THE IMPACT OF BRAND EXPERIENCE ON BRAND LOYALTY: SELECTED CALTEX RETAIL SITES

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DECLARATION

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I, Priyanka Padayachee, declare that the work submitted within this dissertation is my own. Sources have been acknowledged and accurately referenced in-line with the Harvard referencing technique.

In addition to this, I declare that this dissertation has not been copied nor will I allow anyone the right to copy it.

The dissertation entitled The Impact of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty: Selected Caltex Retail Sites is being submitted for the Honours degree in Strategic Brand Communication at Vega School of Brand Leadership.

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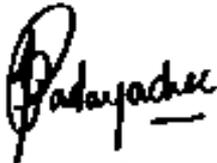
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- **Milano** for keeping me motivated and always pushing me to do my best.

- My supervisor, **Alec Bozas** for his expertise, guidance and constant constructive feedback throughout the study.

DEDICATION

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My dissertation is dedicated to my adored parents,

SHALEN AND SAGREE PADAYACHEE

Thank you for the many opportunities that you have given me and the invaluable lessons that will be etched in me forever.

Thank you for believing in me.

I live to bring honour to your rich legacy.

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty, focusing specifically on three Caltex retail sites: Clairwood, Hillcrest and Warner Beach. The brand experience created within each site was explored. Consumers' desires, in terms of brand experience and the effect of brand experience on brand loyalty were also examined.

A qualitative approach was employed by this study. The data was collected through self-administered semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and customer journey maps. The semi-structured interview were aimed at Caltex retailers, giving the researcher an internal perspective, followed by consumer questionnaires centered on understanding consumers interpretations and expectations of brand experience. The consumers' loyalty towards their relevant sites was also reviewed. Customer journey maps for were drawn out, which gave the researcher first hand exposure to each site's brand experience.

The research revealed that varying approaches to brand experience results in varied levels of brand loyalty. In addition to this, there is no consistency between the three Caltex sites, with reference to brand experience.

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

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Provides an **introduction** and **background** to

the study.

Chapter One: Introduction to Research

1.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the essence of the study. An introduction and a background to the study is discussed. The research problem is identified and questions and objectives will be stated. The rational and significance of the study is explored followed by an introduction to the study's limitations. The research design and methodology is briefly reviewed but discussed further in chapter three. The structure of the study concludes this section.

1.2 Background to the Study

This study was undertaken to ascertain the impact that brand experience has on brand loyalty. It explores the brand experience that is created within three Caltex sites: Warner Beach, Clairwood and Hillcrest. The study then analyses what consumers desire in terms of brand experience and ways in which brand loyalty can be optimized within the sites.

1.3 Research Problem Statement

The only differentiating factor between brands in the fuel industry is the additive formula. To add to this, the government regulates petrol price making it rigid. The fuel quality is not a significant consumer influence as the quality of all brands of fuel are more or less the same (Tickell, 2006: p230). Therefore, fuel companies have to rely on other factors to improve clientele other than physical location and site branding. This makes it difficult for brands to differentiate themselves, and in addition makes competition within the industry even harder. Strategists have a hard job of creating powerful branding and extraordinary customer service to distinguish themselves from their competitor brands, this includes exceptional forecourt service and esthetically inviting convenience stores.

Caltex South Africa is aware that differentiating their brand from competitors is a problem. They are also aware that quality, pleasurable services are critical

success factors for their fuel outlets to attract and retain customers. However, there is no guarantee that retailers are following it through.

1.4 Research Problem Objectives

The core objectives of this study is to:

- Investigate the brand experience created by three (3) Caltex retail sites around Durban.
- Understand what consumers' desire in terms of brand experience within these three (3) sites.
- Discover strategies that will optimize consumer loyalty within these sites.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 What are the various brand experience methods and techniques employed by each site?

1.5.2 What are consumers' desires in terms of brand experience within the three sites?

1.5.3 What strategies will optimize consumer loyalty within these sites?

1.6 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Successful branding means delivering an experience that feels both complete and constant. Chevron (Caltex's holding company) has a standard in place strategizing the brand experience they wish to create at their Caltex sites. The only component that differentiates its product is the additive Techron. Therefore, effective brand experience is vital. This study aims to ascertain how brand experience varies amongst different sites and the effect that these variables have on brand loyalty therefore Caltex will benefit by finding out consumer opinions on these issues.

Social Significance: In this industry, consumers are seeking something beyond the brand's product. The researcher will be able to offer suggestions to strategists based on the finding of the research questions on how they could enhance brand experience and in doing this, build and sustain brand

loyalty. This study will also bring value to the retailers by creating or adding strategies to retain customers.

Personal Significance: The researcher gained industrial experience during a year internship at Chevron Regional Head Office in Durban, this partnered with her knowledge of brand strategy sparked a personal interest in the fuel industry. Fuel brands don't just sell a product they sell an experience. This led the researcher to realize the important role that brand experience plays to a brand, especially in this sector. The reason why she's chosen Chevron is because of her experience within the company and her familiarity with experience strategies from an internal, national level. The research obtained will assist her in engaging directly with consumer behaviour and what they desire in terms of a holistic fuel experience.

Brand Leadership: Academically, the researcher will be able to build on existing research by highlighting the importance of brand experience within the fuel industry and offer strategies using brand experience to engage and sustain customers, reinforcing brand loyalty. A key outcome of this study is to investigate the impact brand experience has on brand loyalty.

1.7   Data Production, Techniques and Procedures

The data was collected by the researcher to determine the impact that brand experience has on brand loyalty. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three retailers set at a convenient time and neutral environment. The link to an online consumer questionnaire was emailed to fifteen consumers of each site. A customer journey map was also adapted based on each individual site, highlighting the positive and negative customer experiences.

The researcher used Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-fold data analysis process. The three stages include data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

Data reduction requires the selecting, simplifying, abstracting and the transformation of data (Huberman, 1994). The researcher had recorded written responses of interviewees for the purpose of this study.

Data display shows the collected data in an organized, compressed manner allows for the researcher to draw clear solutions and conclusions (Huberman, 1994). The researcher had employed the use of condensed forms of displays such as graphs and charts.

Conclusion drawing is the last stage of data analysis. This process begins at the start of data collection when the possible explanations and patterns are noted. From the outset, the researcher recognized the popularity of creating strategies in the attempt to create brand experiences within Caltex sites, this helped shape the direction of her study. However, the final conclusion is only produced on completion of the overall data analysis (Huberman, 1994).

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

Henning, Gravett and Van Rensburg (2005) explain research design to be the logical sequence connecting first-hand data to the research questions and finally the study's conclusion. Qualitative research will be conducted.

Qualitative research focuses on gaining quality and depth rather than quantity. The aim of this aspect of the research is to acquire an in-depth understanding of the consumer's beliefs and attitudes towards a brand (McLeod, 2008). This method involves interviews with a few people that fall within the brand's target audience. The researcher had created online questionnaires aimed at ten consumers from each site. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of their brand experience and loyalty.

The site retailers have also been interviewed in order for the researcher to grasp the retailer's current brand experience strategies. The researcher also put together a customer journey map for each of the three sites

The findings obtained were then investigated individually with reference to the specified sites, in order to distinguish the impact of each site's brand experience on brand loyalty. The researcher then derived best practices to be presented to the retailers.

1.9 Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs and ideas that are considered truthful. (Patidar, 2013)

Based on the research problem and objectives, it's been assumed that the three Caltex sites will be functioning smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The researcher has also based the study on the premise that the consumers desired brand experience will in some way impact brand loyalty and that strategies optimizing brand loyalty will be inferred.

Generally speaking, this study assumes that the respondents will be honest and accurate in engaging in interviews and answering questionnaires to the best of their ability. It's assumed that the researcher as an interviewer will not affect their responses. It is also assumed that the sample is a representation of the research population.

1.10 Limitations

Hussain (2011) defines limitations to be the factors beyond the researcher's control. The researcher has limited the study to the exploration of three Caltex sites' on the South, North and Central areas of Durban (Warner Beach, Hillcrest and Clairwood). Due to time constraints, the study is based solely on the brand experience and brand loyalty of these specific sites. The number of respondents involved in the research will be limited and therefore the sample will not be a representation of the general population. Research gained will be site specific. Researcher bias is also a limitation of this study.

1.11 Ethical Considerations

The Bill of Rights (Devenish, 1999), Section 9(3), stipulates that no individual should be prejudiced; it is therefore crucial that researchers abide by ethical principals within their studies.

The researcher has consulted and communicated with all respondents before the interviews. She outlined the objectives of the study, what the research entails and the participants' role. She only proceeded with the interview once they have given their consent.

Confidentiality is another significant approach to maintaining autonomy. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of the participants.

Any study involving social science has the risk of causing harm both physically or emotionally. The researcher will not cause harm to any person within this study (Durrheim and Wassenaar, 2002) Particpiants will be informed that they are not compelled to participate and have the right to withdraw at any time.

1.12 Journal Publication

Journal of Brand Management. 2015 Palgrave Macmillian Ltd.

This journal is recognised as a leading journal on brand management and strategy. The articles that are published are also original and peer-reviewed (Journal of Brand Management, 2015).

Furthermore, it encompasses a vast array of brand marketing and strategy articles on topics, amongst others, internal branding, construing loyalty through brand experience, the importance of corporate and personal branding. All of these impact on consumer behaviour and therefore deems relevant to my topic.

This journal targets strategists who aim to empower themselves and enhance their knowledge within brand marketing.

1.13 Structure of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. The chapters are as follows:

Chapter One provides an introduction, creating an overview of the study. The research problem and objectives were clarified and it explained the study's purpose, rationale and limitations.

Chapter Two explores literature pertaining to the research problem and objectives. Key terms were defined as well as supporting models and theories.

Chapter Three discusses the research processes followed. The population and sample population of the study was highlighted and explained. The research reliability and validity was examined. Furthermore, limitations and ethical considerations were mentioned and discussed.

Chapter Four explores and presents the collected data and analysis thereof.

Chapter Five concludes the study by presenting the main findings. Recommendations are made to retailers on how the sites can optimize brand loyalty using brand experience and concluding recommendations for future study.

1.14 Summary

This chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. It also encompassed the study's problem status, objectives and research questions. The limitations, journal publication and study structure were also outlined.

The literature review will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

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Explores the **literature used** in the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores extensive literature on the impact brand experience has on brand loyalty. Principles of brand experience and brand loyalty will be discussed in this review, with an exploration of brand experience patterns and the effect that these theories and patterns will have on brand loyalty.

