AN EXPLORATION INTO THE BRANDING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF CONSUMERS RESIDING IN TOWNSHIPS OF TSHWANE: A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE

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Abstract

The primary aim of this research paper is to investigate the branding patterns of consumers residing in townships (also referred to as underdeveloped areas/black urban areas) within the Tshwane area of South Africa. Households in black urban areas are already by far the largest group in the middle-income (LSM 5 to 8) market, where their figures continue to grow gradually (Chase, Legoete & van Wamelen, 2010:2). A quantitative approach was used for this study where a survey questionnaire was the method for collecting data. In order to satisfy research objectives of the study, a self-administered location based survey was distributed to the residents of Shoshanguve, Mamelodi and Attridgeville; black urban areas within the Tshwane region of South Africa.

Keywords: Branding, Purchase Patterns, Townships, Consumers, Tshwane, South Africa

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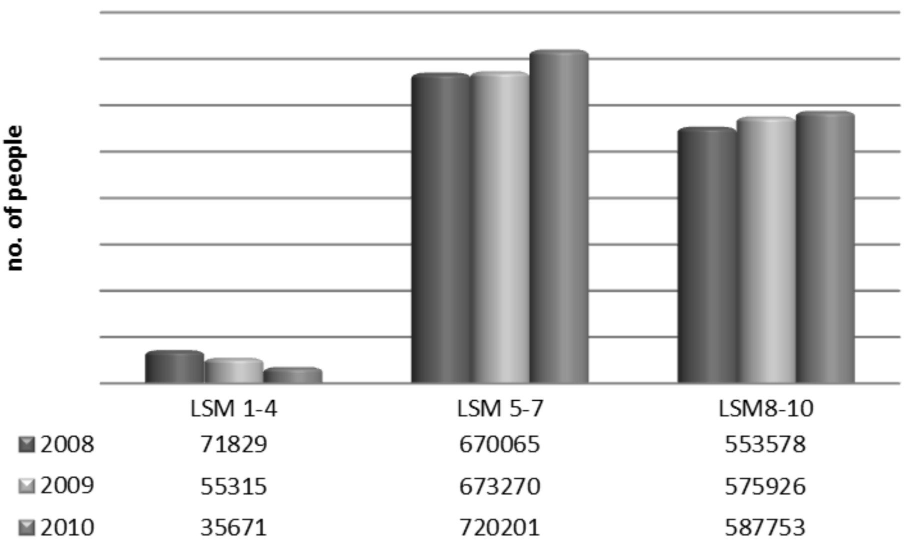
1. Introduction

South Africa is a melting pot of cultures (Brand spanking marketing, 2011). Townships are seen as the keystone of the South African community; however, these very communities are most often misunderstood by organisations (Brand spanking marketing, 2011). Townships in and around the city of Tshwane originate from the apartheid administration that had forced Africans, Coloured and Indian residences into their own segregated areas (SA Townships, 2012). Over the years, these areas have been seen as underdeveloped or unprivileged. However, tremendous growth has taken place within these areas, which has resulted in them becoming a gap in the market and creating new business opportunities. In addition, researchers and marketers have taken great interest in black consumers. Some reasons as to why black consumers' consumption patterns warrant separate attention are as follows:

- Total consumption is dominated by white individuals, thus a focus on aggregate consumption patterns ignores the important differences in consumption that exist in the Western (white) and African (black) consumers (Burger, Van der Berg & Nieftagodien, 2004:5). Over the past years, little consideration has been given to the consumption patterns of the vast majority of the population, namely the African population (Burger, Van der Berg & Nieftagodien, 2004:5).
- Expenditure patterns may also possibly differ methodically by race, given income, either because tastes flactuate among racial groups (culture indisputably influences various aspects of expenditure patterns) or because of a different history (Burger, Van der Berg & Nieftagodien, 2004:5).
- A focal point on African consumption patterns provides insight into the emerging African middle class, a occurence drawing a great deal of attention from analysts and commentators (Nieftagodien & Van der Berg, 2007:3).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the population within the Tshwane area by LSM groups, in the years 2008 to 2010. From this illustration, it can be seen that the majority of the population in Tshwane fell within the LSM 5 to 7 brackets in 2010. In addition, there had been a significant decrease in the population size within the LSM group 1 to 4. The LSM groups 8 to 10 also experienced a slight increase in population from 2008 to 2010.

