



An investigation into the influence of brand equity facets on consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear in South Africa.

By:

Ntandoyenkosi Khuselwa Mlangeni



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Supervisor: Ivan Mkhomazi

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Abstract

People purchase athletic footwear beyond the purposes of using them for sporting activities, they have become a fashion symbol and a way for many individuals to express themselves over the years. A multitude of people purchase athletic footwear resulting in brands expanding their product offering and developing new marketing strategies in order to enhance their value proposition against that of their competitors. Brands invest a significant amount towards strengthening their brand equity, hence, it is imperative we understand what influences customers to go from passive buyers to active buyers and to develop an understanding of what aspects of brand equity resonate with customers and act as a driving force towards a desire to purchase athletic footwear.

Two research objectives were set out and in order to answer them, data was collected from 24 South African consumers through a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The data collection tool was a self-administered questionnaire that made use of a Likert scale to measure the degree of agreement or disagreement from respondents.

The results indicate that the brand equity facets being measured in this study indeed influence purchase intentions of athletic footwear with the results suggesting that brand loyalty from the brand equity facets has the least influence on consumer purchase decisions. Drawing from the research findings; limitations, future research considerations and study implications are discussed.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Ntandoyenkosi Mlangeni

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1. Introduction

1.1 Contextualization

Brand is the most valuable asset that any organization can possess as it is essential for consumer recognition and is responsible for many consumer choices because it aids organizations to differentiate themselves within the market in which they operate in (Sasmita and Suki, 2015). Brand is essential to an organization in that it provides added value to its key stakeholders, these added values are intangible and thus aid in differentiating the organization from its competitors, can influence consumer preferences and potentially lead to customer loyalty (Davcik, Da Silva and Hair, 2015).

Athletic footwear over the past few years has developed from merely being footwear worn for exercise and has become about setting fashion statements. Athletic footwear brand's therefore have had to create footwear that is versatile, wearable and overall comfortable (Gupta, 2015) in order to cater to the lifestyle revolution. Based on the lifestyle revolution, consumers are more willing to spend more in order to keep up with the latest trends (Gupta, 2015) thus making it important that athletic footwear brands communicate their product offering in a manner that is strategic and effective.

Like any industry, branding is vital for the long-lasting existence of athletic footwear brands particularly in a time where there are so many competitors. The management of brand equity which (Aaker, 1991: ADD PAGE NUMBER) defines as “the set of liabilities and assets linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add or subtract from the value added by the product or service to a firm’s customer” is important for the strategic placement and value creation to an organization and its customers alike. It is therefore important for brands to pay close attention to how they create a perceived quality, brand association, brand awareness and overall brand loyalty particularly within a South African context based off the growing athletic footwear craze linked to the African American culture and African musical heritage (africanews, 2021). South African consumers are becoming increasingly aware of product offerings and are slowly but surely adopting the sneaker culture.

1.2 Rationale

Authors such as Aaker (1996) have paid much attention to brand equity and the importance of managing it and has written numerous academic papers on brand equity as a concept. This has inspired this research due to the fact that it seeks to understand how facets of brand equity, namely, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality come together to benefit athletic footwear brands. Understanding the value of the four components of brand equity will aid in dissecting the strategic importance of brand equity to a brands existence (Budac and Baltador, 2013) and how they all come together to promote purchase intent.

Understanding the influencing factors of consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear amongst South Africans therefore justifies the purpose of this research as it attempts to investigate the relationship, if any, between brand equity and consumer purchases of athletic footwear as there are inadequate academic studies on all the brand equity facets as an influence to purchase decisions. A further justification for this research is the growing adoption of the so-called sneaker culture (amongst South Africans, the African American phenomenon has seen local consumers go above and beyond to purchase athletic footwear and has inspired the rise of local brands.

1.3 Problem Statement

A significant amount of research has been conducted around the relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions (Satvati, Rabie and Rasoli, 2016), of which, much of the research conducted related to athletic footwear focuses only on a specific brand (Khumalo, 2019) and facet of brand equity (Bartolo, 2016) thus creating a lack of understanding of the relationship and influences brand equity in its entirety has on purchase intentions of all athletic footwear. Very few studies (Grove, 2020), have been conducted on the relationship between all facets of brand equity and the influence they may have on purchase intentions of athletic footwear as it relates South African consumers. This provides the research an opportunity to observe and determine all the brand equity facets influences on purchase intention and contribute to the body of knowledge.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality on the consumer purchase intention of athletic footwear in South African.

1.5 Research Question

The purpose of this research is to investigate and gain insight into the influence of the various brand equity components on the consumer purchase intention of athletic footwear in South Africa.

This study will also make use of sub-questions in which will be answered throughout the study.

1.5.1 Sub-Question 1:

What is the relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions?

1.5.2 Sub-Question 2:

Which brand equity facet has the strongest relationship with consumer purchase intentions?

1.6 Objectives/Hypotheses

The objectives in which the study will aim to address are:

1. To determine whether there is a relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions.
2. To determine to what extent brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality influences consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear.

2.Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualisation

This chapter aims to provide the study with an academic view of the existing body of knowledge pertaining to brand equity. The literature review will focus on the four components of brand equity, namely; brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality and how they have an influence on consumer decision making. Pride and Ferrell (2003) suggest that brand equity is the marketing and financial value associated to a brands overall strength in the market they operate in based brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality (Pather, 2017).

2.1.1 Key Concepts

Brand Association

Brand Association is the remembered node of information linked to a brand in a consumer's memory that contains the overall brand meaning for the consumers (Keller, 1993). (Keller, 1993) Brand associations are believed to contain the meaning of the brand for consumers, and these associations form from a range of sources and vary according to their favorability, strength and uniqueness (Su and Tong, 2015).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category (Aaker,1991). As it relates to the study, brand awareness is academically contextualized as it links to consumers purchase intent.

Brand Loyalty

Brand Loyalty can be defined as the attachment that a customer has to a brand and their overall tendency to continuously buy the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Perceived Quality

“Perceived quality can be defined as the customer’s perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives” (Aaker, 1991).

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

The key theory the study will use is the customer-based brand equity theory. Keller proposes that in order for customers to respond to a brand’s attempt at marketing their products or service, there has to be a certain level of knowledge created about the brand (Keller, 1993). Customer-Based Brand Equity is about brands shaping how consumers feel and think about their brands by creating positive experiences so that consumers perceive the brand in a positive manner that creates positive opinions (Keller, 1993). The measurement of customer-based brand equity is based off customers positive reactions towards a product or service and the way in which it is marketed (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Strong brand equity creates an attachment by consumers to the products being offered to them and leads to consumers purchasing more and becoming loyal to the brand regardless of the competitors (Hansopaheluwakan and Oey, 2020). What this means is that when strong brand equity is present, in the case of this study which focuses on athletic footwear, consumers purchase from a particular brand rather than their competitors despite superior products, service delivery or price. Positive brand equity can positively influence the brands performance and positively influence consumers’ responses towards their products (Amegbe, 2016). What this means is that, by brands working on creating strong brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality through the effective marketing of their products and services, brands are able to shape how their target consumer feels and thinks about the brand thus increasing the consumers’ overall willingness to either spend more, or go the extra mile to execute a purchase.

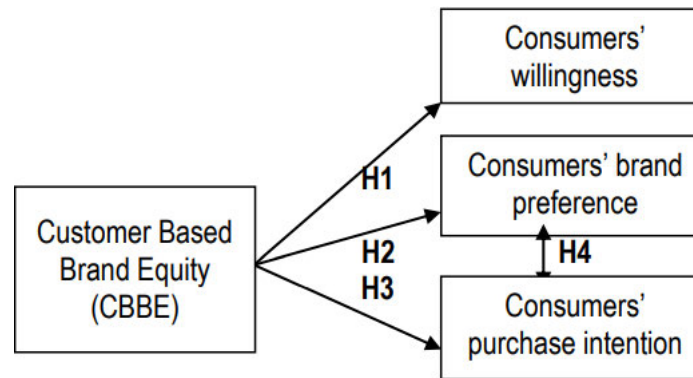


Figure 1: CBBE Conceptual Model (Source Amegbe, 2016)

As illustrated in the diagram above, customer-based brand equity (CBBE) as a theory seeks to influence how the marketing practices of any given brand can positively effect and increase a consumer's willingness to purchase a particular brand repetitively over other alternatives that exist within the market (Amegbe, 2016). The author continues to state that brands with a stronger sense of brand equity gain a higher sense of overall preference as opposed to brands with lower brand equity. These are the brands that consumers, despite high prices or better alternatives within the market will always go for. And lastly, brands with high brand equity and preference will always lead consumers to purchase (Amegbe, 2016).

The overall goal of brand equity is to create a brand in which consumers can relate and have a strong relationship with. CBBE as the theoretical foundation seeks to understand how brands use the marketing resources at their disposal to attract consumers, and how they can turn that attraction into an outcome of purchases. Due to brand equity focusing on how brands can create value in the eyes of their consumers as well as the aim of this study to understand the influence brand equity has on consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear, CBBE will be looked at as a lens from a customer perspective of the core components of brand equity come together to create a desire to purchase.

As a theory, CBBE is complex and has many variables that can make it difficult to comprehend, therefore as part of this study it will be adopted to look at brand association,

brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality and how these components create an overall value to both the customers and the brand alike.

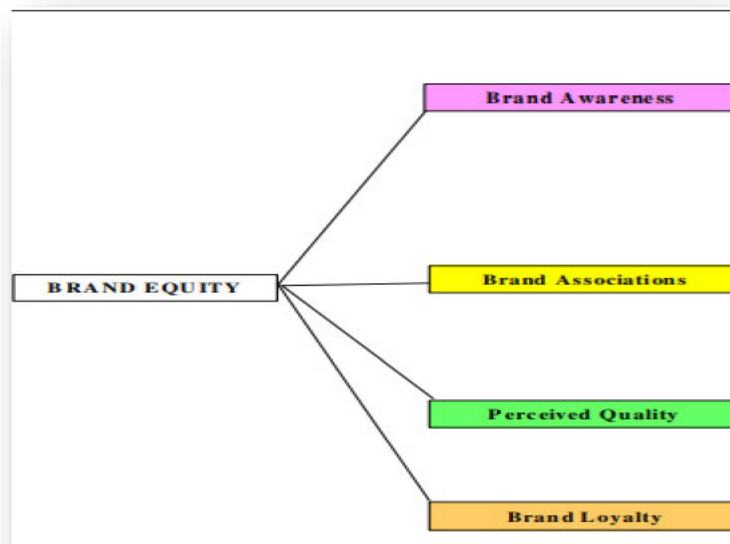


Figure 2: A Framework for Measuring Brand Equity (Lee and Y.L, 2011)

As mentioned in the illustration above, CBBE is about how brands shape the consumers feeling and attitude towards their product offering through positive experiences and attachment (Keller, 1993). The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between brand equity facets and purchase intention of athletic footwear; therefore, this theory was chosen in an attempt to understand some of the elements that can influence consumers preference of certain brands over others (Amegbe, 2016). The theory also shows the power of a consumer's attitude towards a brand based on how the brand seeks to establish a relationship with consumers. The theory also allows for the measurement of brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality strength any given brand has.

