you answered yes to question 8, please continue your participation to section B.

Section B: Sources of Retailer Brand Equity

For Woolworths as one of the grocery retailers in South Africa and globally, please state the degree to which you agree or disagree to the following statements describing the brand and the retailer factors impacting differential choice (brand equity) whereby 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

BRAND IMAGE (Chuma, 2018)		**Strongly Disagree**						**Strongly Agree**
BI1	Woolworths' grocery store brand is regarded as a prestige store.		1	2	3	4	5	
BI2	Woolworths' grocery store brand represents efficiency.		1	2	3	4	5	
BI3	Compared with other grocery retail store brands, the brand image of Woolworths store is unique.		1	2	3	4	5	
BI4	I have a good impression of the overall image of the Woolworths brand.		1	2	3	4	5	
BI5	The Woolworths grocery store brand is well established in the market.		1	2	3	4	5	

Retailer Brand Awareness (Source: Yoo et al., 2000)							
BA1 I know the colours that represent the Woolworths brand.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BA2 I can recognise Woolworths grocery among other competing retailer brands.		1	2	3	4	5	

BA3 I am aware of the Woolworths grocery brand.		1	2	3	4	5	
BA4 The characteristics of Woolworths brand come to my mind quickly.		1	2	3	4	5	
BA5 I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Woolworths brand.		1	2	3	4	5	
Brand Loyalty (Sources: Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuman, 1996, Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000)							
BL1 When I want to shop for grocery, a Woolworths brand is always my first choice.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BL2 I usually choose Woolworths grocery brand over other grocery retailer brand.		1	2	3	4	5	
BL3 I can confidently recommend the Woolworths grocery brand to someone who seeks my advice.		1	2	3	4	5	
BL4 I consider Woolworths grocery store as my first choice to buy grocery.		1	2	3	4	5	
BL5 I do more purchases at Woolworths grocery store brand compared to other stores.		1	2	3	4	5	
BL6 I revisit Woolworths retailer stores whenever I need groceries.		1	2	3	4	5	
Perceived Quality (Source: Arnett et al., 2003); Pappu and Quester, 2006; Anselmsson et al., 2017; Londoño et al., 2017); El Hedhli and Chebat, 2009)							

PQ1 Woolworths grocery stores offer reliable products.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
PQ2 Woolworths store offers good deals relative to other offers available in the market.		1	2	3	4	5	
PQ3 Woolworths retail store sells high quality merchandise.		1	2	3	4	5	
PQ4 Food products from Woolworths are fresher than from other store brands.		1	2	3	4	5	
PQ5 Woolworths retail brand has good packaging facilities compared to other brands.		1	2	3	4	5	
Brand Personality (Source: Austin, Siguawand Mattila, 2003; Aaker, 1997, Ambroise. **L, Ferrandi. J.M, Merunka. D and Pierre Valette-Florence, 2005)**							
Sincerity							
BS1 Woolworths brand is honest in dealing with customers.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BS2 I feel safe to shop at Woolworths brand considering its regular good quality.		1	2	3	4	5	
BS3 Woolworths grocery brand ensures all family needs and wants are catered for.		1	2	3	4	5	
BS4 Woolworths store brand creates a cheerful and reliable customer experience.		1	2	3	4	5	

Excitement	**Strongly Disagree**						**Strongly Agree**
BE1 Woolworths store brand is imaginative is its store layout.		1	2	3	4	5	
BE2 Woolworths grocery stores offer products and services that match my lifestyle.		1	2	3	4	5	
BE3 Woolworths grocery stores provide unique in- store experience.		1	2	3	4	5	
BE4 It is exciting to shop at Woolworths grocery stores.		1	2	3	4	5	
BE5 Woolworths store brand has charming characteristics.		1	2	3	4	5	
Perceived Price (Chen, 2008; Chan et al, 2009; Brandley, 2002; Jaafar,S., N; Naba, M.M., and Lalp, P.E., 2012)							
PP1 Woolworths grocery stores offer fair price compared to the product quality.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
PP2 I compare prices from my favourite store brands with other stores.		1	2	3	4	5	
PP3 The price of grocery is reasonable at Woolworths.		1	2	3	4	5	
PP4 Compared to other grocery retailers, Woolworths charges reasonable prices for its product quality.		1	2	3	4	5	

PP5 I can save money buying from Woolworths.		1	2	3	4	5	
Distribution (Smith, 1992, Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2000							
DI1Woolworths has more distribution stores compared to its competing brands.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
DI2 The number of Woolworths stores that deal with grocery is more than that of its competing brands.		1	2	3	4	5	
DI3 Woolworths distributes much assortment of goods and services than competing store brands.		1	2	3	4	5	
DI4 Woolworth grocery stores are available around where I stay.		1	2	3	4	5	
DI5 Woolworths grocery stores have a national foot print.		1	2	3	4	5	
Customers Services (Saxe and Weitz , 1982; Hong-Youl Ha, 2011							
CS1 Woolworths goes beyond normal call of duty to please customers.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
CS2 Woolworths provides excellent service to its customers.		1	2	3	4	5	
CS3 Woolworths has adequate resources to meet customer service needs.		1	2	3	4	5	
CS4 Woolworths has friendly personnel who provide satisfactory services .		1	2	3	4	5	