Figure 1. Number of people in Tshwane by LSM group:2008-2009



Adapted from: Masemola & van Aardt (2011: 11)

A possible reason for these increased population figures might be due to the opening of shopping malls or centres in and around Gauteng. These developments have transformed the entire shopping landscape and shopping experience of residents. With further development still to be done in these areas, past shopping behaviour trends are bound to change. The urbanisation of townships, increases in malls or centres could very well contribute to the progression within LSM groups as these malls create jobs within the townships. In the context of this study, it is important to understand the significance of the various LSM groups. These groups can provide an overview of the income consumers have at their disposal based on their living situations.

Table 1 illustrates the average household income across the various LSM groups during 2010 and 2011. Although these figures portray the average household income in South Africa, it can be used in this study as it provides the understanding of the how much income households in each LSM have to spend on products and services that fulfil basic needs.

Table 1. Average household income by LSM groups

	Average household income	
	June 2010	**June 2011**
LSM 1	R 1 496	R1 136
LSM 2	R 1 732	R 1 929
LSM 3	R 2 052	R 2 258
LSM 4	R 2 829	R 3 138
LSM 5	R 3 832	R 4 165
LSM 6	R 6 398	R 6 322
LSM 7	R 10 066	R 10 255
LSM 8	R 13 698	R 14 014
LSM 9	R 18 414	R 19 654
LSM 10	R 27 143	R 29 512

Source: SAARF (2011)

From Table 1, it can seen that LSM groups 1 to 6 received an average household income below R7 000. With the recent economic conditions, consumers are spending their limited household income on food, clothes as well as water and electricity. These are basic needs and therefore are a priority. However, with increased food prices, limited research is available on which brands these consumers purchase. In addition, it can be see that LSM groups 7 to 10 receive an average household income of R10 000 and more, indicating that they would be more inclined to purchase branded products that cost significantly more than generic products. Since this assumption cannot be generalised to the population of Tshwane, it is important that such research be conducted.

To accommodate consumers in the economy, organisations have identified a gap in the market whereby more LSM groups are demanding lower priced products without compromising the quality of the products. These organisations therefore have created their own generic or manufacture brands and emphasise their quality being as good as the best. These products are created to provide consumers with more alternatives that are within their means. However, there are some products in the marketplace, which may be difficult to brand because they are generally viewed as produce (Pillay, 2007:30). As a result of this perception which consumers have of these products, manufacturers may decide that it is either too complex or expensive to brand these products with the result that these offerings are given the title of generic product (Pillay, 2007:30). Manufacturer brands are usually marketed by companies that are very large, reputable and have immense financial resources such as Spar and Pick n Pay (Pillay, 2007:30). The following are reasons for manufacturers choosing to brand their products;

- Brands help consumers identify and differentiate between consumer goods (Pillay, 2007:30);
- Brands reduce the amount of time that consumers spend in choosing among the different options that are available for purchase (Pillay, 2007:30);
- Brands give consumers assurance with regard to the level of quality expected from the product (Pillay, 2007:30);
- Branding also influences loyalty among consumers (Pillay, 2007:30).

For the purpose of this study, townships will refer to underdeveloped urban residential areas in which non-Western inhabitants live. These residents include Africans, Coloureds and Indian working class individuals (Give Hope, 2009). The city of Tshwane's black urban areas include Atteridgeville, Eersterus, Laudium, Mamelodi, Marabastad, Saulsville and Soshanguwe (SA Townships, 2012).

The objectives of the study are indicated below and the research methodology used to conduct this study is discussed thereafter, followed by an analysis of previous research studies. The research findings, concluding remarks and recommendations are discussed at the end.

2. Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this research is to explore branding purchase patterns of consumers residing in underdeveloped areas of Tshwane. Market segmentation may be described as the process of dividing a market into groups of potential buyers who have similar needs and wants, value perceptions or purchasing behaviour (Martins, n.d). The findings of this study are therefore important for organisations seeking to include consumers in underdeveloped areas in their target audience during the segmentation process. In pursuit of identifying these patterns, additional objectives of this study include the following:

- To determine whether consumers residing in underdeveloped urban areas of Tshwane are price sensitive
- To determine whether consumers residing in underdeveloped urban areas of Tshwane are brand conscious
- To identify the main influences on consumers residing in underdeveloped urban areas of Tshwane to purchase branded products
- To identify the reasons consumers residing in underdeveloped urban areas of Tshwane have for purchasing branded products

3. Literature review

Branding literature

The role of branding and brand management is primarily to create differentiation and preference in the minds of the target audience (Xie & Boggs, 2006: 350). The growth of product branding has been constructed around the core role maintaining differentiation in a particular market (Xie & Boggs, 2006: 350). A commonly adopted definition of a brand is that 'a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or offerings of a an organisation and to also differentiate them from those in competition' (Bothma, 2013: 152).

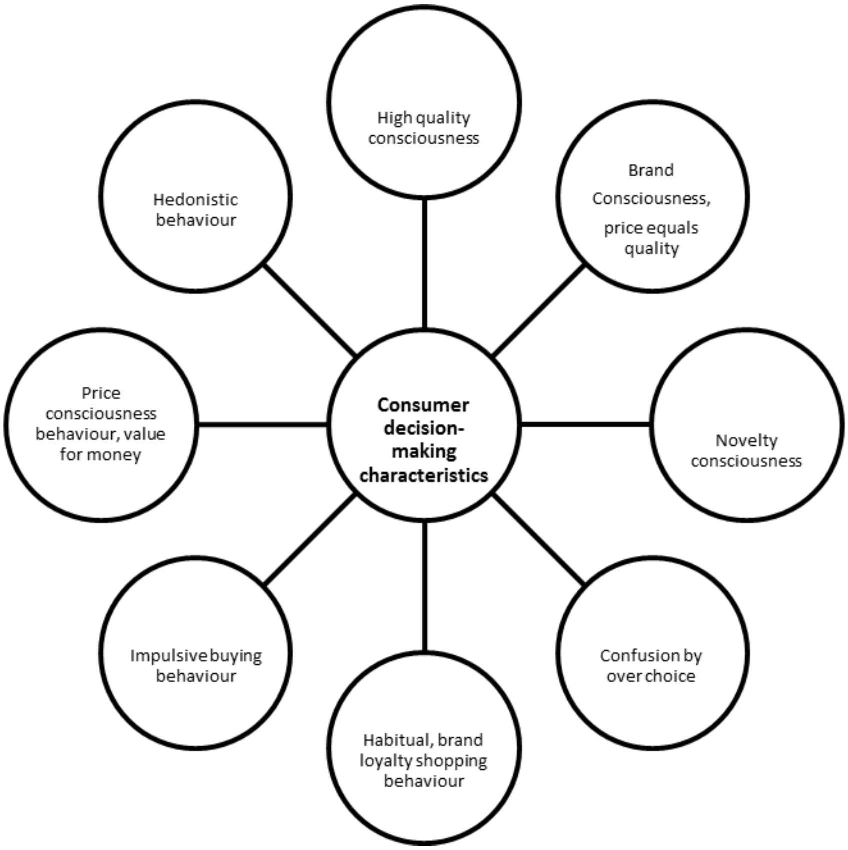
Consumers are constantly presented with thousands of brands, some which satisfy multiple needs. Branding theory has identified different types of brands which consumers can choose from. Such brands include; producer or manufacturer brands; where the manufacturer of the product puts its name on the brand, a dealer brand which is also known as a private brand whereby the manufacturer is not known and a generic brand whereby the product is unbranded therefore labelled in terms of the type of product (Bothma, 2013: 162).