2.3 Brand Association

Brand association is said to consist of consumer brand experiences that influences perception (Ilicic and Webster, 2015). According to (Sasmita and Suki, 2015) brand association is related to information based off the consumers negative or positive memory about the brand in question. The author continues to state that the higher the associations linked to the brand, the more likely that consumers will remember the brand when making purchase decisions and remain loyal (Sasmita and Suki, 2015) and (Aaker, 1991) adding to this point by stating that associations set the basis for purchase decisions and overall brand loyalty.

According to (Ilicic and Webster, 2015) positive brand associations contribute largely to the overall positive outlook of brand equity. Associations help brands summarise specifications and the overall set of facts as it pertains to the product they are offering to firstly; make the process and expense associated with communicating each specification easier and secondly, to highlight the brands most important aspects in a manner that is easier for a consumer to retain and better understand (Aaker, 1991). (Ilicic and Webster, 2015) continues to state that it is vital for brands to understand the importance of associations and the associations that consumers may have about them as to set strategies that will allow them to better differentiate themselves in the market and create a positive brand image. Del Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias (2001) as cited by (Gordon, James and Yoshida, 2016) posit that it is imperative brands create strong and positive association as they combine to form an overall image and meaning of the brand to their target market.

Aaker (1991) suggests that there is a strong relationship between brand association and brand equity as brand association positively influences the memory of the brand (Pather, 2017). As it relates to this study, brand association plays an important role in the creation of perceptions and linking the brand and its product offering to unique characteristics that make up the brand. Due to the competitive nature of the athletic footwear industry, it is vital for brands to create positive associations that consumers can identify.

2.4 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is an important step in creating brand equity as consumers need to firstly be aware of the brands existence before you can attempt to sell to them (Mahfooz, 2015). Brand awareness measures the ability of the prospective customer to recognize or recall a brand when faced with a purchase decision (Aaker, 1991). It is associated with the ability of consumers to recognize the particular brand in question despite the various alternatives that may exist in the market when they think about purchasing a product. The purpose or role of brands creating awareness is to build the brand in the minds of consumers through the provision of knowledge about the brand that they can use at a later stage (Alkhawaldeh, Al-Salaymeh, Alshare and Eneizan, 2017). Developing a brand as the only viable solution in the deep memory of consumers can be regarded as a valuable competitive advantage particularly in industries that are highly competitive as consumers recognize and recall your brand when attempting to reach a purchase decision (Alkhawaldeh, Al-Salaymeh, Alshare and Eneizan, 2017).

The manner in which brands make consumers aware of their product offering aids consumers associate a particular product they wish to purchase with its overall quality (Sasmita and Suki, 2015) and possesses the power to significantly impact consumer decisions particularly in cases where brands associate their product with a specific individual or event. According to Aaker (1996) and Keller (2013) brand awareness plays a significant role in enhancing a brands overall value. The author continues to state that it brings consumers a sense of familiarity and an overall commitment towards a brand (Phong, Nga, Hanh and Minh, 2019).

Sasmita and Suki (2015) states that the higher the brand awareness, the higher the competitive advantage a brand has and possibility to extend and create barriers to competitive entry (Omoruyi and Chinomona, 2019). Murthi & Rao (2012) and Rubio, Oubiña and Villaseñor (2014) state that the product's quality, customers perception of the brands value and customer satisfaction plays an important role in the awareness of the advertised brand. Brand awareness limits the time consumers spend searching for products that they seek to purchase based on prior knowledge they have about a brand selling what they are looking for (Bilgin, 2018).

In a study conducted by (Pather, 2017) it is argued that consumers reach purchase decisions based on investigations of a brands quality and benefits hence the role of brand awareness is vital as it is the foundation of consumers making a decision to purchase which is usually in line with brand's they are familiar with. As it relates to this study, brand awareness plays an important role in creating brand equity and informing consumers of product offerings. Due to the competitive nature of the athletic footwear industry, it is important for brands to distinguish themselves and raise awareness in order for consumers to identify them particularly because athletic footwear brands produce more or less the same footwear but differ in the way in which they aim to communicate with their target consumers.

2.5 Brand Loyalty

Brand Loyalty is advantageous to brands competing in highly competitive markets as it gives them the ability to strengthen their responses to competitors. Customers who are loyal to any given brand are those that buy from the brand repeatedly despite the alternatives that may exist in the market (Çakıroğlu, Önder and Eren, 2020). (Aaker, 1991) states that brand loyalty reflects how likely a customer will pick one brand over another, particularly in situations where brands constantly make changes to their product offering. The author continues to state that loyalty to a given brand does not occur in isolation; consumers are typically loyal to brands that they have experience in using and in many cases, loyalty to brands can stem from the perceived quality or associations that the brand may have.

Brand loyal customers perceive a brand to have a unique value and are less likely to switch to alternatives in the market despite the superior product offerings or changes in price (Shin, Amenuvor, Basilisco & Antwi, 2019). According to (Aaker, 1996), consumers being loyal to any particular brand is beneficial in the generation of sales and profits and allows brands to spend less on marketing as it costs less to retain consumers than attract new ones. According to Salamandic, Alijosiene and Gudonavičienė (2014) brand conscious customers are loyal and are less price sensitive than customers that purely make their decisions based on the products price. Customers behavioural loyalty towards a brand not only provides it with direct income, it also enhances the customers tendency

to give reliable recommendations of the product to people within their environment which is beneficial to brands as it increases customers that engage with it (Bilgin, 2018).

(Song, Wang and Han, 2019) indicates that consumers loyalty towards a brand is linked to the repeated purchase behaviour of the brands products due to a level of trust that the brand will constantly deliver on the quality it is perceived to have. In a study conducted by (Tabaku and Zerellari, 2015) it was evident that brand loyalty from a brand context can be used to explain consumers repetitive purchase nature. Brand Loyalty according to the study has been identified as an important element in which a brand must create in order to achieve a competitive advantage and cannot exist without a customer's prior purchase and use of the product (Tabaku and Zerellari, 2015). As it relates to this study, customers can only be loyal to athletic footwear brands they perceive to have high value, be it through prior purchase or encounter with the brand. Due to the nature of athletic footwear, consumers cannot be loyal to a brand in which they have not previously tried out, or a brand they do not associate with a high societal standing.

2.6 Perceived Quality

According to (Shahid, Hussain and aZafar, 2017) the perceived quality of a brand does not particularly relate to the product offering, but the personal thought consumers have about the brand and its product offering. The perceived quality of a brand and its product offering according to (Aaker, 1991) cannot be objectively determined as it is a perception and an overall judgement by a consumer based of what they perceive as important to them. When consumers perceive the quality of a brand and its product offering positively, it has a direct influence on purchase intentions (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed, 2015) and (Aaker, 1991).

Customers perceiving a brand in a positive manner is advantageous in markets filled with many competitors, as in the case of the athletic footwear industry, it helps the products on offer differentiate themselves from others in that particular category. Zeithaml (1988) concludes that buyers' decisions are motivated by the perception of the quality of a product and the overall superiority of the product (Pather, 2017). Brucks, Zeithaml and Naylor (2000) evaluates quality good is based on: (1) Serviceability which is the ability of

the customer to obtain the product from the producing brand, (2) Durability which refers to the longevity of the product once in use and (3) Performance which refers to the overall functionality of the product.

In a previous study conducted by (Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard, 2015), it is argued that perceived quality to a customer is a perception of general quality or superiority of a product or service in comparison to other products or services that serve as alternatives. The study proceeds to link perceived quality to the desire to purchase stating that it is the key factor in assessing whether the product in question is worth purchasing. Purchase intentions as it relates to perceived quality according to (Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard, 2015) and (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed, 2015) speaks to the consumers overall evaluation and perception of the brand, usually after having previously experienced the product in action. As it relates to customer brand engagement, perceived quality is the overall perception of a brands dependability, and reliability as it relates to its product offering and service that is tied with a customer's preference and previous satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product and or service on offer (Shanahan, Tran and Taylor, 2019).

As it relates to the study, consumer's perception of athletic footwear brands quality cannot be measured in isolation; elements such as associations to sportsmen and other related public figures can create a positive perception of quality that motivate purchase decisions.

2.7 Purchase Intention

The purchase intention of a consumer relates to the consumer's preference to actively buy a product or service (Younus, Rasheed and Zia, 2015), it is the combination of a consumer's interest in a product and the possibility of them purchasing it (Venter, Chuchu and Pattison, 2016). Hellier, Geursen, Carr and Rickards (2003) suggests that customer satisfaction is as of a result of customer desires and expectations relating to a brand being met thus ultimately leading them to purchase the product at a later stage (Pather, 2017). Purchase intention in certain instances can be affected either positively or negatively by the quality or value of the brand (Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard, 2015). When defining it, purchase intention is a decision making that studies reasons behind

consumers purchases of a particular brand (Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard, 2015). Kumar (2008:3) defines purchase intention as a consumer's tendency to purchase a brand routinely with the chances of switching to other brands being very unlikely. Within the report written by (Schutte, 2019), the author states that there are two responses, namely the cognitive response which is the perceived quality of the product and the affective responses which is the extent to which a consumer has a favourable attitude towards a product. Factors such as advertising and product positioning within the market as it relates to Keller's CBBE theory can have a positive impact on purchase decisions, particularly if brands are able to strategically utilize marketing resources to attract and maintain customers. Product perceived quality, price and style directly influences the purchase intention of a consumer based off the products featured (Saleem, Ghafar, Ibrahim, Yousuf and Ahmed, 2015).

2.8 Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the literature review aimed to provide the study with an academic view of the existing body of knowledge pertaining to brand equity by focusing on brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality with the literature indicating that brand equity does indeed influence purchase intentions. Further from a South African perspective, the literature will be utilized to evaluate whether the abovementioned factors do influence purchase behaviors amongst consumers in the athletic footwear industry.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the instruments utilized as the foundation of this study. The focus will be on the population, sampling, data collection methodology and data analysis methodology along with the paradigm that the study is formed upon.

3.2 Paradigm

The paradigm is chosen as the study aimed to understand the extent to which brand equity influences purchase intentions whilst keeping into consideration that brand equity has core components that can affect consumers greater than others. Positivism as a paradigm in nature seeks to understand the cause-and-effect relationship between phenomena (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). This study aimed to understand the cause-and-effect relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions of consumers of athletic footwear in South Africa. The epistemology of the positivism approach states that knowledge must and can be developed objectively and that knowledge is based on direct observation through experimental or empirical means (Tubey, Rotich and Bengat, 2015).