2.2 Brand Experience

Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) define brand experience as the "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments." Marketing and consumer research shows us that brand experiences occur when consumers search for, purchase and/or consume products or services (Arnould and Price, 1993). Brand experience may differ in presence, duration and strength (Brakus et al., 2009). These experiences occur either deliberately or spontaneously and could be brief or sustained over a period. The elements that are experienced whilst interacting with a brand are stored in the consumers mind and conceivably influence how they feel about the brand.

According to Sherry (2005), a brand's ability to manage its consumers experience constitutes the condition of the brand's relevance in its market space. It is therefore necessary for brands to understand the impact that brand experiences have on the brand.

Consumers aren't seeking just functional brand benefits anymore.

Brakus et al., (2009) speak about The Experience Concept in Consumer Research and Marketing. There are three main segments (product, shopping/service and consumption experiences) that they discuss:

Product Experience: Hoch (2002, cited in Brakus et al., 2009) describes product experience as the consumer interaction with a brand's products. "When consumers search for products, examine, and evaluate them," (Hoch, 2002). There are both direct and indirect product experiences (Hoch and Ha, 1986). Direct product experiences are explained as the consumer's physical contact with the product and indirect product experiences are the intangible or virtual presentation of the product e.g. adverts (Hoch and Ha, 1986; Kempf and Smith, 1998).

In order for the researcher to investigate the effect these components have on consumer attitudes, product judgments and purchase intent. The respondent must be asked questions that allow him or her to reflect on the direct and indirect combination (Brakus et al., 2009).

Shopping and Service Experience: The consumers' interaction with the physical environment of the brand is what defines the brand's shopping and service experience; this includes the brand's employees, practices and policies (Hui and Bateson 1991; Kerin, Jain, Howard 2002 cited in Brakus et al., (2009)). The investigation of shopping and service experience is thus based on how the store's environmental variables and employees affect the customer experience (Arnould et al., 1993). The cognitive aspects of the consumer need to be explored, for example, the consumer's perspective, feelings and complacency towards this particular experience (Brakus et al., 2009).

Consumption Experience: Brakus et al., (2009) define consumption experience to be the experience that occurs once the products have been used or consumed. "Much of the interpretive research on consumption experiences has analyzed hedonic goals that occur during and after the consumption of, for example, museums, river rafting, baseball, and skydiving" (Arnould et al., 1993).

Zwilling (2013) explains, with reference to brand experience, that customers remember the experiences rather than the brand logo. "The customer experience is really your brand, since that is what customers remember and communicate to others, rather than your marketing," (Zwilling, 2013)

Another model by Brakus et al., (2009, cited in Posavac 2015: p170) explains four dimensions of brand experience, seen in the 12-item Brand Experience Scale (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Brand Experience Scale
Posavac, S. (2015) Cracking the Code: Leveraging Consumer Psychology to Drive Profitability. New York: Taylor and Francis Group. p170.

Dimensions	Items
Sensory	1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.
	2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way.
	3. This brand does not appeal to my senses.*
Affective	4. This brand induces feelings and sentiments.
	5. I do not have strong emotions for this brand.*
	6. This brand is an emotional brand.
Intellectual	7. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand.
	8. This brand does not make me think*
	9. This brand stimulates my curiosity when solving problems.
Social	10. I engage in physical actions and behaviours when I use this brand.
	11. This brand results in bodily experiences.
	12. This brand is not action oriented.*

*Items marked with an * are negatively phrased and reverse coded.*

The four dimensions of brand experience is listed as sensory, affective, intellectual and social. 'Sensory' refers to whether the brand appeals to any or all of the senses. The 'Affective' dimension pertains to how it invokes the consumers feelings and emotions. 'Intellectual' looks at the influences the brain to engage in creative thinking. Finally, the 'Social' dimension refers to how the brand may shapes consumer behaviour.

The more dimensions satisfied by the consumed brand, the stronger the brand experience.

2.3 Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1991) has defined brand loyalty as a positive, encouraging mindset expressed towards a brand that results in the sustained purchasing of the brand's products or services over time. This concept has been explored within marketing literature since the 1970's (Yi and Jeon, 2003) and is described by Oliver (1999) as the conviction that the brand depicts an unrivaled option for consumer consumption. The success of a brand on a long-term basis is dependent on the number of loyal consumers who regularly buy into the brand rather than the overall number of consumers who buy the brand or product once (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). Hoyer, Macinnis and Pieters (2012, p251) simplify the above by defining brand loyalty as, "Consumers buying the same brand repeatedly because of a strong preference for it." Investopedia (n.d.) furthers this definition by explaining that "brand loyalty is a result of consumer behavior and is affected by a person's preferences."

Lawfer (2004) adds that it's easier to trade with these loyal consumers as they are more predictable and are of less expense in comparison to attracting new customers. Businesses that engage with a loyal consumer base, relish larger profitability in pleasurable economic conditions and depend on these consumers to assist in sustainability through tough financial situations (Lawfer, 2004). Lacey and Morgan (2009, cited in Wangpaichitr 2010) observed relationship building to be a long-term process and therefore noted that strategists need to apply the long-established concept of the "consumer loyalty ladder". The researcher has chosen to use the loyalty ladder concept to measure the variable consumer loyalty amongst the three different Caltex sites (Christopher et al., 1991; Payne et al., 1995; McDonald and Christopher, 2003, cited in Drysdale, n.d.).

The Loyalty Ladder (Figure 2.1) illustrates the different levels of consumer loyalty. The purpose of the loyalty ladder is to show the possibilities of building customer relationships from one level to another, in order to build up to the position of Advocates, full brand loyalty (Drysdale, n.d.).

There are five segments to this Loyalty Ladder (Mutyala, n.d.), seen on p.18.

- 'Prospect' is someone who hasn't as yet engaged in business with the brand but will most probably be interested.
- 'Customers' are consumers who have done business with the brand once before.
- 'Clients' are consumers who have done business with the brand repeatedly but might have a negative or neutral attitude towards it.
- 'Supporters' like the brand and will try new products.
- 'Advocates' are intensely loyal and have long term relationships with the brand.
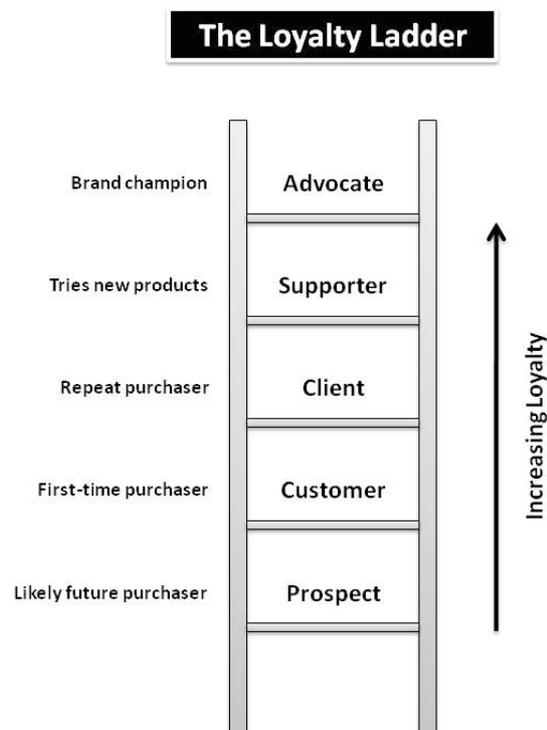
Figure 2.1 Loyalty Ladder

Mutyala, S. (n.d.) The Loyalty Ladder: A Sideway Look. Viewed: 30 March 2015. http://www.eightleaves.com/2010/04/the-loyalty-ladder-a-sideways-look

For the study, the researcher has chosen to focus on four of the above segments (customers, clients, supporters and partners) as the remaining segment, namely, Prospect is of little or no significance because it is a likely future purchaser and the study is focused on current consumers.

More recently, Ferrell and Hartline (2011, p204) discuss brand loyalty as the positive attitude of the consumer towards the brand that results in consistent consumer preference for the brand over its competitors. They also introduce three (3) degrees of brand loyalty, seen in below in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Degrees of Brand Loyalty

Ferrell, O.C., and Hartline, M. (2011) Marketing Strategy. 5th Ed. OH: South- Western Cengage Learning

Brand Recognition exists in situations whereby the consumer is aware of the brand as a considered alternative (Ferrell and Hartline, 2011: p204). This is regarded as the lowest degree of brand loyalty and occurs due to the awareness of the brand rather than the deep desire to purchase. Ferrell and Hartline (2011: p204) describe Brand Preference as a stronger form of brand loyalty in comparison with brand recognition. Brand Preference occurs when the consumer opts for one brand over its competitors and will usually purchase the brand when it's available (Ferrell and Hartline, 2011: p204). The strongest degree of brand loyalty is Brand Insistence and is present when consumers will except no substitute and will go out of their way to find and purchase the brand (Ferrell and Hartline, 2011: p204). These consumers spend numerous hours and put immense effort into locating and purchasing these specifically desired brands (Ferrell and Hartline, 2011: p204)

The researcher has combined the above two models, namely the Loyalty Ladder (Figure 2.1) and the Degrees of Brand Loyalty (Figure 2.2), to create a more comprehensive, cohesive approach to categorise and understand customer loyalty segments.

The researcher has done this in the form of a model, entitled Layers of Consumer Loyalty, seen in figure 2.3 on the following page. The model uses a step or process approach, illustrating the layers required in achieving customer loyalty. Progressing through the layers of Brand Acknowledgers and Brand Opters will ultimately lead to the holistic development of the Brand Champion, which is the fundamental brand loyalty.

Figure 2.3 Layers of Consumer Loyalty

Layer one consists of Brand Acknowledgers, these are individuals who recognise and know the brand. These consumers purchase the brand because of their acknowledgement rather than impulse. This layer combines 'Customer' from figure 2.1 and 'Brand Recognition' from figure 2.2.

Layer two, Brand Opters, is a merge of 'Client' (Figure 2.1) and 'Brand Preference' (figure 2.2). In this layer, consumers will buy competitor brands if their preferred brands are not available, their attitude towards the brand is somewhat neutral.

The third and final layer describes the highest form of brand loyalty, the Brand Champions. This layer integrates Supporter and Advocates from figure 2.1 and Brand Insisters from figure 2.2. It explains Brand Champions to be those who go out of their way to find their desired brand. They try new products, share a long term relationship and are intensely loyal to this brand.

2.4 Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty

Iglesias, Singh, and Foguet (2010) state that there is a direct relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty and that the role of brand experience in the brand-building role is critical. They argue that if consumers receive a pleasant and positive experience they are more likely to return to engage or purchase the brand again thus creating loyalty. "Brands which are capable of delivering a superior brand experience can achieve preference over and differentiation from other brands and build brand loyalty and foster evangelism". (Iglesias et al, 2010) Ramaseshen and Stein (2014) add that the pleasurable outcomes that are brought about by positive brand experiences encourage consumers to repeat purchase - just for the positive experience. They explain that relationship judgments aren't the only aspect affected by brand experience, it should also bring about brand loyalty.