With the experience consumers may have had with brands over a specific period of time, some may develop preference and routinely purchase branded products as a result of being conscious of the brand. The term brand consciousnesses is therefore defined as the awareness of a brand as a distinct product seperate from others (Slide share, 2013).

Private brands, however, have become the most economically viable choice for consumers due the nature of the price. Compared to branded products, private brands' prices are lower and thus more affordable.

Sproles and Kendall (1986) identified basic characteristics of consumer decision-making. These are considered imperative in understanding consumers' decision to purchase branded products. A consumer decision-making style can be regarded as a mental orientation characterising a consumer's approach to making choices (Hafstrom, Chae & Chung, 1992: 147). These characteristics are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Consumer decision-making characteristics



Source: Sproles & Kendall (1986:269)

From this model, it can be deduced that consumers will base their decision to purchase products on one or more of these factors. Therefore, these factors will now be elucidated (Sproles & Kendal, 1986):

Factor 1: High quality consciousness

This factor denotes that consumers search for the very best quality products, which these consumers would be more systematic in their shopping by mostly comparing products. It can, however, not be assumed that consumers are not concerned about price in pursuit of quality.

Factor 2: Brand consciousness, price equals quality

This orientation explains that consumers justify the price with the quality levels of products and/or brands. Buying behaviour will be towards more expensive and/or well-known national brands.

Factor 3: Novelty consciousness

Consumers exhibiting favourable scores in this orientation appear to gain enthusiasm and contentment from seeking out new things. In addition, variety is an important factor when purchasing products.

Factor 4: Hedonistic behaviour

Consumers portraying hedonistic shopping behaviour perceive shopping as a fun and joy filled activity, therefore shopping is considered a leisure action.

Factor 5: Price consciousness behaviour, value for money

Consumers who shop with this orientation seem to look for sale prices and are generally aware of low prices. In addition, they are apprehensive when purchasing from one store that has regular pricing because they seek the best deal in terms of value for money.

Factor 6: Impulsive buying behaviour

Consumers who strongly shop with this approach do not plan their shopping. This would imply that they are also not concerned about the price of the products and how much they spend.

Factor 7: Confused by over choice

Consumers, who are confronted with various brands and multiple stores to choose from, may experience difficulties in making a precise decision. Therefore, these consumers fall within this orientation.

Factor 8: Habitual, brand-loyalty shopping behaviour

Consumers within this orientation are likely to have favourite brands and stores. They therefore, over time, develop habits of choosing these brand or these stores. An example would be a consumer who buys at one store because of their low prices, over time, this may become a habit and loyalty towards this store may possibly develop.

Branding purchase patterns of consumers living in townships within the Tshwane area

According to Beneke (2010), South African consumers are vigilant about fully embracing private label brands. These brands are perceived to be of low quality. It is therefore up to the retailers to position their brands in a manner that affirms to consumers the quality levels of these private brands. This is heavily challenging as once a customer's mind is made up about a brand, it's next to impossible to change it (Dawson, 2011). Brands become what they have proven themselves to be and mental perceptions are hardened by experience (Dawson, 2011). People cannot form new perceptions without a new experience (Dawson, 2011). In the context of this study, purchase patterns refer to the extent to which consumers develop repeat purchasing patterns and the extent to which purchases are unplanned (Rama Rao, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the concept of 'brand purchase patterns' will be defined as the extent to which consumers develop repeat purchasing patterns with regards to branded products.