This paradigm was selected as this study will make use of a quantitative method. This method according to the positivistic paradigm allows the researcher to collect and test data that will later provide a descriptive analysis (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of existence or reality which includes the assumptions made about a phenomenon, through this, the cause-and-effect reality can be measured and observed thereby allowing researchers to discover laws that govern the reality in which they seek to measure (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Ontology is essential towards the positivism paradigm as it provides an understanding of the laws that regulate the world, as well as allows a researcher to determine the nature of the topic or phenomena being observed (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

The aim of this study is gain knowledge and therefore the relationship between brand equity and purchase intent of athletic footwear is viewed as a phenomenon worth observing.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology focuses on gaining knowledge through objective and empirical evidence as the main purpose of researchers is to understand the casual effect of situations (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Knowledge must be developed objectively without the influence of the researcher and in order to fully understand the casual effect of a given phenomenon, there must be separation between the researcher and the research participants at the time of data collection (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020).

The aim of this study is to gain knowledge which will be achieved through the observation of the relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions of customers as it relates to athletic footwear. The observation will lead to the measurement of the casual effect through a quantitative approach due to the objective nature of numerical data which will then later serve as empirical evidence.

3.3 Design/Conceptual Approach

A quantitative approach was best suited to address the objectives and the purpose of the study and ties in with the positivism paradigm in that it allows for a descriptive analysis of the data that will be gathered with no ability to influence the results. The epistemology of the positivism paradigm states that knowledge must be developed objectively without the influence of the researcher and there must be separation between the researcher and the research participants at the time of data collection (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). According to (Apuke, 2017) questionnaires as part of the quantitative method allows for a thorough analysis of the population in question to better understand their behaviors based off their opinions, beliefs, attitudes and motivations (Apuke, 2017). Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) describe the quantitative approach as an explanation of a phenomenon through numerical data collection and analysis. Creswell (2005:39) states that quantitative data collects numerical data from participants, analyses it and conducts

an inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner (Lombard and Kloppers, 2015). This study aims to do this.

3.4 Population

According to (Du Plooy- Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014:97) the population is defined as the total group of people or entities from which the researcher intends to gain information. Individuals that form part of the population must all have a characteristic that relates to the study being conducted. The accessible population of a study refers to a section of the population that can be used and included in the study being conducted whereas the target population refers to everyone that falls within the population parameters (Du Plooy- Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014:133).

For this study, the population targeted were individuals between the ages of 18-35 years of age, residing within the Gauteng province, and who purchase athletic footwear. This is due to the target population forming part of the South African youth and are the most likely to be influenced by brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality when making purchase decisions. For this research, it is not viable to gather information from the general population within these parameters due to the time constraints associated with this research and limited resources, hence, the research makes use of non-probability sampling to gather information in a manner that is practical and will be sufficient to gather enough information on the target population as it relates to the study. The accessible population that made up this study are individuals within the Gauteng province, between the ages of 18-35 and are easily accessible to the researcher.

3.5 Sampling

This study will make use of a non-probability sampling method which is utilized to examine real-life phenomena and does not randomly select members of the target population (Taherdoost, 2016).

3.5.1 Sampling Method

Within the non-probability sampling, convenience sampling which is used particularly when members of the target population meet certain practical criteria of the study such as accessibility, geographic proximity, willingness to partake in the study and availability

(Etikan, Musa, Alkassim, 2016). This sampling was chosen as it takes into consideration the time constraints that go along with research. The method is cost-efficient and allows for easy collection of data from the intended population. Considering the limited time allocated to completing this research, convenience sampling fits the study in that the researcher can obtain the responses to the questionnaires within a few hours of distribution and can complete the research in the time allocated.

Aligned with the convenience sampling, the purposive sampling method was utilized as this method allows the researcher to look at the population and research question, after which a set of important characteristics was determined. These are vital for the success of the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout 2014:143). The characteristics that were important for this study include participants between the ages of 18-35, live within Gauteng and are assumed to have in some way been influenced by the units of measurements when making purchase decisions. Individuals between the ages of 18-35 can be assumed to have in some way been exposed and or influenced by brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality and are most likely the main targets of the athletic footwear brands.

3.5.2 Sample size

A sample size is the number of components that are included in an investigation (Pather, 2017). The sample of any given research is the subset of a population that is considered to be a representation of the entire population (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout 2014:135). The sample size as guided and recommendation by the lecturer and supervisor for this study is 30 individuals.

3.6 Data-Collection Method

A self-administered questionnaire was utilized as it best fitted the study and aided in answering the proposed research question. The use of a self-administered questionnaire was adopted for the study and was beneficial as it encouraged anonymity and is in line with the positivism paradigm in that; data can be collected objectively and later be used for descriptive analysis (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). As an instrument, questionnaires allowed the researcher to gain facts and or opinions about a particular phenomenon from

people knowledgeable about the issue being studied (Lombard and Klopppers, 2016) to draw conclusions based on the data provided by respondents.

The self-administer questionnaire framework of questions (Annexure B) were adapted from a similar study on brand equity conducted by (Pather, 2017). It consisted of six sections with section one aiming to determine the respondent's biographical information including gender, race and age group. Section two of the questionnaire asked respondents to specify their purchase frequency of athletic footwear, their familiarity with a list of athletic footwear brands from which they were asked to name one brand they are most likely to purchase with the questions that followed asking respondents to specify how much they are likely to spend on athletic footwear and whether or not they purchase their own.

Section three to six covered the studies research question and was based on brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement to statements using the 5- point Likert scale provided to measure attitudes, knowledge and perceptions. The 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. Section three of the questionnaire spoke to brand awareness and consisted of questions aimed at determining brand awareness' influence on purchase decisions. Section four covered brand association to discover whether or not certain brand associations influence the purchase decisions of consumers. Section five dealt with brand loyalty where respondents were asked to use the Likert scale to determine their level of loyalty to brands and section six finally addressing perceived quality in an attempt to understand whether or not an athletic footwear brand's perceived quality has an impact on the final purchase decision or not.

The self-administered questionnaire was created using an online survey platform Google Forms due to its ability to capture participants' responses with little interference from the researcher and create respondent anonymity. The questionnaire was then sent out to three individuals as part of a pilot test to determine whether the questionnaire is easily understood as well as to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. At this point, a Google Forms link with the questionnaire was sent to 30 individuals that fit the study

parameters and were convenient to the researcher at the time of distribution in the form of Whatsapp contact list and they were given a day to complete the questionnaire.

3.7 Data Analysis Method

As part of the data analysis method, the raw data that was retrieved from participants was edited; this entailed making sure that all questionnaires were correctly and satisfactorily completed to be coded and used for analysis (Bhatia, 2018). Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data as it allows the data to represent the responses of the participants that will be gathered from the questionnaire. This will be done in the form of different graphs and tables that represent the responses.

Each self-administered questionnaire response was extracted from the Google Form and used to create a coded descriptive datasheet. The use of coding aided in grouping sections of the questionnaire and representing responses as per the participant's responses to the particular questions.

The use of the descriptive analysis was utilized to summarize the data collected (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014:210) in a numerical form. The use of a descriptive measure of analysis in this study was utilized to understand the influence brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality has on consumer purchase intentions.

3.8 Conclusion

The study makes use of a positivism paradigm in order to understand the cause-and-effect relationship of brand equity and purchase intentions. The study will make use of a non-probability sampling technique in the form of convenience sampling and will utilise and self-administered questionnaire consisting of six sections in order to gain the necessary insights. The findings and interpretation from the self-administered questionnaire will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4.Findings and Interpretations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings from the data collected which was analysed and interpreted for the purposes of linking them to the research objectives. The literature that underpins this study and the theoretical framework utilised for the study aligned with the data presented from a quantitative data analysis perspective. The data collected for the purposes of this study was analysed on Microsoft Excel from which graphs, pie charts and tables were created and obtained through the use of a self-administered questionnaire on the platform Google Forms.

4.2 Results

The self-administered questionnaire was electronically distributed through the use of a Google Forms link. After an initial pilot study, 30 questionnaires were distributed with only 24 being successfully completed and suitable for analysis. Fatoki and Asah (2011) state that there are many limitations associated with a self-administered data collection method such as non-response (Pather, 2017). The response rate for this study is 80 percent which is an adequate amount for data analysis. The results for this study will be presented in the form of tables for the demographic questions and graphs for all the questions that follow.

Table 1 Presentation of the frequency and percentage associated with the distribution of the respondents as it relates to their demographics

Gender	Frequency
Male	11
Female	13
Race	Frequency
Black	24
White	0
Asian	0
Indian	0
Mixed	0
Other	0
Age	Frequency
18-21	5
22-25	17
26-29	2
30-33	0
34-above	0

4.2.1 Age

The respondents with the most representation that made up 17 out of 24 of the sample were aged between 22-25 years old, with the second highest respondents aged between 18-21 years old making up 5 out of 24 and with only 2 out of 24 of respondents being aged between 26-29 years old. As per the South African government classification, 18-35 years old's make up the youth component (Stats SA, 2019). All the respondents are represented by individuals between 18-35 years of age, this is indicative a true reflection of the targeted population for this study.

4.2.2 Gender and Race

Amongst the sample collected, female respondents were the majority with 13 out of 24, while males made up 11 out of 24. The majority of the respondents were black South Africans.

Table 2 The table represents the frequency associated with the distribution of the respondents as it relates to the brand, they are most familiar with, purchase frequency and net spend.

Brands you are most familiar with	Frequency
Under Armor	7
Reebok	12
Adidas	23
New Balance	13
Nike	24
Puma	14
Asics	7
Bathu	2
Drip	2
Purchase Frequency	Frequency
Once every month	0
Once every three months	1
Once every six months	5
Once every nine months	1
Once every year	11
Once every two years	6
Net Spend	Frequency
R500-R1000	5
R1001-R1500	10
R1501-R2000	5
R2001-R2500	3
R2501-R3000	1
R3001-R3500	0
R3501-R4000	0
R4001-Above	0

4.2.3 Brand Familiarity

From the data collected, the data shows that 24 respondents were familiar with Nike, followed by 23 being familiar with Adidas and 14 are familiar with Puma. The brands selected for this study were determined by the researcher as the brands that are the most popular and widely known with Bathu and Drip added to the list of which both got 2 responses respectively to examine whether or not respondents know of the brands.

4.2.4 Purchase Frequency

The 11/24 respondents stated that they purchase athletic footwear once every year suggesting that despite the latest trends, they do not rush to make purchase decisions but rather stick to the same athletic footwear.

4.2.5 Net Spend

From the data collected, it is evident that 10/24 respondents spend between R1001-R1500 for their athletic footwear with very few spending more or less this amount. It can be argued that many other 18-35 years old spend within this region when purchasing athletic footwear.