2.5 Caltex Retail Outlet Standards

The researcher attended a Caltex Retailer Training Course in 2013 and was briefed on guidelines that need to be followed as a Caltex Retailer. She received the Caltex Retail Outlets Standard Manual (2010) that discusses all the standards and expectations that Caltex Head Office requires to be carried out on retail sites. "In a highly competitive service industry such as ours, the customer is of paramount importance and outstanding services is critical for business success." (Caltex Retail Outlets Standard Manual, 2010) Caltex believe that customer service is identifying the customer's needs and providing for them in the form of products and services on the forecourt, and convenience stores. This is to be done in a prompt and respectful manner so that their customers understand that they are the priority, thus, allowing them to engage with the brand and note that the brand caters for their needs and has their best interest at heart (Caltex Retail Outlets Standard Manual, 2010).

Caltex has measures in place that discuss site appearance, driveway service, staff appearance, trading hours and restroom facilities.

2.6   Customer Journey Map

A customer journey map is a strategic tool that describes the holistic customer experiences within an organization, as well as the emotional responses provoked - from environmental first impressions to staff interactions and received services (Customer Journey Mapping, 2014).   This tool assists strategists with the exploration and representation of current customer experiences. The researcher will use it to document experiences within the three sites and graphically present them.

Sauro (2015: p91) simplifies this by explaining a customer journey map to be the "visualisations of phases that customers go through when engaging with a product or service." Unlike standard marketing funnels, the journey map highlights the journey inclusive of the customer-brand touchpoints. These toucpints are defined as the points of contact between the consumer and the brand (Sauro, 2015: p91).

Van den Berg and Pietersma (2015) go on to describe steps in creating customer journey maps.

The first step of customer journey mapping begins with the researcher highlighting and analysing all interactions and contact points between the brand and the consumer, these interactions are then divided into key steps (Van den Berg and Pietersma, 2015). The consumers' emotional experiences are assessed and described for each step. The emotional experiences are pivotal in pinpointing the development potential and ensure consumers are well engaged with the brand (Van den Berg and Pietersma, 2015).

When faced with a negative emotion, the researcher must then look into the brands performed activities. The following is examples of questions that need to be asked (Van den Berg and Pietersma, 2015):

- Are the activities up to standard?
- Do the activities meet consumer expectation?
- Does the organisation facilitate the consumer expectations the right way?

If the researcher is faced with a positive emotional experience, she must then analyse the possibilities for further improvement. She must learn what caused the positive emotion in each step and how the positive experience can be transferred to the next step (Van den Berg and Pietersma, 2015).

Customer journey mapping is concluded by highlighting improvement suggestions for each step, with the overall aim of increased customer satisfaction and a holistic customer experience.

2.7 Summary

This chapter explored the different studies related to brand experience and brand loyalty and also provided clarification of various terminology used in the study. The terms 'brand experience' and 'brand loyalty' were discussed in detail. The researcher provided literature based on the effect that brand experience has on brand loyalty and Caltex retail outlets standards, customer journey mapping was also discussed.

The next chapter presents the research methodology and design used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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Research methodology **outlines** the **processes** used in **collecting data**.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research can be defined as the search for knowledge. "One can also define research as a scientific and systemic search for pertinent information on a specific topic." (Research Methodology: An Introduction, n.d.). This definition is reinforced by Gweyi (2014), who states that the purpose of research is to discover new knowledge. He says research involves the discovery of new facts, their accurate understandings and practical application (Gweyi, 2014).

The previous chapter focused on examining the available literature that the researcher used to give insight into the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty. This chapter explains the research methodology used in this study, the research design and data collection instruments. Ethical limitations and considerations are also included.

This study aimed to explore the impact that brand experience has on brand loyalty and sought to answer the research questions:

1. To what extent does Caltex brand experience differ within selected retail sites in Durban?
2. How does this variable affect brand loyalty?
3. What strategies will ensure a successful brand experience?

3.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the systemic way that the research problem is solved. The "procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology." (Rajaseker, Philominathen and Chinnathambi, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach will be used to explore the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty. The researcher selected this approach, as it will investigate the brand experience within 3 different Caltex sites, the effect that these variables have on brand loyalty and

strategies to ensure an optimum brand experience, site specific. This will be elaborated on in more detail within this section.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Creswell (2013: p4) defines a qualitative research approach as one which involves the collection of data through a constructivist perspective that focuses on people's beliefs, feelings and thoughts, with the aim of producing a theory. Qualitative methods are used in finding the meaning of something or reviewing the meaning of specific experiences (Shields and Twycross, 2003: p23).

"Qualitative research usually has no measurements or statistics but uses words, descriptions and quotes to explore meaning. It can even use arts techniques, such as dance," (Picard 2000, cited in Shields and Twycross, 2003: p23)

This research approach can be conducted using semi-structured interviews, observations, artifacts and focus groups.

3.2.2 Quantitative Research Approach

Quantitative research is used to "quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics," (Wyse, 2011). Quantitative research usually comprises of proportions, numbers and statistics, it's deemed invaluable in research that measures participant's attitude, behavioral and emotional state and understanding their thinking (Shields and Twycross, 2003: p23).

Mora (2010) explains that quantitative research is used to quantify the problem and understanding its prevalence by comparison of the larger population. This research approach can be carried out through audits, click-streams and point of purchases.

3.2.3 Mixed Methods Approach

The mixed method approach can be considered fairly new. Johnson et al., (2007) defines mixed method to be the combination of elements pertaining to both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The purpose of this is to create depth and breadth in collaboration and understanding. Maree (2007) builds on this definition by adding that the gathered evidence is based more on the question's nature and theoretical orientation.

3.2.4 Adopted Approach: Qualitative Approach

For the study, the researcher has adopted a qualitative approach. By adopting this approach she gained detailed responses. This approach is an empirical, systematic strategy that answers questions relating to individuals in a specific social context. Observations and interviews are usually included in these qualitative research methods however historical documents, surveys and case study are also included.

The researcher has adopted the qualitative approach to get consumer perceptions, utilizing online questionnaires. An interpretive approach to the questionnaires will direct the researcher towards a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how the respondents interact or relate to each other in particular situations and the meaning they make of the phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2007).

3.3   The Population and Sample Size

In statistics, the term 'population' includes the members of a specific group that the researcher is studying or collecting information on (Cross Validated, 2010). A 'sample' can be defined as the subset of the bigger chosen population (Wolverton, 2009: p373).

Population is known as the "total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher." (Salkind, 2012: p71) The population used in this study is the clientele of the three Caltex petrol stations in the greater Durban area, as well as Caltex retailers that fall within these

areas. It can also involve branding agencies or strategists who would like to employ their skills in improving the success of these sites.

Sampling is a selected unit of the larger population (Johnson and Christensen, 2014: p273). The sample needs to be as comparable to the population as possible. For this study, the researcher has chosen to use purposive or judgmental sampling, a type of non-probability sampling. This means that the individuals observed are determined by the researchers judgment of who will be the best representative or the most useful (Babbie, 2011: p207). This form of sampling was chosen as specific individuals within the businesses hold necessary key information about each of the selected Caltex sites. The retailers of each site were selected to provide essential data for the study, as well as selected consumers who provided external stakeholders' perceptions.

Due to time and resource constraints, the study was limited to three Caltex sites: Hillcrest, Clairwood and Warner Beach.

3.4   Research Design

Research design is the structure or plan of the research. It can be described as the "overall plan for obtaining answers to the questions being studied and for handling some of the difficulties encountered during the research process" Polit and Beck (2008: p66)

The research design for this study consists of three facets, one aimed at the retailer, the other aimed at the consumer. The third facet is a consumer-centered approach to brand experience.

3.4.1 Retailer Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher had chosen to collect data from the retailers directly, in the form of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews fall between a structured, minimal variation interview approach and an unstructured, no limit research approach (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). A semi-structured interview poses questions as guidelines and allows for alternative new questions to be

asked within the framework of the overall research questions (O'Hare, Wainwright, Carter, Kay and Dewis, 2011: p171).

3.4.2 Consumer Questionnaires

Questionnaires in qualitative research often mean gathering data from many people, in a shorter period of time (O'Hare et al., 2011: p189). They allow the researcher to put questions together and receive responses without physically interacting with each participant (Williman, 2014: p157). The researcher used Survey Monkey, an online questionnaire platform. However, she went through the questionnaires personally, with each participant using an iPad. This method was chosen as it allowed the researcher to assist participants with questions that they consider unclear and ensured a high-response rate (Williman, 2014: p157).

3.4.3 Customer Journey Map

Sauro (2015: p91) describes a customer journey map to be the visualization of phases that consumers go though when interacting with or purchasing a brand or product. Simply put, this map focuses on the consumer and highlights the consumer's experience (Van den Berg and Pietersma, 2015). The researcher chose this method as it allowed her to map out all interactions and engagements between the brands and its consumers, from the consumers' point of view.

3.5   Data Collection

Data collection is defined an approach aimed at obtaining information through various sources to create an accurate and complete impression of the topic of interest. The researcher collected information using semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires, which are explained in depth below.

3.5.1 Retailer Semi-Structured Interview

The Retailer Semi-Structured Interviews were telephonically administered conducted with each retailer (Appendix 1) and consent forms were emailed to the retailer prior to the interview (Appendix 2). The researcher chose to

interview the retailers as they represent the internal aspect of the brand. The primary aim of the interview was to gain insight into the retailers understanding of brand experience and brand loyalty, as well as to highlight the retailer's brand experience strategies.

3.5.2 Consumer Questionnaires

The Consumer Questionnaires were designed and linked to the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. This researcher captured the data of thirty individual petrol station consumers, ten from each site, using an iPad to access the online surveys. The questionnaire aimed at establishing consumer's views of the brand's experience and brand loyalty.

3.5.3 Customer Journey Map

Three Customer Journey Maps were created, one for each site. The aim was to take the researcher from the initial brand-consumer contact point all the way to the point of purchase. The Customer Journey Map pointed out the positive and negative contact points and ways to enhance the brand experience.

3.6   Data Analysis

Qualitative data involves visual or textual data, consisting of words and observations rather than numbers (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: p1). Data analysis ensues once all the data is gathered. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) describe four steps to analyzing qualitative data.

The first step is to understand the collected data. In terms of qualitative analysis, the data needs to be read and re-read (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: p2).

The next step is to review the research objectives and questions this creates a clear, focused analysis (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: p2).

The third step is the categorizing of data, this can be done by identifying patterns or creating organized categories (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: p2).