As previosuly discussed, private label brands, also known as store brands, refer to those brands that are owned by, and sold through a specific chain of stores (Beneke, 2010:203). These products are typically manufactured by a third party (contract manufacturer) under licence (Beneke, 2010:203). Two anomalies present themselves in terms of penetration of private label brands in South Africa (Beneke, 2010:205). Firstly, it has been concluded that retail concentration (essentially an oligopoly scenario in the retail sector) is highly correlated with success of private label brands (Beneke, 2010:205). Yet, in South Africa, despite high retail concentration enjoyed by the major supermarket chains, private label brands have not achieved the successes of their global counterparts (Beneke, 2010:205). Secondly, lower income groups tend to be the most common purchasers of private label brands due to higher levels of affordability (Beneke, 2010:205). The study by Van Eck, Grobler and Herbst (2004) investigated the perception of branding among African adolescents in the clothing industry. Although the study was conducted among adolescents, it is relevant as younger members of household (children) may act as an influencer concerning family decision making (Du Plessis, Rousseau, Boshoff, Ehlers, Engelbrecht, Joubert & Sanders, 2007:72). The study conducted by Van Eck, Grobler and Herbst (2004) showed that general perceptions regarding branded clothing are positive and flourishing among the African adolescent market. Unbranded clothing on the other hand, was perceived relatively less positive than the branded garments. However, these items were not perceived unfavourable to such an extent that adolescents would refrain from realising their worth. African households are already by far the largest group in the middle-income (LSM 5 to 8) market, where their numbers continue to grow steadily (Chase, Legoete & van Wamelen, 2010:2). It is for this reason that this market is of interest and is examined in this study.

Chase, Legoete and van Wamelen (2010) found that on brands, African consumers and Western consumers diverge sharply from each other. Forty-nine per cent of middle income African consumers agree with the statement "I purchase branded food products because they make me feel good". Only 26 per cent of middle income Western consumers say the same. Among the upper income African consumers, this number jumps to 65 per cent, while for Western consumers in the same category it falls to 22 per cent. In addition, the study concluded that the importance of brands to African consumers may be related to their low level of trust in retailers and consumer goods (Chase, Legoete & van Wamelen, 2010:3).

The above mentioned studies convey branding patterns and preferences of African consumers in South Africa as a whole; however, this is where there is a gap in research knowledge. Limited research has been conducted on branding patterns of consumers living in township areas of Tshwane.

4. Methodology

The research study made use of a survey questionnaire whereby quantitative data was captured. This approach was deemed appropriate by the researchers since the aim of the study was to investigate whether consumers residing in underdeveloped areas of Tshwane, purchase branded products. Therefore, this was done by means an analysis of frequency data collected in the survey. The population sample consisted of 38 African individuals residing in underdeveloped areas of Tshwane. The target population was inclusive of both males and females. Respondents varied in age, from 19 years of age to 56 years of age. The sampling method used in this study was the convenience sampling method. The data collection instrument consisted of dichotomous, multiple choice, single response, as well as multiple choice, multiple response choice questions.

In the data collection instrument, respondents were asked to indicate whether they based their decisions to purchase products on the price. This question was a dichotomous, single response question. Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate whether they based their decision to purchase products on the brand of the products. As branding literature constantly reiterates, consumers' decision to purchase branded products can be influenced by a number of factors. Respondents were therefore requested to indicate who influenced their decision to purchase branded products over non-branded products. This question was a multiple response choice question. Lastly, in pursuit of understanding why consumers residing in underdeveloped areas of Tshwane purchase branded products, respondents were asked to provide reasons for their predetermined decisions.