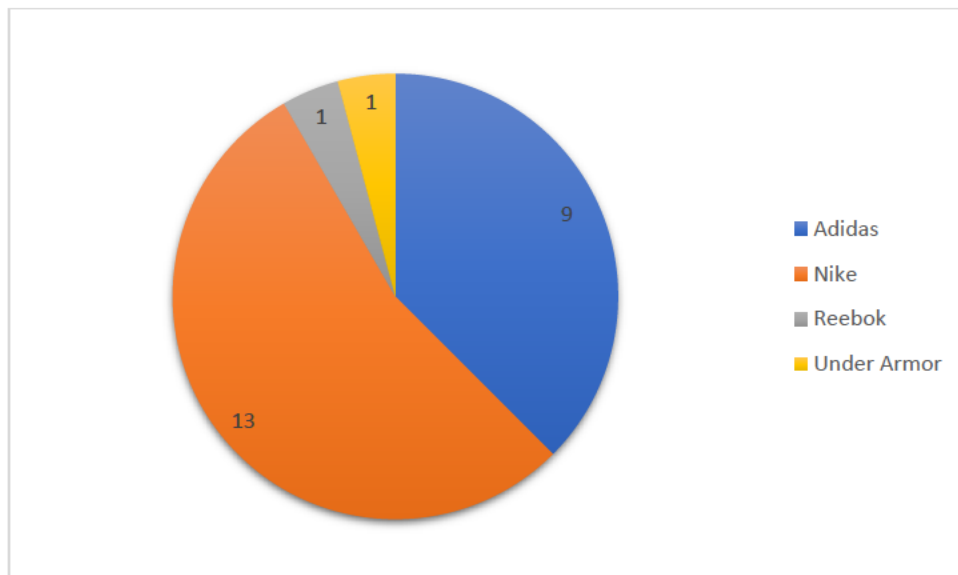


Figure 3: Brand most likely to purchase.

The brands selected for this research were identified by the researcher to be the most well-known athletic footwear brands based off consumer purchasing and brand sales as indicated by (GQ, 2021). The purpose behind this question was to identify which brand respondents were most likely to purchase with the results showing that respondents are most likely to purchase Nike with the brand receiving 13 responses followed by Adidas with 9 responses, Under Armor and Reebok with 1 response each. These responses could indicate that as compared to the other brands listed, Nike's brand equity facets may be more influential as compared to other brands and as per the research objective, all the brand equity facets influence purchase decisions.

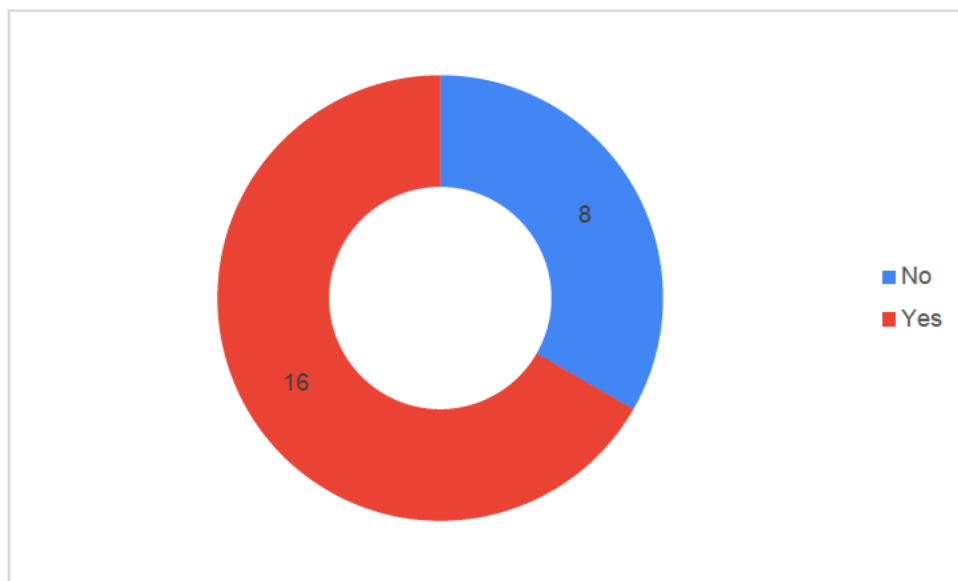


Figure 4: Do you purchase your own footwear.

The purpose of this question was to gauge whether or not the respondents purchase their own athletic footwear. This was done in order to understand whether responses in the following sections were reliable. 16 of the 24 respondents answered yes thus proving their contribution to the sections will be valid.

4.3 Brand Awareness Findings

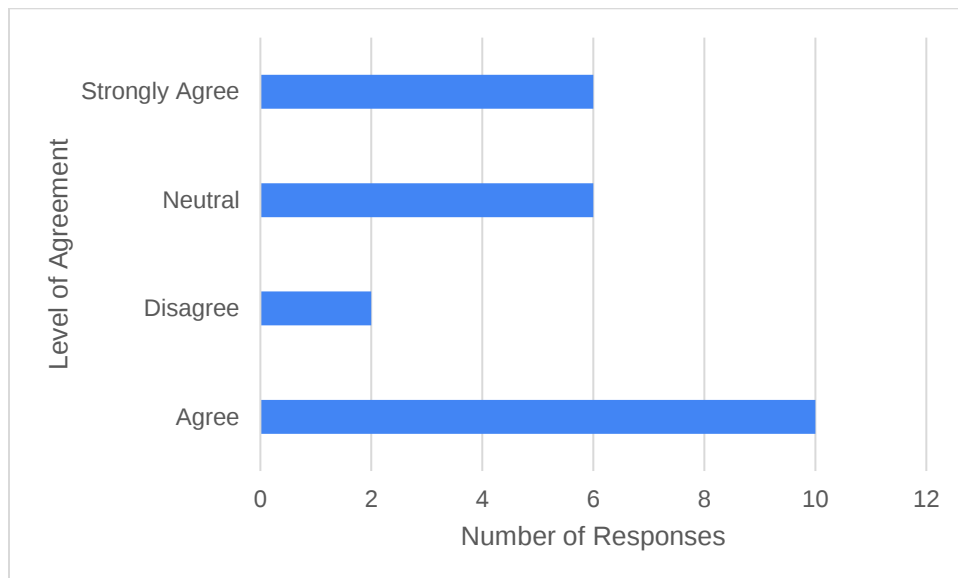


Figure 5: *How well I know a brand is important to me when purchasing footwear.*

The respondents exhibited high levels of agreement to the statement with 10 respondents agreeing, 6 strongly agreeing, 6 being neutral and 2 disagreeing.

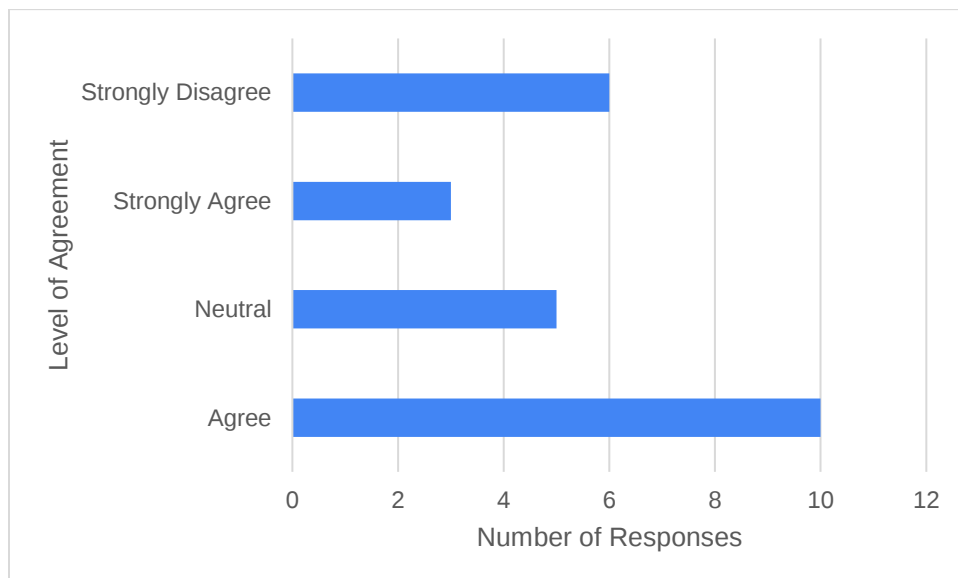


Figure 6: *I am influenced by brands communication/advertising when making a purchase decision.*

The 10 out of 24 of the sample agreed to this statement with only 6 respondents strongly disagreeing, 3 strongly agreeing, 5 being neutral and 10 agreeing.

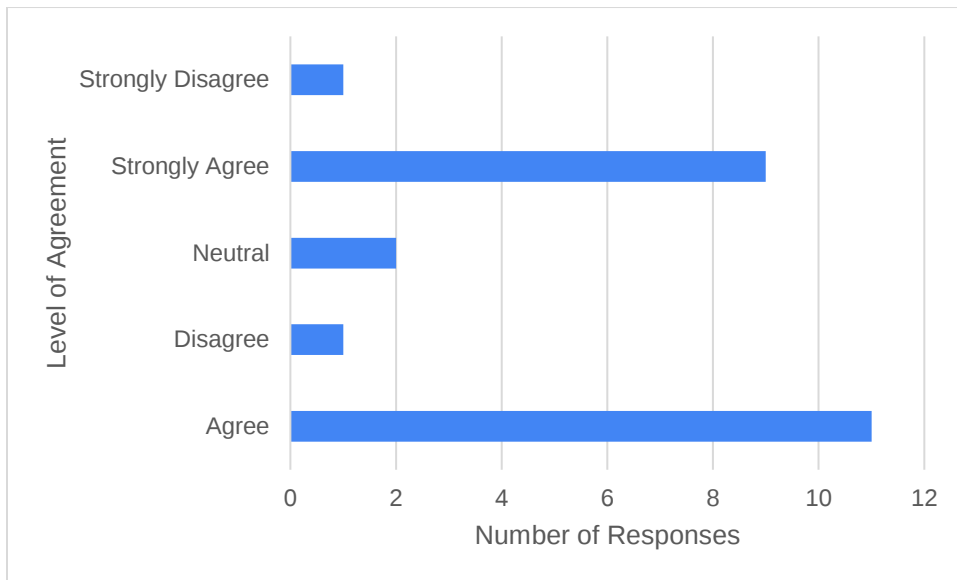


Figure 7: The level of knowledge I have of a brand motivated me to purchase from them repetitively.

11 respondents agreed to this statement making it the highest response with strongly agree being the second highest response at 9 responses with very little disagreeing or strong disagreeing or being neutral.