CS5 I can freely discuss my needs with Woolworths sales people.		1	2	3	4	5	
Trust (Source: Delgado et al., 2003)							
BT1 With Woolworths grocery retail stores, I get what I am looking for.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BT2 Woolworth never disappoints me in terms of their product offerings.		1	2	3	4	5	
BT3 I can rely on Woolworths for my grocery needs.		1	2	3	4	5	
BT4 Woolworths keeps its promises to customers to deliver quality goods and services.		1	2	3	4	5	
Overall Brand Equity (Source: Yoo et al., 2000)							
BEQ1 It makes sense to go to Woolworths instead of any other store, even if they offer the same products.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BEQ2 Even if another store has same features as Woolworths, I would prefer to go to buy from Woolworths.		1	2	3	4	5	
BEQ3 Even though other grocery shops are cheaper, Woolworths would still be my choice.		1	2	3	4	5	
BEQ4 Compared to other stores, I am willing to pay a higher price at Woolworths.		1	2	3	4	5	
		Section C: Outcomes of Retailer Brand Equity					
Brand Preference (Source: Baalbaki S.S, 2012; Yoo and Donthu, 2001)							

BP1 Woolworths is my preferred brand for grocery shopping.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
BP2 I will not buy from another brand if Woolworths is open.		1	2	3	4	5	
BP3 I am committed to shopping at Woolworths		1	2	3	4	5	
BP4 I prefer my Woolworths if everything else was equal		1	2	3	4	5	
Repurchase intention (Source: Buil el at, 2013, Vinh and Huy, 2016)							
RP1 I see myself still shopping at Woolworths in the future.	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
RP2 I am motivated to continue shopping at Woolworths.		1	2	3	4	5	
RP3 I would buy from Woolworths for all my grocery purchases.		1	2	3	4	5	
RP4 I am likely to buy from Woolworths in future		1	2	3	4	5	

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLERANCE

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Pwaka

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/04/17

PROJECT TITLE: Sources and Outcomes of Retailer Brand Equity in the South African Grocery Sector: A Study Towards A Unified Retailer Brand Equity Model

INVESTIGATOR(S) Mr O Pwaka

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT Economic and Business Science/

DATE CONSIDERED 24 April 2020

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE Approved
Risk Level: Minimal

EXPIRY DATE 25 May 2023

DATE: 26 May 2020 CHAIRPERSON _____

(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor: Professor H Duh

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 1Oth Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

1/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we may carry out the abovementioned research and 1/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved 1/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High- Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.

Signature Date: 25/04/2020

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRJES

APPENDIX C: SIMILIARITY INDEX

OLIVER PWAKA PHD THESIS TURNITIN

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APPENDIX D: EDITOR CERTIFICATE

The Final Word
Editing Services

EDITING CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

30 April 2021

This is to certify that I, Gisela van Reenen, of The Final Word Editing Services, have proofread and edited Mr Oliver Pwaka's doctoral thesis entitled *"Sources and Outcomes of Grocery Retailer Brand Equity: A Study Towards a Unified Brand Equity Model in the South African Grocery Industry."*

The following issues were corrected: grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, idiomatic use and style. The candidate was advised to make the recommended changes.



G van Reenen

finalwordsa@gmail.com

Cell phone number: **084 948 4691**

APPENDIX E: Summary of Results

Outer VIF Values

	VIF
BA1	**1.791**
BA2	**2.107**
BA3	**2.040**
BA4	**2.012**
BA5	**2.090**
BE1	**1.739**
BE2	**1.907**
BE3	**2.171**
BE4	**2.550**
BE5	**2.393**
BEQ1	**2.443**
BEQ2	**2.853**
BEQ3	3.472
BEQ4	**2.846**
BI1	**1.410**
BI2	**1.445**
BI3	**1.615**
BI4	**1.897**
BI5	**1.632**
BL1	3.628
BL2	4.887
BL3	**1.844**
BL4	4.634
BL5	4.901
BL6	3.484
BP1	**2.658**
BP2	3.094
BP3	3.372
BP4	**1.539**
BS1	**2.213**
BS2	**2.174**
BS3	**2.355**
BS4	**2.284**
BT1	**1.893**

BT2	**1.871**
BT3	**1.609**
BT4	**1.571**
CS1	**2.040**
CS2	**2.314**
CS3	**2.108**
CS4	**2.007**
CS5	**1.975**
DI1	**2.918**
DI2	3.056
DI3	**1.822**
DI4	**1.322**
DI5	**1.435**
PP1	**2.248**
PP2	**1.118**
PP3	**2.605**
PP4	**2.207**
PP5	**2.496**
PQ1	**1.756**
PQ2	**1.256**
PQ3	**2.294**
PQ4	**2.118**
PQ5	**1.878**
RP1	**2.688**
RP2	**2.719**
RP3	**2.278**
RP4	**2.355**

Inner VIF Values

	Bp	**Be**	**Pq**	**Ri**	**Bi**	**Bl**	**Ce**	**Cs**
Brand Preference								
Brand Trust						**2.225**		
Customer Service						**2.185**		
Distribution						**1.895**		
Overall Retailer Brand Equity	**1.000**			**1.000**				
Perceived Quality		**2.822**						
Price						**1.981**		
Repurchase Intention								

Retailer Brand Awareness		**1.778**	**1.000**		**1.000**	**1.252**	**1.000**	**1.000**
Retailer Brand Image		**2.189**						
Retailer Brand Loyalty		**1.797**						
Retailer Customer Excitement		3.330						
Retailer Customer Sincerity		3.108						