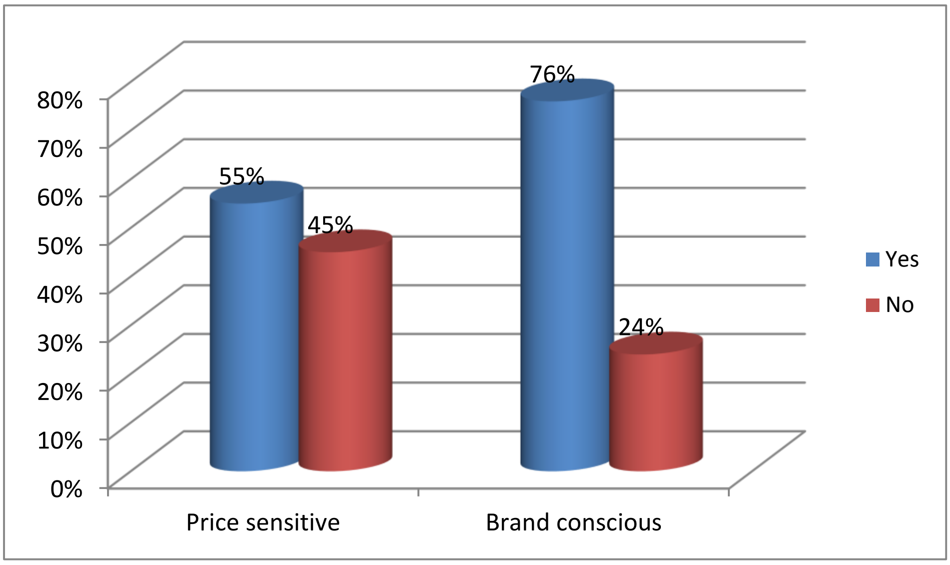
5. Research findings

In the earlier section, a great deal of literature was provided which delineated how consumers behave towards brands. A detailed report on the key findings from the research conducted will therefore be discussed in the next section. Completed questionnaires were received from 38 respondents (n=38) within underdeveloped areas of Tshwane.

Branding purchase patterns of consumers living in underdeveloped areas of in Tshwane

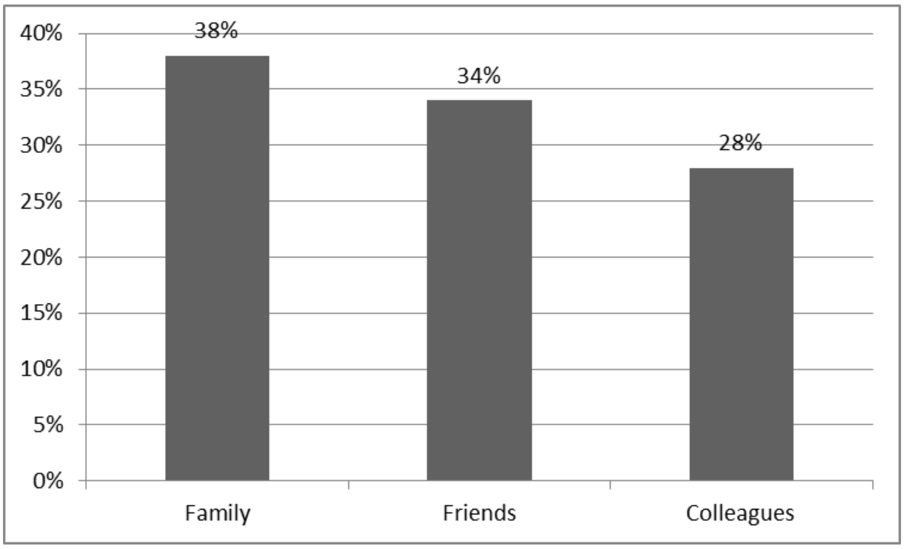
Consumers often base their purchase decision on one or more factors. Respondents were asked whether they based their purchase decisions on the price of the items or simply on the type of brand the item is. Figure 3 depicts the results.

Figure 3. Base of purchase decision



From Figure 3, it can be seen that 55 per cent of the sample population agreed and said that when purchasing products, they base their decision on price; meaning that they are price sensitive. However, 45 per cent indicated that their decision was not based on price hence not price sensitive. When asked if respondents were brand conscious, 76 per cent admitted that they were indeed brand conscious and 24 per cent indicated that the brand of products made no significant difference to their decision to purchase products. For those who were brand conscious, surely they could have been influenced by a number of things; be it factors, members of their households or simply people around them. Figure 4 portrays the respondents' responses.

Figure 4. Influences on decision to purchase branded products



From Figure 4, 38 per cent of the respondents were influenced by their family members to purchase branded products over non-branded products. Thirty-four per cent of the respondents indicated that friends influenced their decision and 28 per cent of the respondents indicated colleagues where influences on their purchase decisions. When asked to mention what other factors influenced their purchasing decision, respondents indicated that their primary need for the product determined whether or not they were going to purchase the particular product.