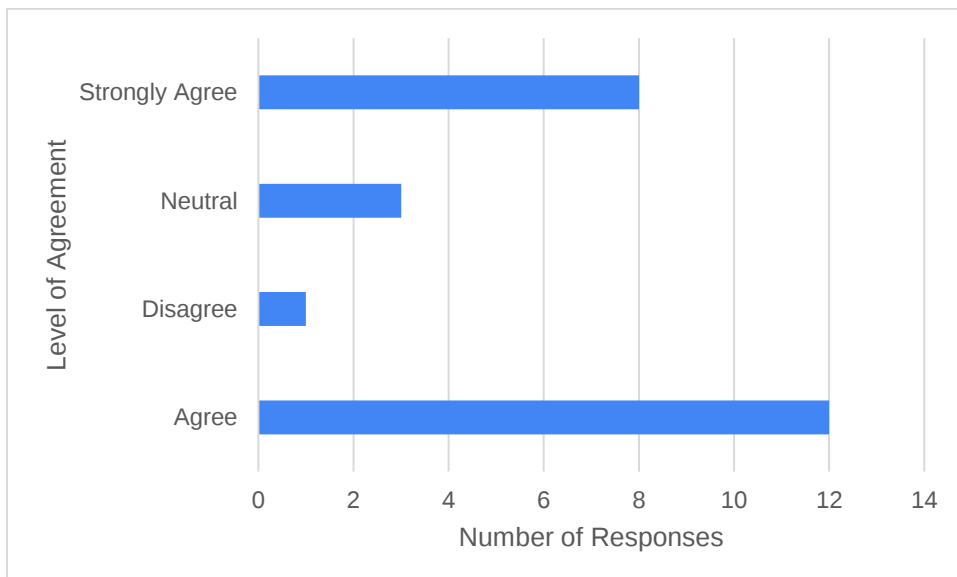


Figure 8: My preferred brand gives me confidence when making a purchase decision.

12 respondents agreed with the statement with 8 strongly agreeing, 3 being neutral and only 1 respondent stating their disagreement.

4.3.1 Overview of the findings

The responses towards the brand awareness questions were those that agreed with the statements having; 10 out of 24 (41.6%) respondents agreeing to how well I know a brand is important to me when purchasing footwear, 10 out of 24 (41.6%) agreeing to being influenced by brands communication/advertising when making a purchase decision, 11 out of 24 (45.8%) stating their agreement to their level of knowledge about a brand motivating them to purchase from them repetitively and lastly 12 out of 24 (50%) stating their preferred brand gives them confidence when making a purchase decision and but only a few responses being those that disagreed.

According to the literature (Mahfooz, 2015; Aaker, 1991; Pather, 2017), brand awareness is an important step in brand equity as consumers need to be aware of a brand in order to engage with it and is associated with consumers ability to recognise a brand despite alternatives that may exist in the market. (Aaker, 1991) argues that the purpose of brand awareness is to measure the ability of the prospective customer to recognize or recall a brand when faced with a purchase decision; it therefore based on the seminal authors statement and the findings that the research objective aiming to identity the extent to which brand awareness influences purchase intentions can be answered. This id due to brand awareness to a large extent influencing purchase decisions of South African consumers as it relates to athletic footwear.

4.4 Brand Association Findings

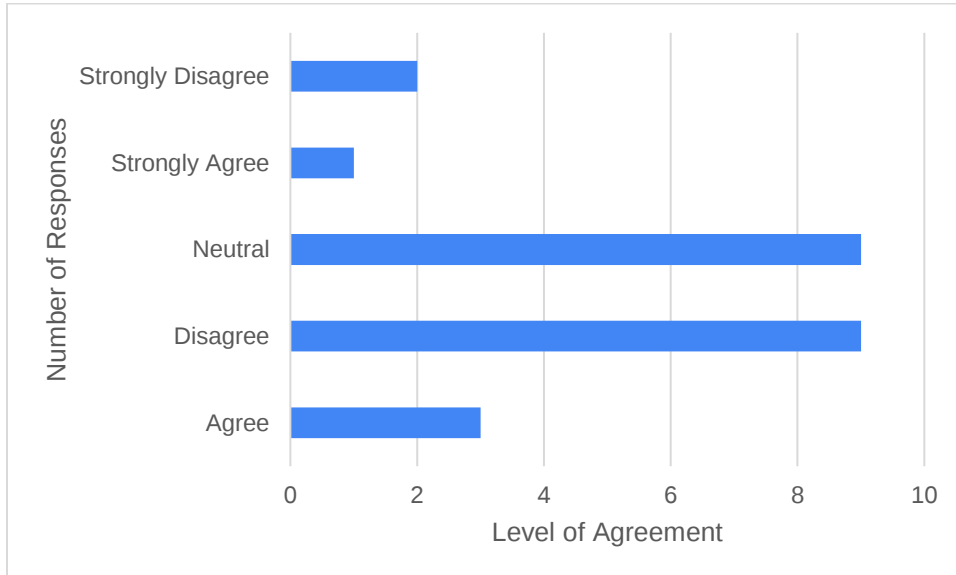


Figure 9: I associate with the brands my friends or family wear when making purchase decisions.

9 respondents disagreed or were neutral with this likert scale statement and 3 respondents agreeing, 1 strongly agreeing and 2 strongly disagreeing.

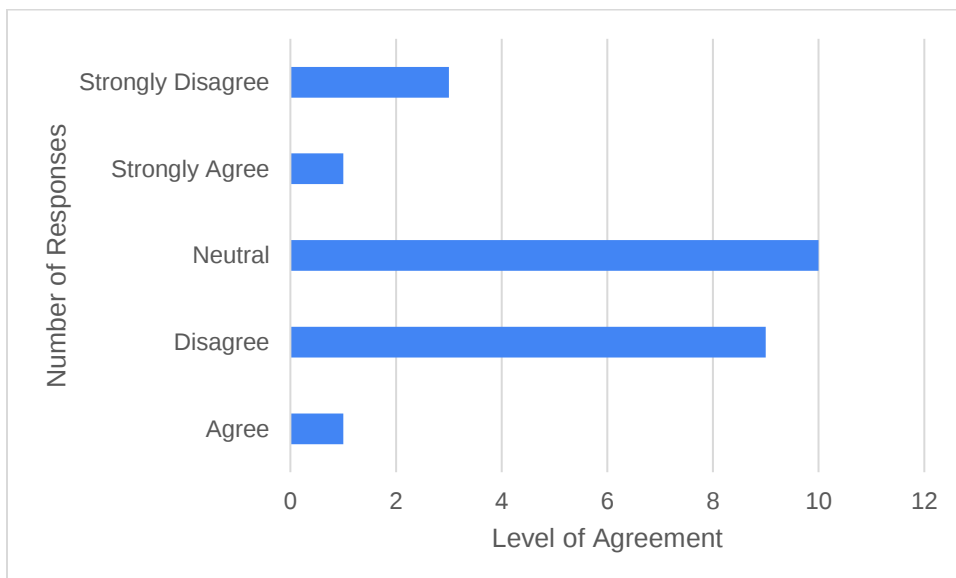


Figure 10: I associate with brands influencers and or celebrities wear when making purchase decisions.

10 respondents were neutral to this statement with 9 stating their disagreement to it. 3 respondents strongly disagreed with 1 respondent agreeing and strongly agreeing.

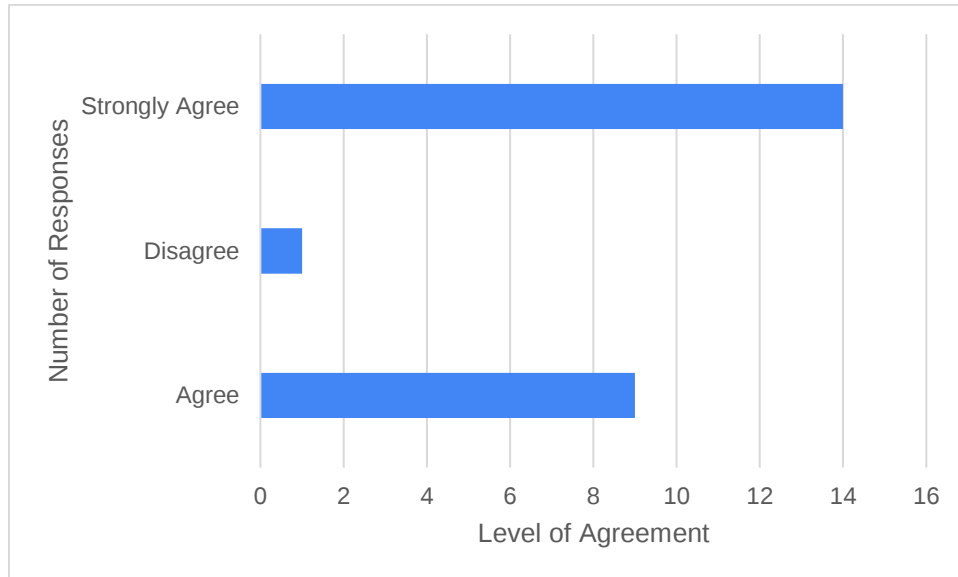


Figure 11: I associate the athletic footwear brands I use with value for money when making a purchase decision.

14 respondents strongly agreed with the likert scale statement and 9 stating their agreement with only 1 respondent stating their disagreement.

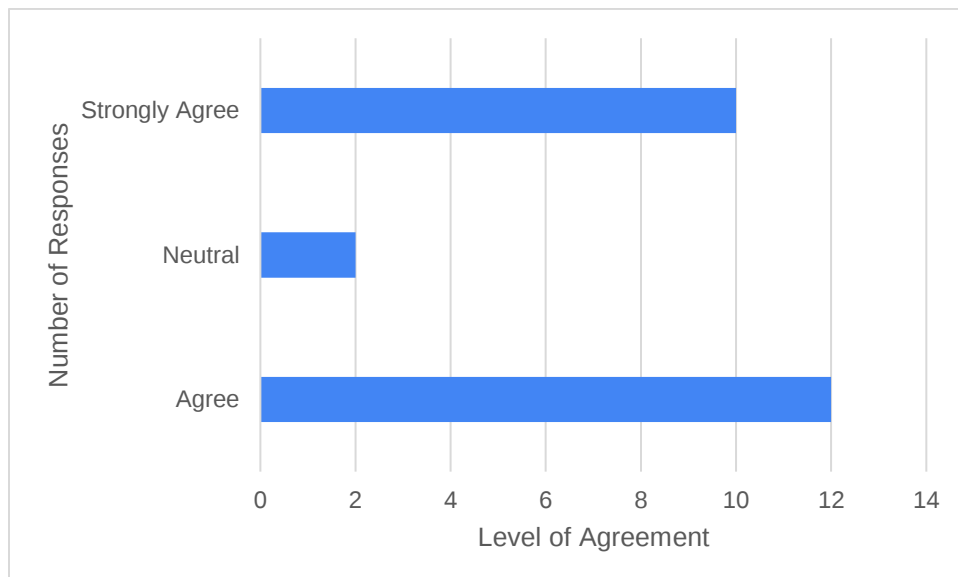


Figure 12: I associate my preferred athletic footwear brand with being dedicated to only making quality products.

12 respondents agreed to the likert scale statement with 10 strongly agreeing with it and only 2 respondents stating their neutrality.