The fourth step and final step is to interpret and explain the research findings. (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003: p5).

3.7   Validity and Reliability

For valid and reliable data to be collected the researcher must ensure that the measurement procedures and instruments are effectively valid and reliable, prior to the start of the research process.

Validity refers to the factual accuracy in publishing descriptive information. (Johnson and Christensen, 2014: p300) Simply put, how valid the information gathered is in the real world. Validity is an instrumental and vital component of effective research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013: p179) explain that within qualitative research the participants' perspectives, opinions and attitudes may present a level of bias - their experiences in life contribute to perceiving scenarios in different ways.

Babbie (2013: p152) illustrates that reliability is "a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result." Salkind (2012: p108) simplifies this definition by describing reliability to be the consistent quality of a research tool. It's emphasized in both the above readings that reliability does not guarantee accuracy, also resulting in bias.

To ensure the data gathered in this study is both valid and reliable the researcher referred to three verification strategies (Morse, Barette, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2002: p18):

Methodological Coherence refers to the consistency between the research question and the research methodology (Morse et al., 2002: p18). *An Appropriate Sample* consists of participants who have a firm understanding of the research topic (Morse et al., 2002: p18).

Theoretical Thinking requires engaging both a macro and micro perspective, checking and rechecking in order to build a solid foundation (Morse et al., 2002: p18).

Furthermore, the interview transcripts have been given to the participants to ensure the verification and accuracy of the information transcribed. This is referred to as respondent validation (Torrance, 2011).

3.8   Limitations

Simon and Goes (2013) describe limitations as situations and scenarios that emerge in the study that are beyond control of the researcher. The limitations of this study are that the researcher may influence or effect participant's responses through either verbal or non-verbal cues. The semi-structured interviews may result in variable responses and lack of consistency. The restricted sample size and sample selection may also cause limitations within the study, so can participant reactivity and researcher bias (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012: p114).

Researcher bias is a key limitation of any study. Also related to this is participants' subjectivity based on adjusting to the researcher. Participants who aren't familiar with the researcher may be guarded and less responsive, whereas those who are might have tried to over compensate. To minimize the impact of these limitations, the researcher executed anonymity through the interview and questionnaire process, so that information collected won't be associated with particular individuals. The researcher also attempted ensuring an environment conducive to open and honest dialogue.

Restricted research sample also plays a weighty role in limitation as it creates a possibility of generalization.

3.9   Pre-Testing

A pre-test is seen as the trial of an interview or questionnaire to see how effective it is and whether changes are required before the actual survey begins (Escalada, 2009). "The pretest provides a means of catching and solving unforeseen problems in the use of the questionnaire, such as the phrasing and sequencing of questions," (Escalada, 2009).

The study's pre-test focused on 10 respondents who fell within the research population. The aim of the pre-test was:

- To determine the respondents reactions.
- To determine the time needed for completion
- To determine respondents understanding of key terms
- To ascertain that the sequence of questions solicited the desired information

All of the 8 questionnaires and 2 interviews came back as useable, however 2 questionnaire respondents needed clarity on the key terms being 'brand experience' and 'brand loyalty'.

The semi-structured interview schedules and questionnaires were then revised and finalized accordingly.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

"As researchers, we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimizes potential harm to those involved in the study," (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012: p111).

Ethical considerations play an integral role in any qualitative study that involves the engagement with living organisms. Individuals who are used as participants of any social science studies cause numerous ethical concerns. De Vos, Delport, Fouche and Strydom (2011) explain how this results in the need for researchers within social science studies to be wary of obtaining and collecting data at the detriment and expense of human beings. Ethics commonly refers to what is right or wrong. Necessary procedures need to be abided by the researcher in order to protect the participants whilst the research is undertaken.

Throughout the study the researcher retained the priority of informed consent, and ensured all participants understood the purpose of the research before hand. She reserved the participants' interests and rights as of key importance when dealing with issues regarding the reporting and publishing of data. Participants' names and identification characteristics have remained confidential.

3.11 Summary

This chapter delved into the research methodology and design used to explore the impact that brand experience has on brand loyalty. A qualitative approach was chosen and explained, together with the data production techniques that were used. The study's population and samples were mentioned and clarified. The researcher discussed the study's limitations and lastly concluded this section by indicating ways in which the study abides by mandatory procedures that protect the participants' best interest.

The chapter that follows explores the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The **research findings** are **presented** and **analysed**.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The study's research methodology was discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter outlines and illustrates the study's findings and presents an analyisis of the data thereof. The researcher analysed this data using a thematic approach in terms of a qualitative component and a quantitative analysis for the questionnaires.

A variety of illustrative tools were used to analyse the data, including bar charts, graphs and frequency tables. The researcher had collected the data keeping the following in mind:

4.1.1 Research Objectives

The core objectives of this study were to:

- Investigate the brand experience created by three (3) Caltex retail sites around Durban.
- Understand what consumers' desire in terms of brand experience within these three (3) sites.
- Discover strategies that will optimize consumer loyalty within these sites.

4.1.2 Research Questions

4.1.2.1   To what extent does Caltex brand experience differ within selected retail sites in Durban?

4.1.2.2   How does this variable affect brand loyalty?

4.1.2.3   What strategies will ensure a successful brand experience?

4.2 Research Findings

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the researcher has adopted a qualitatiive approach to the study.

With reference to investigating texts, specifically in widespread communication research, content analysis is generally the accepted method.

A thematic analysis is similar to a content analysis however; it gives greater focus to the qualitative facets of the analysed material (Ruggunun, n.d.). The researcher has chosen to conduct a thematic analysis of her qualitative findings.

Balkisoon (n.d.) describes a thematic analysis as a practice "used to analyze qualitative information and to systematically gain knowledge and empathy about a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization or a culture."

The researcher has derived three core themes, focused on answering the aforementioned research questions. The themes are identified as follows:

4.2.1 Brand Experience

4.2.2 The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty

4.2.3 Strategies to Ensure Successful Brand Experience

The above themes where then reviewed with reference to the retailer semi-structured interviews.

4.3 Retailer Semi-Structured Interviews

A retailer, as defined by Waters (2015), is an individual who sells commodities or goods to the consumer directly. "These items are purchased from the manufacturer or wholesaler and sold to the end user at a marked up price," (Waters, 2015).

In the case of this study, the retailers are the individuals who own and run each of the three Caltex sites. The interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 1. Respondents of this interview are referred to as: Retailer A,

Retailer B and Retailer C (refer to Table 4.1) who come from Clairwood, Warner Beach and Hillcrest respectively. Table 4.1 represents the first section of the retailer semi-structured interviews and allows for an introduction to the retailer with reference to business and industry experience.

Table 4.1 Retailer Information

	Location	Years in Business	Years in Industry
Retailer A	Clairwood	19	19
Retailer B	Warner Beach	15	12
Retailer C	Hillcrest	20	9

The discussion and presentation of the remaining data will be presented under the aforementioned themes, namely:

4.3.1 Theme One: Brand Experience

Question one to four of the interview schedule deals with retailers' understanding of brand experience, the brand experience created by Caltex and how it's monitored, as well as consumers' desires in terms of brand experience. Question five also pertains to brand experience, discussing the desires and requirements within different segments of the client portfolio.

Participants were asked to explain the term 'brand experience'.

> Retailer A: *"Brand experience is an identity. It clearly distinguishes or sets the organisation apart from competitors."*

> Retailer B: *"It is about the overall experience a customer has from a particular brand, via its facilities, product and services."*

> Retailer C*: "As the Caltex brand, we're known as a 'customer-driven' brand. It's about the experience that the customer's receive when they come to our site."*

Brand experience is multi-dimensional (Brakus et al., 2009); this means that there are various means of understanding brand experience. This ideology is reinforced by the above responses of the participants. Retailer A refers to brand experience as an identity, both Retailers B and C relate the term to the overall experience of the customer.

When asked about measures used to create a positive brand experience within each site participants responded:

> Retailer A: "I create a positive experience by redefining service excellence. Meaning that we go above and beyond the conformed definition of 'service'."

> Retailer B: "By adhering to and maintaining brand standards, whether it be the brands image, products or services provided."

> Retailer C: "The interaction with consumers. I have a certain relationship that I hold with my staff, letting them know what's expected of them. This makes things easier as they know exactly what is required.

With reference to Brakus et al., (2009), The Experience Concept in Consumer Research and Marketing, two of the three key consumer experience segments are highlighted. The emphasis of Product Experience is evident in Retailer B's response and Shopping and Service Experience by Retailers A and B. These responses display that retailers are unwittingly aware of critical measures needed to create a positive brand experience.

The researcher then asked participants to identify the various measures Caltex has in place to ensure a positive brand experience. The responses are as follows:

> Retailer A: "Caltex has a Customer Measurement Programme called "Customer First". The brand has mystery customers, scoring the customer service assistants (CSA's) and petrol attendants."

> Retailer B: "Caltex has a retail Operations Standards Booklet which outlines all the policies and procedures involved in maintaining the brand experience as they would prefer it."

> Retailer C: "Their monthly audit and guidance, letting us know what's expected in terms of site maintenance, cleanliness,

customer relationships. These aspects guide us on a daily basis."

The researcher used the four-dimensional Brand Experience Scale by Posavac (2015) to identify whether Caltex assists in satisfying the consumer according to sensory, affective, intellectual and social elements.

'Sensory' describes whether or not the brand engages the consumer senses. 'Affective' dimensions refer to how the brand invokes consumer emotions or feelings. Caltex provides monthly audits and guidance, discussed by Retailer C, which furnishes retailers with a clear understanding of what's required. By understanding their role, retailers are able to create an effective sensory and affectively appealing experience.

By implementing 'mystery shoppers' and a Customer Measurement Programme (mentioned by Retailer A), Caltex is able to certify the 'social' dimension of the scale. The 'social' dimension refers to the ways in which the brand shapes consumer behaviour. This further represents the manner in which the employees engage with consumer.

The 'intellectual' dimension of the scale refers to aspects that influence the brain, engaging creative thinking. Retailer B discusses the Operational Standards Handbook, by utilizing this handbook retailers gain knowledge of the brand and are able to further understand what is expected of them.

Participants were then asked to highlight the ways in which they have modified these measures.

> Retailer A: "We incentivise and award the employees that receive 100% by the mystery shoppers."

> Retailer B: "I haven't modified these measures."

> Retailer C: "We engage ourselves in further training."

4.3.2 Theme Two: The Effect of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty

Questions six, eight, nine and ten evaluate the retailers' view of brand experience and brand loyalty within each site.

Participants were asked to rate the overall brand experience created by Caltex as a brand. Figure 4.1 indicates that Retailer A and B feel Caltex has an average hand in assisting with creating a positive brand experience. These two participants felt that Caltex could do more in terms of helping to build the brand and brand experience.