Thereafter, consumers were asked to provide precise reasons for purchasing branded products. The findings are illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Reasons for buying branded products

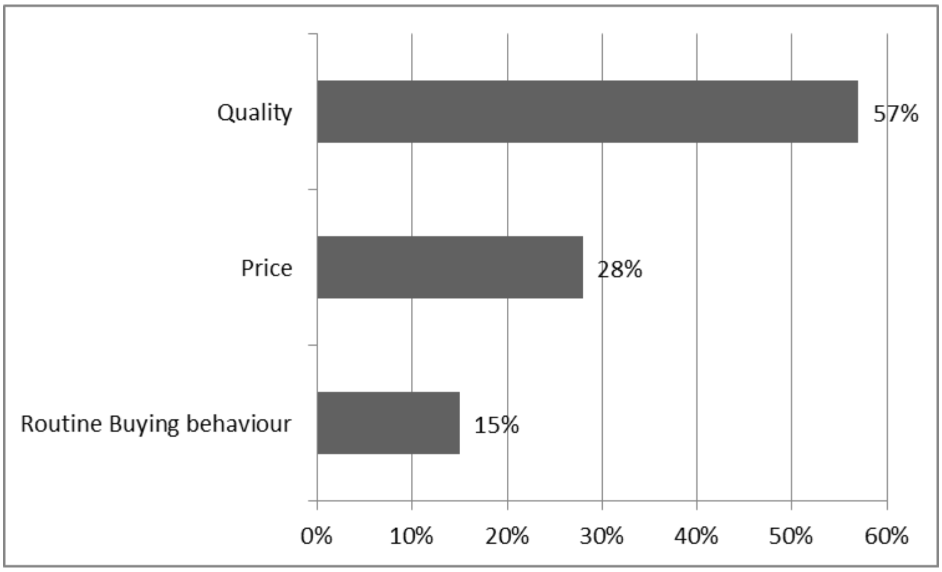
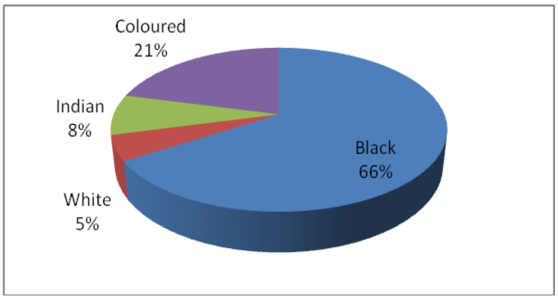


Figure 5 provides the reasons given by respondents as to why they purchased branded products. Quality was the main reason respondents purchased branded products whereby 57 per cent of the respondents indicated that this was their reason. The price of these branded products was also deemed important as 28 per cent of the respondents indicated that this was their reason for purchasing branded products. Lastly, 15 per cent of the respondents indicated that they only bought branded products because it was routine buying behaviour for them. They did not put much thought or effort into their decision.

Demographic data of consumers residing in black urban areas of Tshwane

The demographic data on consumers' household expenditure patterns within the black urban areas of Tshwane covered the gender, age range and the racial group of the respondents. As per our discussion earlier, the term 'Black urban area' refers to underdeveloped urban residential areas in which non-Western inhabitants live. These residents include African, Coloured and Indian individuals. Figure 6 represents the racial group distribution of consumers who completed the questionnaire.

Figure 6. Racial distribution of respondents



Of the respondents who participated in the research study, 66 per cent were African, 21 per cent were Coloured and 8 per cent were Indian. However, in spite of the perception given by the definition provided earlier, that black urban areas of Tshwane was restricted to African, Coloured and Indian consumers; five per cent of consumers who partook in the study were in fact Western. The gender distribution among the respondents was equally distributed; 50 per cent of the respondents who answered the questionnaire were male and equally, so 50 per cent were female.