4.4.1 Overview of the Findings

According to the literature overview, (Aaker, 1991) suggests that there is a strong relationship between brand association and brand equity as brand association positively influences the memory of the brand. In accordance with the findings of this research, many of the respondents felt that purchasing athletic footwear based on their friends or family's association to brands was not enough to motivate their purchase decisions with 9 out of 24 (37.5%) respondents disagreeing and being neutral to the statement, nor is the brand being associated with a celebrity or influencer a contributing factor to their purchase decisions. It must be noted, however; that many respondents either agreed or strongly agreed when asked about brands association to value for money with 14 out of 24 (58.8%) respondents strongly agreeing with the statement "I associate the athletic footwear brands I use with value for money when making a purchase decision" and 12 out of 24 (50%) agreeing to the statement "I associate my preferred athletic footwear brand with being dedicated to only making quality products". Del Rio, Vazquez, and Iglesias (2001) state it is imperative that brands create strong and positive associations as they combine to form an overall image and meaning of the brand to their target market (Gordon, James and Yoshida, 2016). It is based on the authors statement which it can be argued that as it relates to South African athletic footwear consumers, a brands association is based on its overall image as it relates to its quality and or value for money as opposed to its association with influential figures. Aligning to the research objective, it can be argued that brand association to a large extent influences the purchase decisions of South African consumers.

4.5 Brand Loyalty Findings

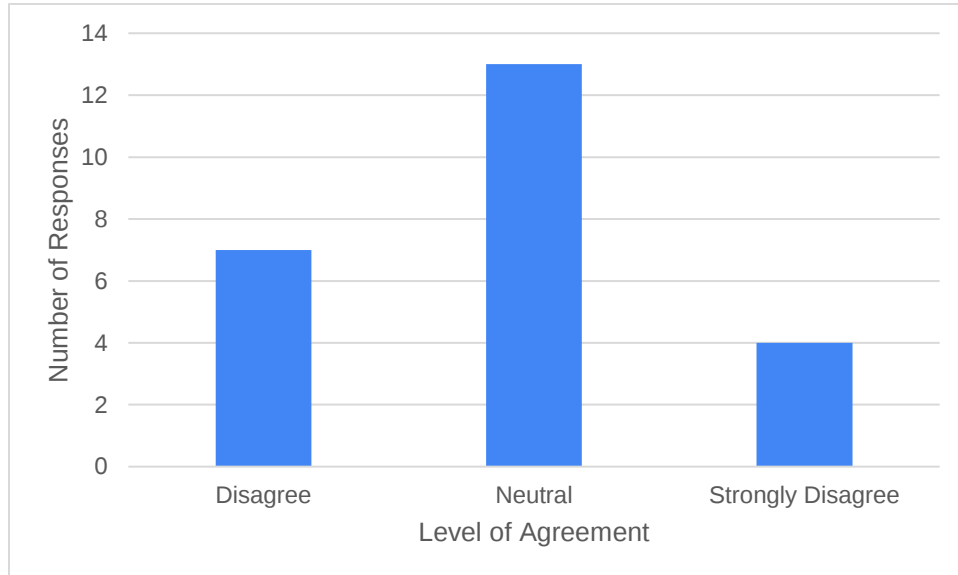


Figure 13: I am loyal to one brand when making a purchase decision and rarely switch.

13 respondents were neutral to the likert scale question with 7 stating their disagreement and only 4 stating that they strongly disagree.

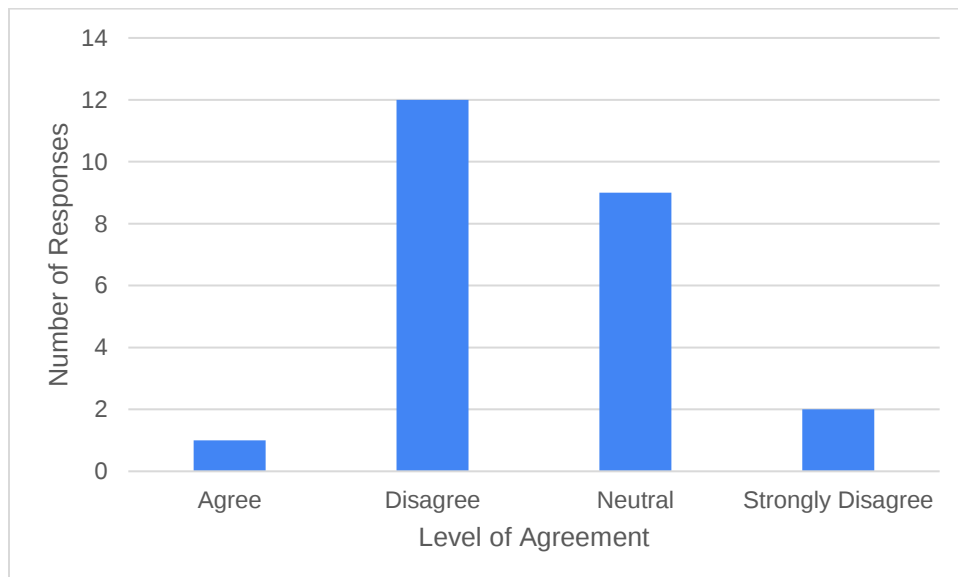


Figure 14: My purchases are based on my loyalty to the brand.

12 respondents disagreed with the likert scale question with 9 stating their neutrality, 2 stating that they strongly disagree and only one respondent stating their agreement to the statement.

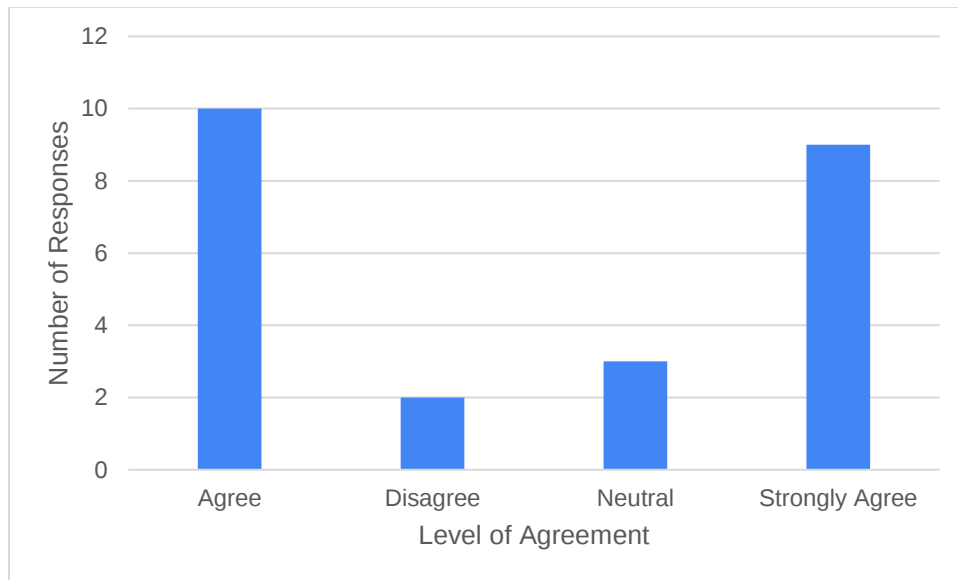


Figure 15: I purchase various athletic footwear brands and will constantly switch between brands.

10 respondents agreed with the likert scale statement with 9 strongly agreeing. Only 3 respondents stated their neutrality to the statement and 2 disagreed.

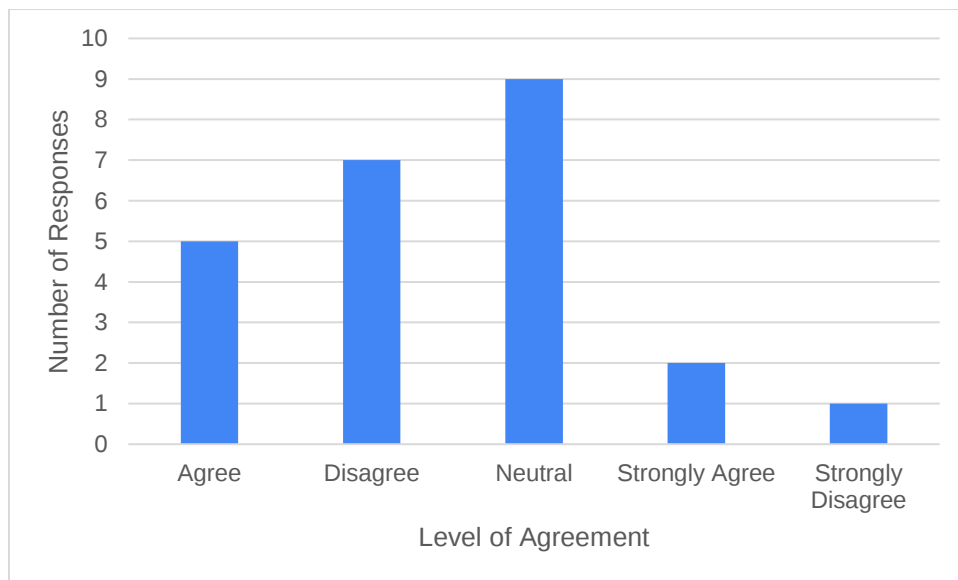


Figure 16: Repurchase decisions are based on my loyalty to the brand.

Neutrality is the highest response to this statement with 9 followed by 7 disagreements, 5 agreements, 2 strongly agrees and 1 strongly disagree to the likert scale statement.

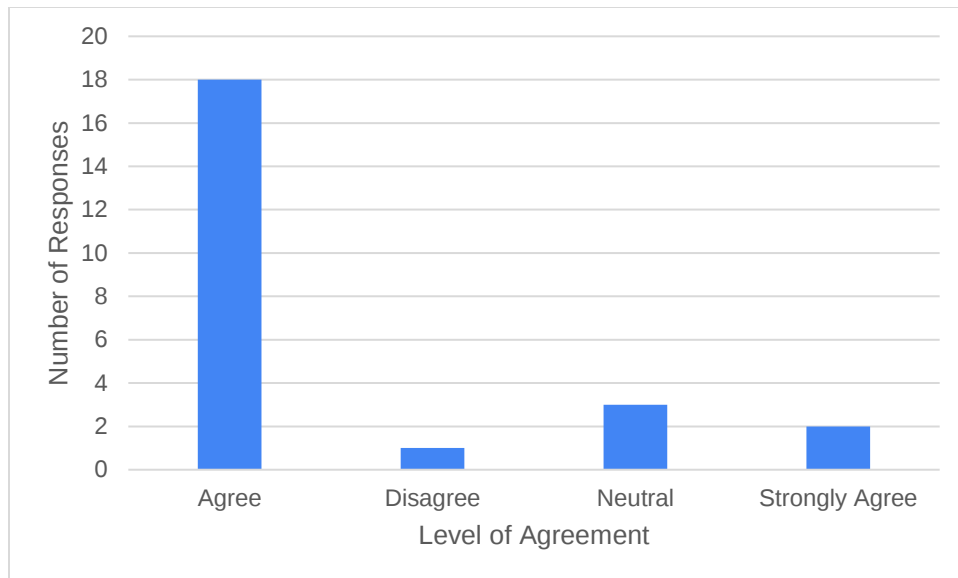


Figure 17: My level of loyalty to a specific brand when purchasing athletic footwear is based off my trust in the brand.