Retailer C feels that Caltex provides excellent assistance with brand experience. He states that Caltex creates a platform for understanding by providing brand experience requirements and sustains this by utilizing monthly audits.
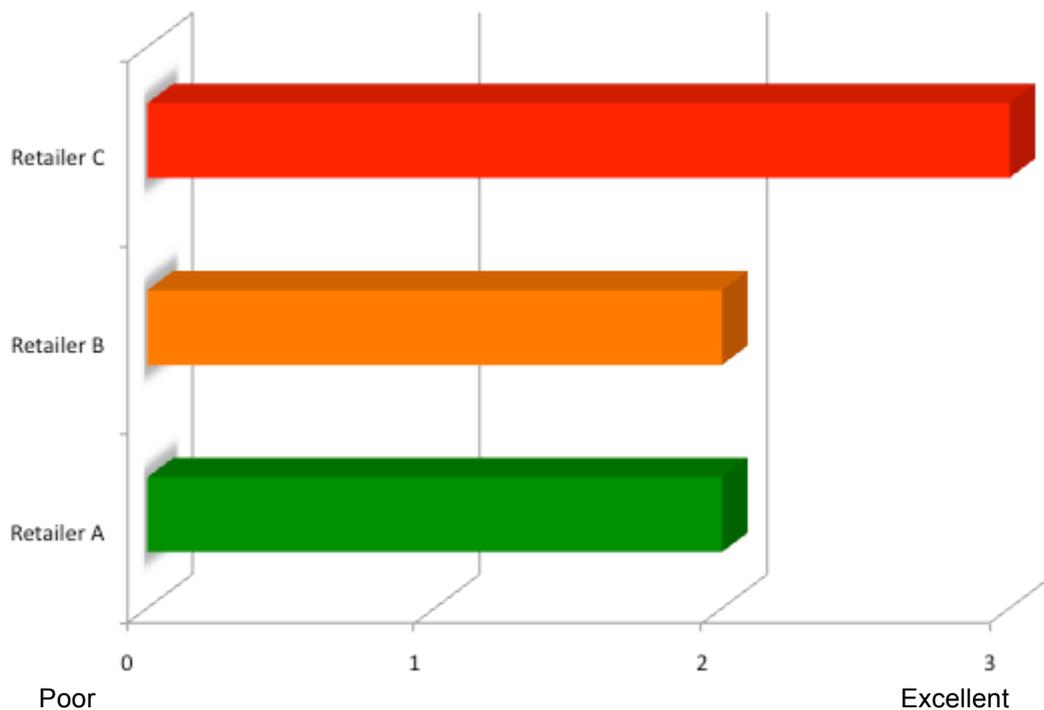

Figure 4.1 Caltex Involvement in Creating Brand Experience

When participants were asked to rate their site *specifically* in relation to brand experience, the following responses were gained.
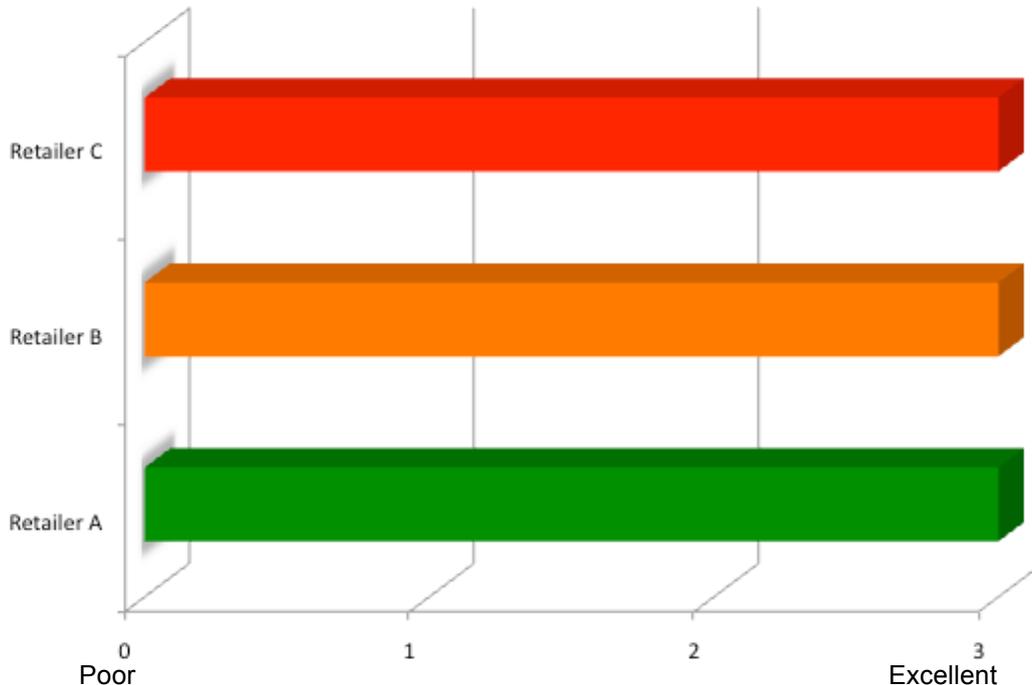
Figure 4.2 Individual Site Brand Experience Rating

Figure 4.2 states that all participants have viewed their sites' brand experience as exceptional. They had following comments to make:

Retailer A: "We go beyond what's expected of us."

Retailer B: "Our customers keep coming back and are always commenting on great service."

Retailer C: "We understand our customer and are focused on creating lasting relationships, in doing so, we offer exceptional service. I try to engage as much as I can, the customers say that they come into our site because they feel welcome and love our service."

All three participants represent a strong level of confidence in maintaining and sustaining brand experience.

Figure 4.3 Layers of Consumer Loyalty

Figure 4.3 was shown and explained to participants. The Layers of Consumer Loyalty is a model that was compiled by the researcher, illustrating layers required to achieve customer loyalty.

The model foundation is set by Brand Acknowledgers, consumers who are aware of the brand and support the brand due to acknowledgement rather than strong desire. The next level is Brand Opter, consumers who prefer the brand but will engage in other brands if the preferred brand isn't available. The highest and most aspirational layer of the model, Brand Champion, refers to the consumers who go out of their way to get to their desired brand.

The participants' confidence in once again reinforced as they describe their customers and brand loyalty as 'Brand Champions'.

Participants were then asked to contend whether clients are loyal to the Caltex brand or their service station specifically.

> Retailer A: "I think they are loyal to my service station specifically because of the service and the convenience."

> Retailer B: "I believe that, again, customer really look for that service element and I believe that's what keeps them coming. On your way here, you pass Engen, Shell and other Caltex service stations but we still get customers coming to us. We're constantly working hard and that's why they're loyal to us specifically."

Retailer C: "They are loyal to the service station. Customers know that fuel purchased from any brand will achieve the same result in their motor vehicle. I think that the service they receive is more likely to keep them loyal to a particular service station."

4.3.3 Theme Three: Strategies to Ensure Successful Brand Experience

Question seven reviewed consumers' desires when patronizing and how the retailers go about obtaining this, participants then discussed the following:

Retailer A: "Firstly, they would want to see a warm welcoming smile, a neatly dressed attendant and a neat environment. They want elements that are appealing and welcoming. I feel we go that extra mile in providing this with our customers."

Retailer B: "Consumers wish to get their fuel and other vehicle related services to be conducted in the quickest, most efficient, hassle free, manner as possible. We do this by employing adequate staff, ensuring they are appropriately trained and monitor the execution of their duties, and encourage them to try to exceed their expectations."

Retailer C: "Customers basically want the same thing, it's not about the price or the product – they really look at the attention that they get. So we serve the services when they get to our site, we recognise the customer, open the doors for them and do everything that we can to make them feel special."

The researcher looked at these responses and analysed it in with reference to the Brand Experience Scale again, here she focused on retailers understanding of consumers desires in terms of brand experience.

In reviewing Retailer A, B and C responses, it is evident that they have a clear understanding of consumer expectations and how to satisfy all four dimensions. However, Retailer C is focused on maintaining a relationship with

his consumers and going the extra mile to make the consumer-experience more pleasurable.

4.4   Consumer Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered to a total of thirty consumers, ten from each Caltex site, via Survey Monkey. All thirty have been correctly completed and used by the researcher in this study (appendix 3).

The following questions were asked:

- Do you have a preferred petrol station?
  - If yes, why do you prefer one to the other?
- How loyal are you to your current petrol station?
- How likely are you to recommend your current petrol station to others?
- What influences your purchase decisions at this petrol station?
- What do you believe great service to be in this regard?
- What would you like attendants to do more of?
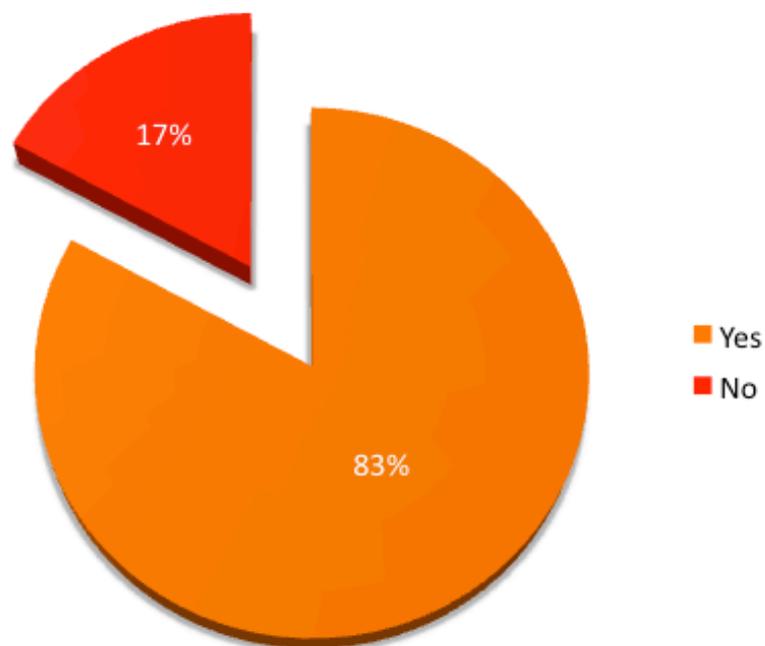
4.4.1 Preferred Petrol Station Statistics

Figure 4.4 Preferred Petrol Station Statistics

Figure 4.4 on p.45 indicates that out of 30 participants, 83% (25 participants) have preferred petrol stations whereas 17% (5 participants) don't. Majority of participants have a preferred service station. This preference demonstrates a form of brand loyalty. As mentioned before, brand loyalty is affected by an individual's preference and can be seen as the result of consumer behaviour (Investopedia, n.d).