Figure 7. Age distribution of respondents

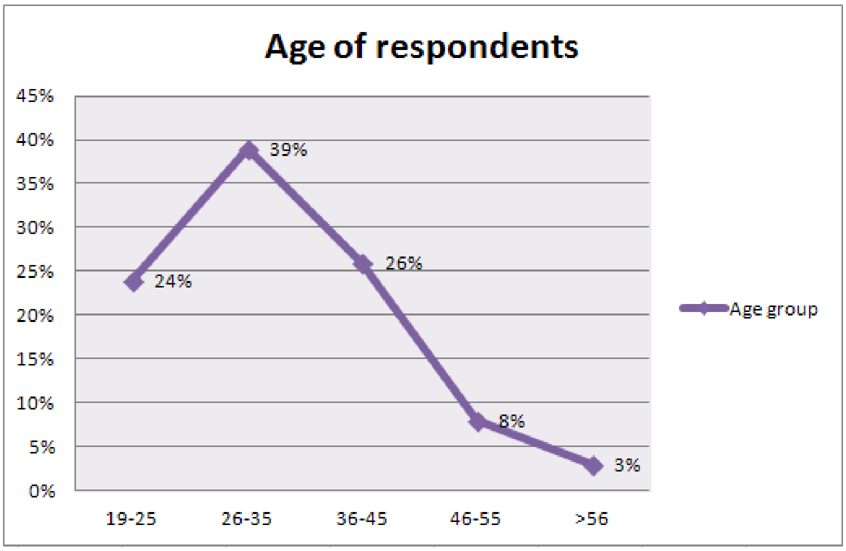


Figure 7 depicts the age distribution of the consumers who took part in the research study. Thirty-nine per cent of the respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35 years; 26 per cent were between 36 and 45 years, 24 per cent were between the ages of 19 and 25 years. The age group 46 and 55 represented only eight per cent on the total respondents and three per cent were older than 56 years.

6. Discussion

From the findings, it can be seen that the sample population is brand conscious in their buying. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents indicated that they are indeed brand conscious. Twenty-four per cent of the respondents indicated that they were not brand conscious. However, 55 per cent of the respondents indicated that they were price sensitive. This is consistent with the average household income figures provided in the study. Consumers within LSM groups 1 to 6 have a household income of less than R10 000, so considering other expenses and the economic conditions, they simply cannot afford to ignore the prices of products that they purchase. In addition, 38 per cent of the respondents indicated that family members are the main influences for purchasing branded products. Friends accounted for 34 per cent of the influences, whereas colleagues accounted for 38 per cent. It was interesting to see that with the restriction of disposable income, consumers strongly seek good quality products. Fifty-seven per cent of the respondents indicated that quality was the main reason for purchasing branded products. These findings can therefore alter the perception that consumers in townships are less concerned about quality.

7. Limitations

The limitations applicable to this study need to be acknowledged and taken into consideration before any recommendations could be provided. Firstly, the sampling size that was used was very small (n= 38), therefore the branding patterns determined cannot be generalised to represent the entire black urban area community of Tshwane. They can only provide a picture as to the branding convictions the sample holds.

8. Recommendations

This study investigated various branding purchasing patterns and buying decision of consumers residing in townships within the Tshwane area. The following are some recommendations that can be considered for further research:

- As a result of the world wide recession, consumers are being more careful with how they spend their money. However, their caution does not mean that they restrict their basic needs. The study found that more consumers are greatly concerned with the quality of the products they purchase which may result in them being slightly more brand conscious. However, price is not ignored by consumers as their income is limited. Retailers who have identified townships as a gap in the market can therefore take this into consideration in their product offerings. They simply cannot assume that because products are cheap that consumers will welcome them.
- Family was seen as the main influence for purchasing branded products, therefore future research can be conducted to establish the influence each family member has in the final decision making process and ultimately in which branded products to buy. The role of children within the African community can be of particular interest.
- The findings showed that 45 per cent of the respondents are not price sensitive, therefore research can be conducted to further delineate how spending is conducted for these specific households.

9. Conclusion

The primary objective of this paper was to investigate the branding buying patterns of consumers residing within township in the areas of Tshwane. Although the sample size was not representative of the entire population, it provides a clear view of convictions held by these consumers and their buying patterns. The most significant finding was that in pursuit of lower costs, the desire for quality goods and services is not compromised.

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