18 of the responses were those that agreed to the statement followed by 3 neutrality responses, 2 strongly agree responses and only 1 response that disagrees with the statement.

4.5.1 Overview of the Findings

According to (Aaker, 1996), consumers being loyal to any particular brand is beneficial in the generation of sales and profits and allows brands to spend less on marketing as it costs less to retain consumers than attract new ones. The likert scale questions sought to measure consumers level of agreement or disagreement to brand loyalty statements and indicated that 18 out of 24 (75%) respondents' loyalties to any given brand is based on brand trust with 12 out of 24 (50%) stating they do not purchase brands purely out of loyalty. 10 out of 24 (41.6%) respondents agreed with 9 out of 24 (37.5%) strongly agreeing to purchasing various athletic footwear brands and switching when making purchase decisions with 9 out of 24 (37.5%) respondents being neutral to the statement "repurchase decisions are based on my loyalty to the brand". It is from these findings that (Shin, Amenuvor, Basilisco and Antwi, 2019) statement about "brand loyal customers perceiving a brand to have a unique value and are less likely to switch despite the alternatives that exist in the market" can arguably be said to not relate to the targeted age group for this study. From the above results, it is evident that the targeted age group have

a low brand loyalty as it relates to the purchasing of athletic footwear, this can be linked to the question on how frequently athletic footwear is purchased with many respondents stating they only purchase once every year. It is from the above that it can be concluded that brand loyalty to a lesser extent influences South African consumer purchases of athletic footwear.

4.6 Perceived Quality Findings

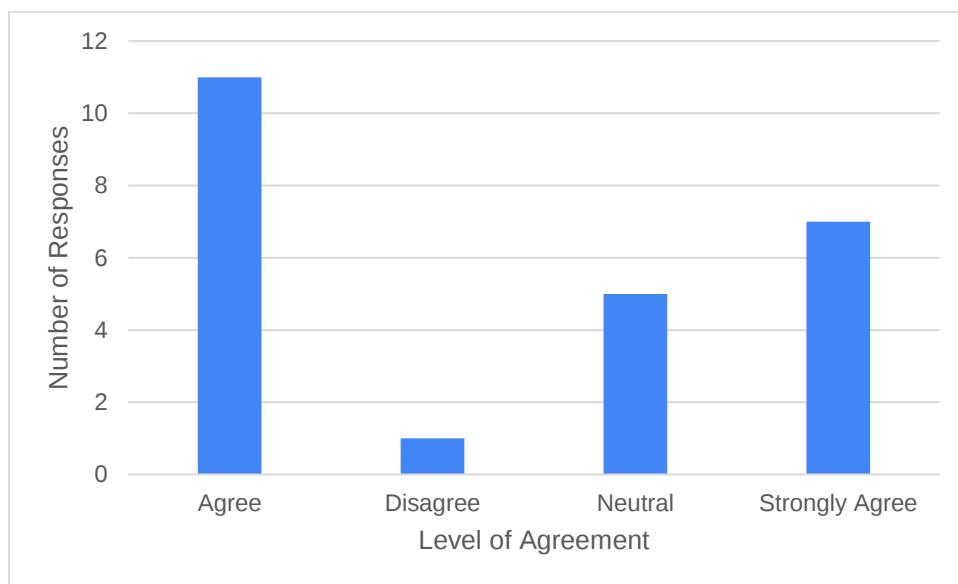


Figure 18: The perceived quality influences my decision when purchasing athletic footwear.

11 of the responses are those that agreed with the statement followed by 7 that strongly agreed, 5 responses stating their neutrality and only 1 stating a disagreement to the above statement.

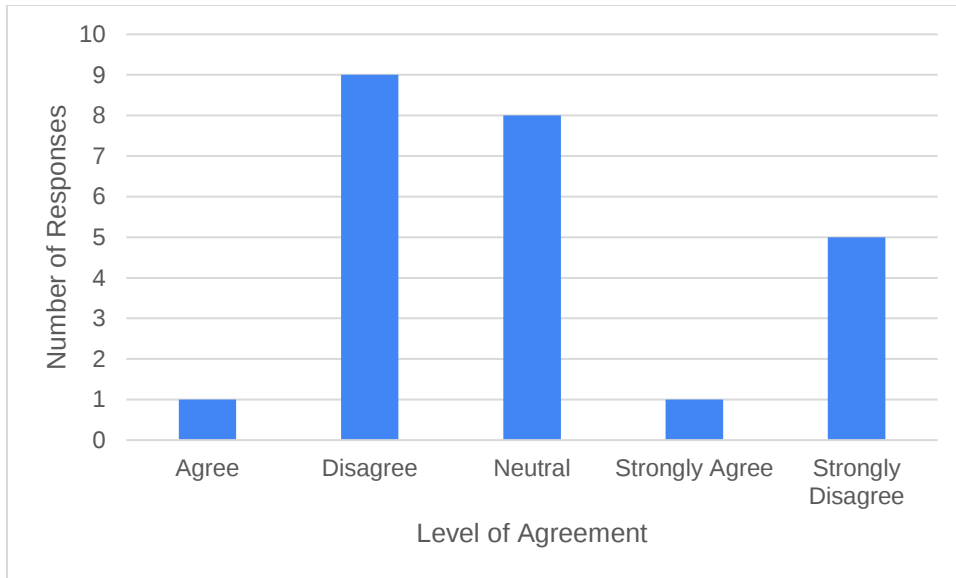


Figure 19: I base the perceived quality of the brand based off its influencer/celebrity association.

9 respondents disagreed with the likert scale statement with 8 stating their neutrality, 5 strongly disagreeing and 1 response shared between agreeing and strongly agreeing with the statement.

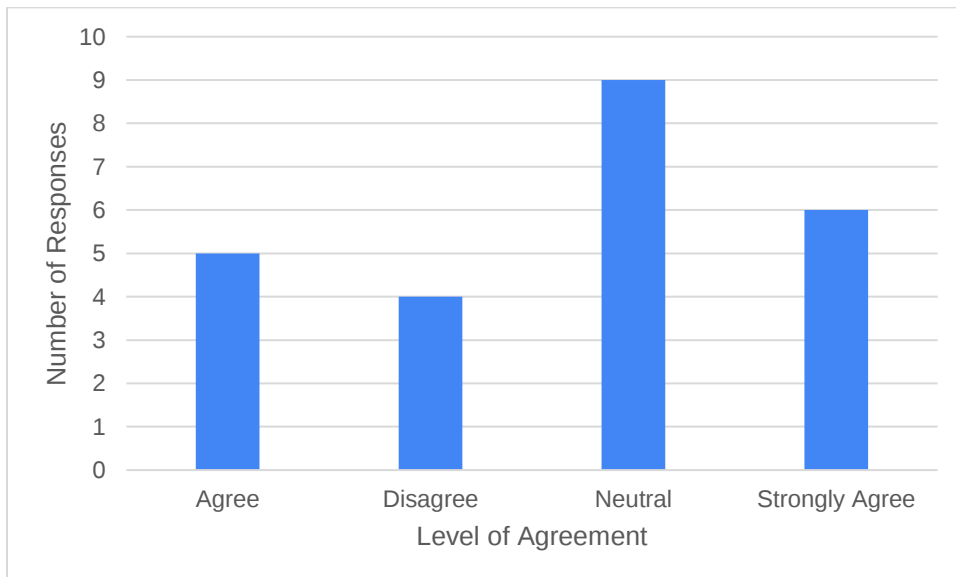


Figure 20: The perceived quality of the brand is more important than association when making purchase decisions.

9 respondents stated their neutrality to the statement with only 6 strongly agreeing, 5 agreeing and 4 disagreeing.

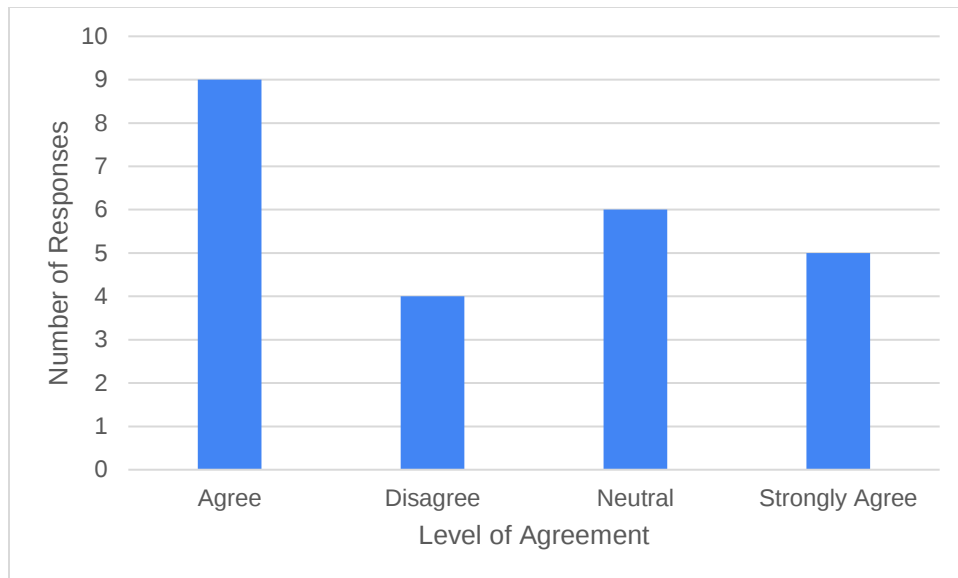


Figure 21: The perceived quality of the brand is more important than loyalty when making a purchase decision.

9 respondents agreed with the statement with 6 stating their neutrality, 5 strongly agreeing and 4 disagreeing.

4.6.1 Overview of the Findings

According to the seminal author (Aaker, 1991), perceived quality cannot be objectively determined as it is a perception and an overall judgement by a consumer based on what they perceive as important to them. 9 out of 24 (37.5%) respondents disagreed with the statement about perceived quality of athletic footwear being linked to influencers/celebrities and this playing an important role in their purchase decisions. This relates back to the seminal authors statement and based on the other likert scale questions, many respondents agreed to perceived quality being more important than brand loyalty with 9 out of 24 (37.5%) respondents believing so and 11 out of 24 (45.8%) respondents stating that the overall perceived quality of a brand influences their purchase decisions thus showing that in the eyes of South African athletic footwear consumers, it can be argued that influencers or celebrity's do not create a superior quality for athletic footwear, rather the actually quality of the athletic footwear itself influences their purchase decisions. It is from this that these responses can be related back to a study by (Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard, 2015), Keller (2008) states that perceived quality to a customer is a perception of general quality or superiority of a product or service. When

seeking to determine the extent to which perceived quality influences purchase decisions as it relates to South African consumers, it can be argued that despite the impact of influencers and celebrities in the marketing of athletic footwear, the overall quality of the products on offer to a certain extent play an important role in the final purchase decision of South African consumers based on their perception and evaluation of the brand and its product offering.