Participants who responded to having a preferred petrol station were then asked what prompts this choice, the result can be seen below in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Word Cloud Representing Preference Drivers

Figure 4.5 is a word cloud representing participant responses pertaining to preference drivers. It can be noted that service, convenience and friendly staff are key drivers. Other drivers mentioned by participants are promotions, reward programmes, site safety, trust and being worthwhile.

4.4.2 Layers of Customer Loyalty

Participants were asked to select their level of loyalty to each particular site, refer to figure 4.6 on p.47.
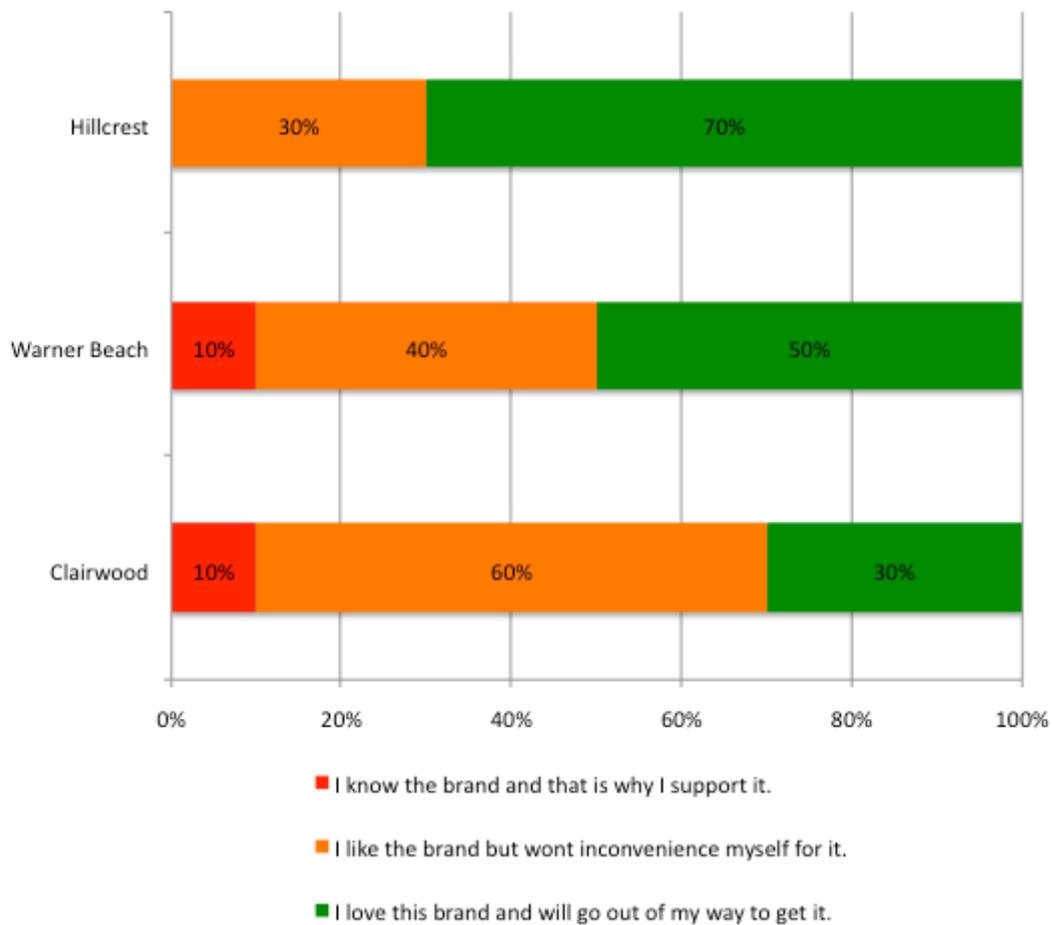
Figure 4.6 Consumer Loyalty Amongst Each Service Station

Figure 4.6 indicates the participants' loyalty towards each service station.

The questionnaire options gave participants choices derived from The Layers of Customer Loyalty model. The choices are highlighted as follows:

- Brand Acknowledger: I know the brand, that's why I support it.
- Brand Opter: I like the brand but won't inconvenience myself for it.
- Brand Champion: I love the brand and will go out of my way to get it.

From figure 4.6, it can be seen that Hillcrest maintains the highest level of loyalty with 70%, or 7 out of 10, of the participants being brand champions. Majority of participants from the Warner Beach service station were Brand Champions (50%) and Brand Opters (40%). Clairwood had the poorest

customer loyalty with 60% of the participants being Brand Opters and a mere 30% Brand Champions.

4.4.3 Customer Recommendation Potential

The next question required participants to state how likely they are to recommend their individual service station.
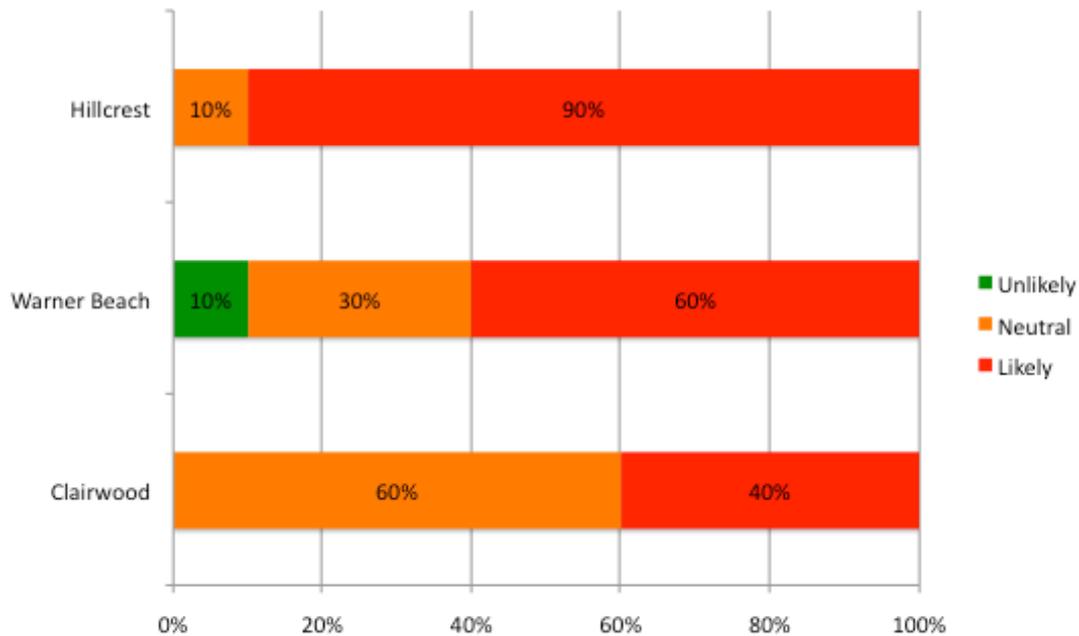
Figure 4.7 Customer Recommendation Potential

It can be seen in figure 4.7 that 9 out of 10 (90%) of participants from the Hillcrest service station will recommend the site to other individuals, with 1 out of 10 (10%) providing a neutral response. With reference to Warner Beach, 6 out of 10 (60%) of participants feel that they will recommend the site and 10% responding that their recommendation is unlikely. Participants from the Clairwood service station feel neutral about recommendations (6 out of ten or 60% of participants) and the other 4 out of 10 (40%) responded saying that they are likely to refer the site.

4.4.4 Purchase Decision Drivers

The aim of this question was to get an understanding of what consumers are looking for in terms of brand experience. Participants were asked to name elements that influence their purchase decision.
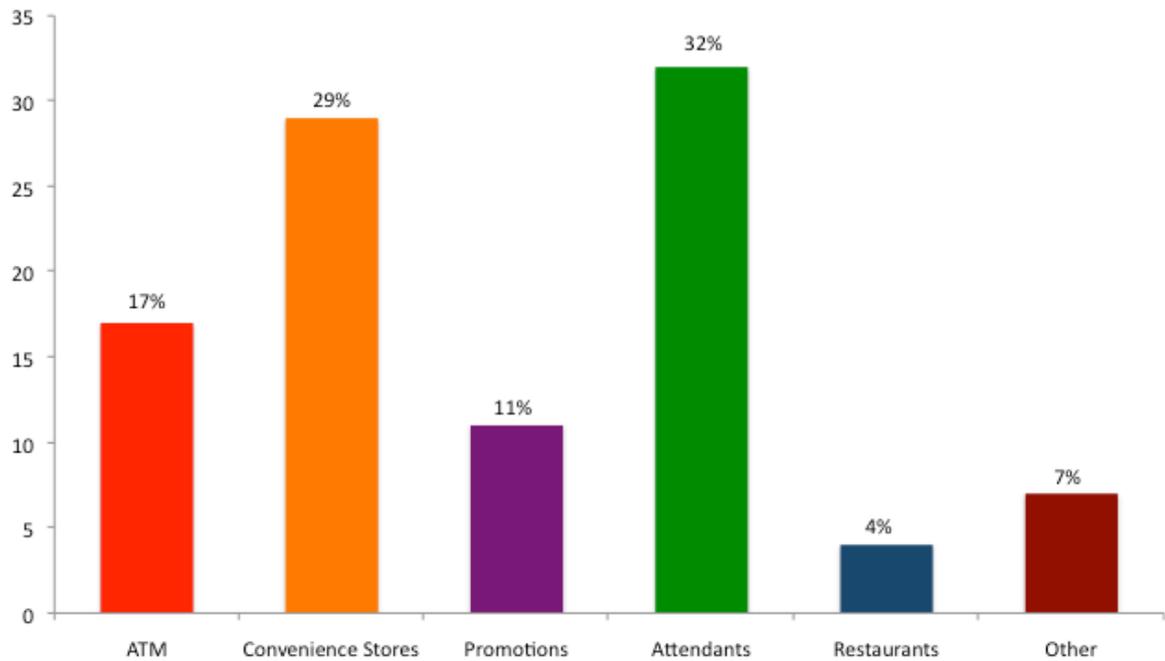
Figure 4.8 Purchase Decision Drivers

Figure 4.8 indicates what drives purchase decisions amongst the consumers. Out of 30 participants, 32% feel that attendants are an important element that drives purchase decisions, participants highlighted that attendants are the first point of contact and therefore feel that friendly, approachable attendants are a huge draw card.

Convenience store was the second most popular response (29%), participants mentioned that by having a convenience store they are able to refuel petrol and buy their day-to-day groceries.

ATMs (17%), Promotions (11%) and Restaurants (4%) were seen as other purchase decision drivers.

4.4.5 Participants' Definition of Good Service

Participants were asked to describe what they felt their individual site was doing right in terms of providing good service. Some of the responses are highlighted, per service station on p.50.

4.4.5.1 Hillcrest

"Able to communicate with the consumer. Offer service above the rest."

"Understanding what the consumer wants. Asking for extras. Staff going beyond their roles."

"Service with a smile."

"Excellent service with a warm smile."

"Friendly employees and great service. I leave with smile because the employees engage in conversation."

4.4.5.2 Warner Beach

"Always request to check oil, pressure and other extras."

"Pleasant staff."

"Quick and efficient."

"The staff speed."

"The behaviour of employees and managers… respect."

4.4.5.3. Clairwood

"Friendly attendants"

"Friendly and efficient"

"Quick fill-ups, always efficient."

"Attendants are respectful and recognizes me as a frequent customer."

"They make me feel comfortable."

4.4.6 Attendant Guideline

The researcher asked participants what they would like to see attendants doing more of. The following key guidelines were indicated:

"Make sure necessary car checks are done if need be to ensure all customers are satisfied with the service."

"Service with excellence, up-sell products of convenience store, or Caltex promotions"

"Smile and be willing to help."

"Attendants that chat to you and smile and ask how your day is. Attendants that care about their clients and make that few minutes that much better."

"Be on the forecourt even when it's quiet, so when a car comes in they are already smiling and welcoming the customer."

4.5. Customer Journey Map

The researcher conducted three customer journey maps, one for each site. Each map was based on the experience created per service station. The journey map focused on five elements:

- Welcome – this element analyses the welcome received when an individual enters the site. Here, the researcher assessed approachability, welcoming attitudes and eagerness.
- Filling – the researcher analyzed the efficiency of the attendant, and whether he/she confirmed the amount and fuel type.
- Extras – this element reviews whether or not extras were offered. These extras include windscreen washes and oil and tyre check.
- Attitude – the attitude of the attendant was assessed, also looking at his/her neatness.
- Overall Experience – the researcher then evaluated the holistic experience of each site.
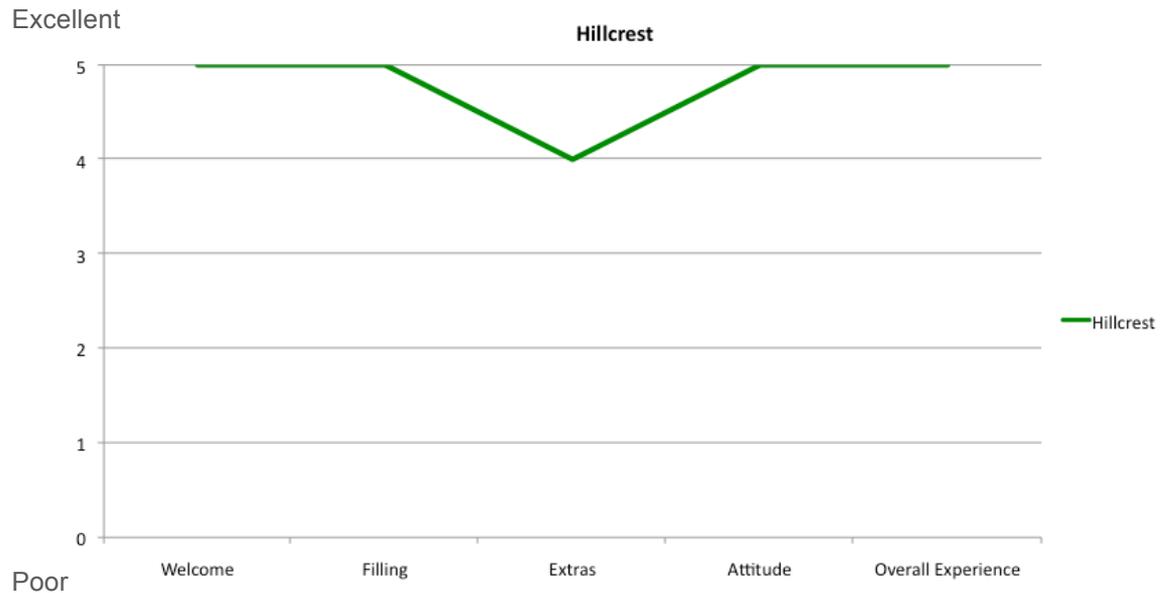
4.5.1 Hillcrest

Figure 4.9 Hillcrest Customer Journey Map

Figure 4.9 illustrates the Hillcrest Customer Journey Map. Upon arrival at the Hillcrest site, as a mystery shopper, the researcher was greeted with a warm welcome and smiles, she was then guided into the appropriate petrol pump. She therefore scored the 'welcome' 5 out of 5, excellent service. When it came to filling the petrol, the attendant double-checked the amount with the researcher and filled the petrol in a quick and efficient manner, the 'filling' was scored a 5. The site was a busy on the day and it took a while for extras to be offered and so 'extras' scored a 4. The attitude of the attendant was pleasant and friendly, he went out of his way to make the researcher comfortable and was scored a 5. The overall experience of the site was excellent, even though the site was busy, it was still neat and staff were friendly and eager – this earned the overall experience a 5 out of 5.

4.5.2 Warner Beach

The Warner Beach Customer Journey Map is illustrated in Figure 4.10 on p.53. The 'welcome' in Warner Beach service station was rated a 4, as the staff took a little longer to get to the researcher. The 'filling' and 'extras' were also rated a 4 because the attendants didn't go out of their way. The attitudes

of the attendants were rated a 3 simply because they didn't seem interested. The overall experience was average and rated a 3.
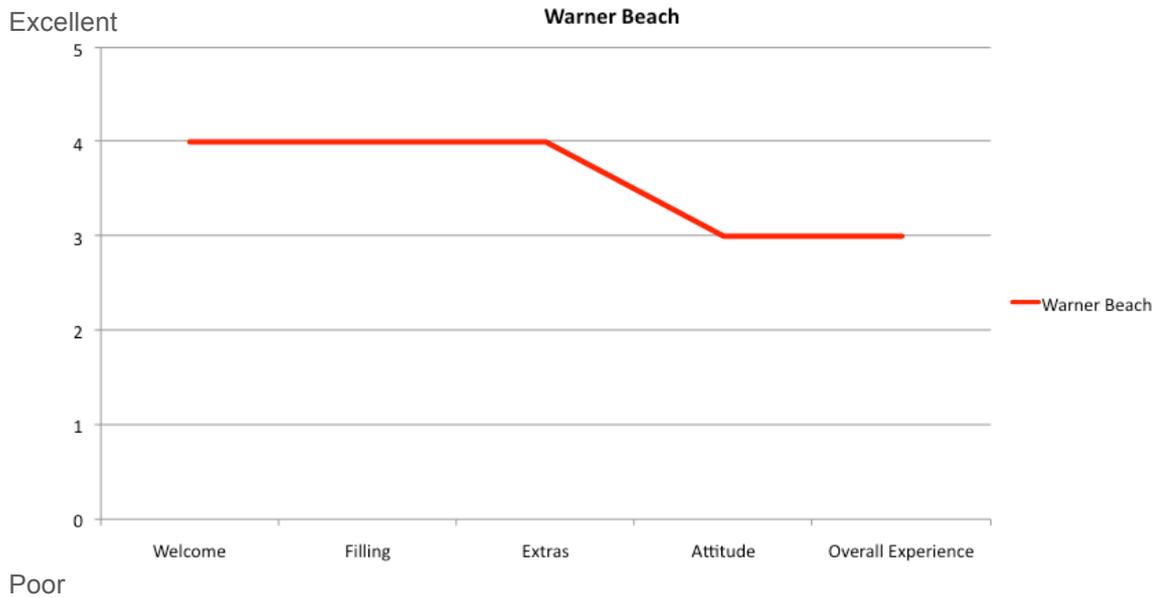
Excellent

Poor

Figure 4.10 Warner Beach Customer Journey Map
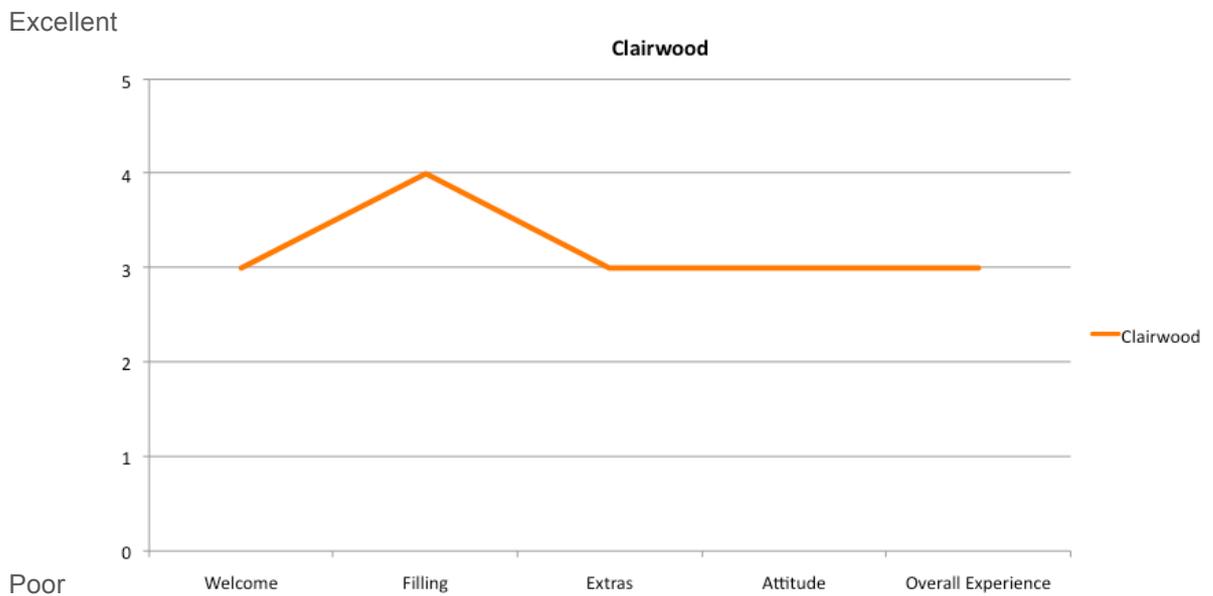
4.5.3 Clairwood

Excellent

Poor

Figure 4.11 Clairwood Customer Journey Map

Figure 4.11 is indicates the customer journey with reference to the Clairwood service station. The 'welcome' was rated as a 3, this is because attendants

were chatting when the researcher arrived and took a while to actually get to her. The 'filling' was rated as 4 because the attendant did confirm the amount before filling, and filled the tank in an efficient manner. 'Extras' and 'attitude' were also rated as 3 because the attendant only offered to check the tyres and nothing more and the attitude of the attendant was average. The overall experience was rated a 3, leaving room for improvement.

4.6 Summary

The results have revealed that retailers have an understanding of the term 'brand experience' and have their own methods or approaches in attaining it. The different methods of creating brand experience have resulted in fluctuating levels of brand loyalty through each site. Caltex has measures in place to ensure a sustained brand experience however most retailers feel that they provide average assistance and impact thereof.

Results have also revealed the importance of brand experience as a purchase decision driver and key elements that consumers seek in this regard.

In the next chapter the researcher concludes the study by presenting the main findings. Recommendations are made to retailers on how the sites can optimize brand loyalty using brand experience and concluding recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study's **key findings, recommendations** and **conclusion** are discussed.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The research findings are concluded on in this chapter. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to draw attention to the contribution of this research with direct reference to the objectives and aims of the study. Recommendations are also presented based on the research findings.

The research objectives were to:

1. Investigate the brand experience created by three (3) Caltex retail sites around Durban.
2. Understand what consumers' desire in terms of brand experience within these three (3) sites.
3. Discover strategies that will optimize consumer loyalty within these sites.

The study of the findings is beneficial for the following reasons:

- To create awareness amongst retailers and employees or attendants that will promote their understanding and perceptions of brand experience.
- This information will help retailers strategize to support and encourage customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- This will act as a reflection on current practices regarding brand experience and identify areas of improvement.
- Recommendations will be made on how to execute support structures encouraging improved brand experiences.
- Understanding the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty allows for sustained business and lasting partnerships.

5.2 Research Question One

The first research objective aimed at exploring the various brand experience methods and techniques employed by each site. This objective answered the first research question: To what extent does Caltex brand experience differ within selected retail sites in Durban?

5.2.1 Findings

5.2.1.1 Literature

Brakus et al., (2009) state three crucial brand experience segments: product experience, shopping and service experience and consumption experience. They explained that Brand experience may differ in presence, duration and strength. This literature furnished the researcher with factors investigated in the retailer semi-structured interviews.

5.2.1.2 Observation

Interview questions one to four achieve this objective. The semi-structured interviews aimed at getting retailers perspectives of brand experience and elements thereof. The literature was supported by participants' responses. Retailers had a fair understanding of the term 'brand experience'. It's been observed that Caltex provides Operations Standards Booklet, yearly 'service excellence' trainings and monthly visits however, the brand experience techniques differ per site. Retailer A and Cs approach to brand experience was focused around shopping and service experience. Retailer B based his approach on product experiences, centered on maintaining the Caltex brand standards. Retailer C highlighted the importance of building customer relationships.

Question seven of the consumer questionnaire also fulfills this objective. Participants pointed out what they feel their service station does best in terms of creating a positive brand experience. It can be noted that the Hillcrest site focused on communicating, engaging and creating a relationship with the consumer providing "service with a smile". The pleasant staff and speedy

service represented Warner Beach. With regard to Clairwood, the attendant efficiency has been highlighted in chapter four.

5.2.2 Conclusion

The interview responses support the literature in that each retailer has his or her own technique. Retailer A, from the Clairwood site, is known for its efficiency and yields a shopping and service experience. Warner Beach, Retailer B, provides product experience focused on maintaining brand standards, the attendants are speedy and pleasant. Hillcrest, Retailer C, focuses on building customer relationships and a proficient shopping and service experience.

5.2.3 Recommendations

The findings call attention to the differing brand experience techniques amongst sites. Caltex need to find a solution to this situation, as the brand experience is inconsistent through the three sites. It is recommended that Caltex provide a clear outline of what is expected in terms of brand experience as well as regular attendant and retailer training. It is also recommended that the observed segments of brand experience be reviewed and integrated and incorporated into their own manuals or guides.

5.3 Research Question Two

The second objective of this study was to understand what consumers' desire in terms of brand experience within the three sites. This was done to answer question two: How does the brand experience variable affect brand loyalty?

5.3.1 Findings

5.3.1.1 Literature

Hoyer, Macinnis and Pieters (2012, p251) describe brand loyalty as "consumers buying the same brand repeatedly because of a strong preference for it". The researcher utilized the Layers of Consumer Loyalty model (Figure 2.1.3). The model described the various layer of consumer loyalty consisting of three layers: brand acknowledgers, brand opters and brand champions.

5.3.1.2 Observations

Question one and four of the consumer questionnaire were developed to fulfil the second research objective. The majority (83%) of participants prefer their relevant petrol stations. Furthermore, 70% of Hillcrest participants, 50% of Warner Beach participants and 30% of Clairwood participants consider themselves brand champions, the highest level of loyalty on the Layers of Consumer Loyalty. Here, the literature is sustained as the loyalty is proven through the preference and vice versa.

5.3.2 Conclusion

It is evident that there are varying degrees of brand loyalty within each site. The Hillcrest site has the highest percentage of brand loyalty overall. It can be noted that the brand experience deviation has communicated through the brand loyalty levels.

5.3.3 Recommendations

Due to the fact that Hillcrest indicates the highest level of brand loyalty, best practices can be drawn from their brand experience. Consumers felt that by creating a bond and providing service excellence at Hillcrest, they remained loyal to the site.

5.4 Research Question Three

The third objective was to determine strategies that will optimize consumer loyalty within these sites in order to answer the third research question: What strategies will ensure a successful brand experience?

5.4.1 Findings

5.4.1.1 Literature

The Caltex Retail Outlets Standards Manual (2010) explains that "In a highly competitive service industry such as ours, the customer is of paramount importance and outstanding services is critical for business success". In this manual Caltex illustrates customer experience as identifying and providing for customers, needs in a prompt efficient manner.

5.4.1.2 Observations

The researcher analysed the current brand experience through the interviews, questionnaires and customer journey map in order to produce strategies to optimize brand loyalty. The literature provided guidelines to which retailers utilize with reference to brand experience, however, the guidelines are not being entirely followed – this can be seen by the brand experience and brand loyalty inconsistency through sites.

5.4.2 Conclusion

The current strategies put in place by Caltex are not fully optimizing the brand loyalty. Strategies need to be put in place that will ensure efficiency and sustainability.

5.4.3 Recommendations

Caltex needs to implement more powerful strategies to ensure a consistent brand experience.

5.5 Summary of Findings

Based on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, the literature review, it is evident that brand experience has a crucial impact on brand loyalty. The literature revealed that the different layers of loyalty are dependent on the level of brand experience; this was confirmed by the findings of the study. The research findings are summarized as follows:

- Retailers have an understanding of the term 'brand experience' and importance thereof.
- Retailers are aware of brand experience techniques that they implement within their sites.
- The current techniques are not creating a holistic, optimized brand experience.
- Key purchase decision drivers are positive, friendly attendants and convenience stores.

- Consumers are looking for engaging, efficient and friendly attendants.
- Attendants need to understand their role and the attitude and skills required to fulfill their job profile.

5.6 Main Findings of the Study

The study aimed at exploring the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty, focusing on selected Caltex retail sites. The findings revealed that the varying approaches to brand experience results in varied levels of brand loyalty. The results also revealed that while retailers are confident in their approaches, these approaches are not designed for optimum efficiency.

It can be noted that brand experience is a key component when choosing a service station. Consumers were able to identify brand experience elements that they feel are pivotal and drive their purchase decisions. The researcher was also able to highlight components that enhance the consumer journey per site.

5.7 Recommendations

A valuable discovery of this study was that retailers have an understanding of the positive impact of brand experience, however, have not engaged in a sustainable, engaging approach in this regard.

Based on the findings, the researcher was able to derive the following recommendations:

- Both retailers and attendants need to be more passionate about the Caltex brand.
- Retailers need to educate attendants on the necessary skills required, such as:
    - Communication skills
    - Interpersonal skills
    - Customer Etiquette
- Positive reinforcement to motivate and encourage attendants should occur on a regular basis.

- The forecourt should be clean, aesthetically pleasing and welcoming at all times.

It will be beneficial, in terms of future studies, to look into the following:

- Study the impact of brand experience on brand loyalty on a national scale in order to get an accurate view as, in this case, the study was based around the Durban region.

5.8 Summary

This chapter has concluded the various aspects of brand experience and brand loyalty based on the research findings with relevance to the research objectives. It has been established that brand experience does have a relevant impact on brand loyalty. Recommendations based on the findings, as well as for future research, have been provided. Chapter five contains conclusions and recommendations concerning the researched objectives, which if carefully implemented will help to improve service levels at Caltex service stations and which should thus improve customer loyalty.

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Appendix 1:

Retailer Semi-Structured Interview

Site Name:

Location:

Date:

Time:

Focus: Brand specifically as a business unit and not the overall Caltex brand, unless otherwise stated.

Key Terms:

Brand Experience: the overall experience that the brand creates.

Brand Loyalty: the commitment of the consumer towards the brand.

1. Do you understand the importance of brand experience? Please elaborate.

☐ Yes   ☐ No

_____

_____

2. What measures have Caltex come up with to ensure brand experience?

_____

_____

_____

3. How does Caltex monitor your site's brand experience?

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you do additionally to create a successful brand experience?

_____

_____

_____

5. What would you rate your overall brand experience as? Please elaborate.

☐ Poor   ☐ Average   ☐ Exceptional

_____

_____

_____

6. Based on the model below, how brand loyal do you believe your consumer to be?

Model: Layers of Consumer Loyalty

☐   **Brand Acknowledgers** are aware of the brand and support the brand due to acknowledgement rather than strong desire.

☐   **Brand Opters** are consumers who prefer the brand but will engage in other brands if the preferred brand isn't available.

☐   **Brand Champions** are the consumers who go out of their way to get to their desired brand.

Appendix 2:

Letter of Informed Consent

Interviewee Consent Form

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by the researcher, Priyanka Padayachee (11028943), an Honours Student at Vega, the School of Brand Leadership.

I understand that this interview is designed to gather information to aid the researcher in her thesis entitled The Impact of Brand Experience on Brand Loyalty: Selected Durban Caltex Retail Outlets. I will be one of three people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this research is voluntary.

2. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by the researcher. The interview will last approximately ten minutes. Notes will be written during the interview.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

_____

Interviewee Signature and Date

Appendix 3:

Consumer Online Questionnaires

1. Do you have a preferred petrol station?

☐ Yes ☐ No

        1.1 If yes, why do you prefer one to the other?

_____

_____

2. How loyal are you to your current petrol station?

_____

3. How likely are you to recommend your current petrol station to others?

_____

4. What influences your purchase decisions at this petrol station?

_____

_____

5. What do you believe great service to be in this regard?

_____

_____

6. What would you like attendants to do more of?

_____

_____

_____

_____