4.7 Validity and Reliability

According to (Heale and Twycross, 2015) validity is defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in quantitative studies while reliability refers to the consistency of a measure. With the purpose of validity being to determine whether or not the research measured what it was meant to measure (Du Plooy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout, 2014) a pre-test of the research instrument was conducted amongst three individuals to determine the readability of the statement and to correct any spelling or structural errors that may have occurred. The validity was dealt with by the researcher by designing the self-administered questionnaire in a manner that covered all the important concepts and utilising a methodology that aided in answering the research question. The research instrument used for this study was adapted from a similarly study on brand equity (Pather, 2017) which had conducted the necessary tests for the research instrument's reliability with the statements having a level of similarity indicating levels of reliability in the research instrument.

4.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the findings and provide interpretations of the responses obtained from the self-administered questionnaire. The findings indicate that respondents are willing to pay between R1001-R1500 for athletic footwear with many respondents indicating they purchase athletic footwear once every year with being Nike the brand most respondents was familiar with. The level of agreement or disagreement to statements regarding brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality indicated a positive relationship between brand equity facets and purchase intentions, however, to be highlighted is respondents having brand loyalty as the least contribution factor towards purchase intentions.

5.Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to combine the study by providing a look into how each of the research objectives, questions and the problem statement was answered with a view at the future contributions the study can make to both the academic world and branding space. Finally, the limitations that came with conducting this study will be discussed.

5.2 Research Questions, Objectives and Problem Statement

5.2.1 Research Sub-Question 1- What is the relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions?

The findings strongly indicate that there is a positive relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions by South African consumers as it relates to athletic footwear. This means brands that focus more on building a positive brand equity, are more likely to attract consumers.

5.2.2 Research Sub-Question 2 - Which brand equity facet has the strongest relationship with consumer purchase intentions?

Based on the findings, it was evident that many of the respondents felt that brand awareness had the strongest influence on their purchase decisions of athletic footwear. This was identified through brand awareness receiving the highest “strongly agree” and “agree” responses as compared to the other brand equity facet statements.

5.2.3 Research Objectives 1- To determine whether there is a relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions.

The findings indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear. This finding is crucial as brand equity adds or subtracts value for the consumer (Aaker, 1991) and can significantly affect consumer confidence in purchase decisions particularly in highly competitive markets.

5.2.4 Research Objective 2- To determine to what extent brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality influences consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear.

The findings indicate that although brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality all play an important role in the final purchase intention of consumers; the brand loyalty facet to a lesser extent influences consumers when making purchase decisions whereas the brand awareness and brand association facets to a large extent play a big influencing factor on consumer purchase decisions. Although respondents found perceived quality to be of importance when making purchase decisions, the facet only to a certain extent influences the final purchase intention of consumers as it relates to athletic footwear.

5.2.5 Problem Statement

The problem of not having enough studies cover all the brand equity facets as it relates to athletic footwear purchases has been addressed as all facets were covered in the research and the findings indicate that brand loyalty, brand association, brand awareness and perceived quality all contribute to the final purchase intent of consumers, however; the extent of the contribution varies. The data presented in the study shows that although consumers may be influenced more by one facet than the other, each of the facet intertwine and play an important role in guiding purchase intentions.

5.3 Implications of Study

The contribution of this study lies in its investigative nature of brand equity in its entirety and its influence on purchase intentions, particularly of athletic footwear.

The study firstly contributes to the academic component of the researcher's qualification in that it describes the relationship between brand equity and South African consumer purchase intentions by focusing on athletic footwear. This is of particular relevance as the researcher's degree focuses on the fundamentals of branding and how strong brands are built and can be used for future academic scholars and researchers. Secondly, by

focusing on the South African consumer, local athletic footwear brands which based off the findings had low familiarity, can use the research as a building block for further investigations that can help the brands strengthen their brand equity.

5.4 Heuristic Value of the Study

The study was successful in answering its objectives and aiding in gaining an understanding of the influence brand equity on purchase intentions. It can however; be studied further and in greater detail in order to provide greater contributions. For future studies it can be recommended that a much larger sample size is utilised in order to gain a more in-depth understanding and space to generalise the findings to the greater population. This would mean that more time in future would be recommended in order to collect the necessary data and analyse it for the purposes of exploring the relationship between the two concepts. In order to strengthen the research, a more diverse race group and age group is recommended in order to fully grasp how different consumers are influenced by brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality when making purchase intentions. The quantitative nature of the study meant that respondents were given a select few responses to the statements, future research on this topic could incorporate a qualitative element to it thus allowing the researcher to fully understanding reasoning behind responses to specific questions. This would be beneficial to the academia but more so local and international brands in building up brand equity and identifying some of the things that make consumers tick.

5.5 Ethical Implications

The research is in line with the IIE ethical consideration policy. Throughout the data collection process, an online survey platform was utilised to keep respondents' identities and responses anonymous (Annexure A). Respondents were made aware that participation in this research was completely voluntary and were notified of the academic nature behind the research. The sample does not include any minors. Throughout the data analysis process, findings were reported in an ethical manner that did not falsify or misinterpret the information gathered in order to skew the results.

5.6 Limitations of the study

A limitation to this study was that the sample size ($n=30$) of the research was small thereby making it difficult to generalise the findings to the greater South African population. Although the data collection methodology aided in getting the necessary information to continue the study and provided anonymity, socially desirable response bias could have played a big factor thus resulting in respondents giving responses that seem more favourable as opposed to those that truly fit their feeling towards the statements presented to them. The respondent age and race demographic were highly concentrated on black individuals and the 22–25-year-old age group thus limiting the understanding of purchase intentions from an older and racially diverse demographic. The utilisation of a self-administered questionnaire limits the ability to truly gauge the respondent's true attitude towards statements. The limited time constraints inhibited the ability to gather more information on the phenomena from respondent's and gather more body of knowledge related to the topic.

5.7 Final Conclusion

The study enabled the researcher to explore the influence brand equity has on purchase intention of athletic footwear and brought about useful insights that bring an opportunity for further research to be conducted on a scale much larger than that of this research. The findings indicate that of the brand equity facets, brand loyalty had the lowest influencing factor to purchase intentions of athletic footwear whilst brand awareness had the strongest influence which brings about an opportunity for future research to be conducted on the reasons behind South African consumers considering brand loyalty as the least contributing factor when making purchase decisions. The study made use of a quantitative approach and utilised the positivist paradigm in an attempt to gain the necessary insights on the influence brand equity has on purchase decisions in a manner that is objective. The study was successful in answering all its objectives and despite the limitations that existed whilst conducting the study, the research findings can be utilised as a foundation for further studies on a similar topic.

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Annexure A



CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Ntandoyenkosi Khuselwa Mlangeni and I am a student at IIE Vega, Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi about the influence brand equity facets, namely; brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality have on your purchases of athletic footwear. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of brand equity and the influence it plays on purchase intentions as to contribute to the rising local athletic footwear brands. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fall within the population most likely influenced by brand equity. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to invite you to answering questions based on association, loyalty, awareness and perceived quality as they influence your purchasing intentions. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your influencing factors towards athletic footwear purchases. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Vega, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours Strategic Brand Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Ntandoyenkosi Mlangeni

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkhomazi

[REDACTED]

Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Ntandoyenkosi Khuselwa Mlangeni about the influence of brand equity on athletic footwear purchase decisions.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature	Date

Annexure B

Please indicate your gender (If you are not comfortable with answering, please leave it blank) *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other...

Please indicate your age group *

- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-25
- ☐ 26-29
- ☐ 30-33
- ☐ 34-above

Please indicate your ethnic group (If you are not comfortable with answering, please leave it blank) *

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Mixed
- ☐ Other

How often do you purchase athletic footwear? *

- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Once every three months
- ☐ Once every six months
- ☐ Once every nine months

Which of the following brands are you most familiar with? *

- ☐ Nike
- ☐ Puma
- ☐ Adidas
- ☐ New Balance
- ☐ Under Armor
- ☐ Reebok
- ☐ Asics
- ☐ Drip
- ☐ Bathu

From the brands listed above, please state one brand you would prefer/most likely purchase. *

Short answer text

How much are you willing to spend on the above brands? *

- ☐ R500-R1000
- ☐ R1001-R1500
- ☐ R1501-R2000
- ☐ R2001-R2500
- ☐ R2501-R3000
- ☐ R3001-R3500
- ☐ R3501-R4000
- ☐ R4001-above

Do you purchase your own athletic footwear? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Below are statements about brand awareness. Please indicate on the Likert scale below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Description (optional)

How well I know a brand is important to me when purchasing athletic footwear *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I am influenced by brands communication/advertising when making a purchase decision *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The level of knowledge I have of a brand motivates me to purchase from them repetitively *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My preferred brand gives me confidence when making purchase decisions *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Below are statements about brand association, Please indicate on the Likert scale below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Description (optional)

I associate with the brands that my friends or family wear when making purchase decisions *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BAS1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I associate with brands influencers and or celebrities wear when making purchase decisions *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BAS2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I associate the athletic footwear brands I use with value for money when making a purchasing decision *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BAS3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I associate my preferred athletic footwear brand with being dedicated to making only quality products *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BAS4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Below are statements about brand loyalty, Please indicate on the Likert scale below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Description (optional)

I am loyal to one brand when making a purchase decision and rarely switch *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BL1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My purchases are based on my loyalty to the brand *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BL2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I purchase various athletic footwear brands and will constantly switch between brands *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BL3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Repurchase decisions are based on my loyalty to the brand *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BL4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My level of loyalty to a specific brand when purchasing athletic footwear is based off my trust in the brand *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BL5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Below are statements about perceived quality. Please indicate on the Likert scale below the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements.

Description (optional)

The perceived quality influences my decision when purchasing athletic footwear *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PQ1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

I base the perceived quality of the brand based off its influencer/celebrity association *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PQ2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The perceived quality of the brand is more important than association when making purchase decisions *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PQ3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The perceived quality of the brand is more important than loyalty when making a purchasing decision *

	Strongly Disagr...	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PQ4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for participating

Description (optional)

Annexure C



Date: 11 August 2021

Student name: Mlangeni Ntandoyenkosi Khuselwa

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: IIE Vega Pretoria Campus

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns. However, please consult your supervisor with regards to your supporting documents and research instrument before collecting your data for your research. We hereby provide you with *provisional permission* to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.

4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: Ivan Mkhomazi



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Dr SC Engelbrecht



Signature:

Annexure D

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
To investigate the influence of the various brand equity facets on consumer purchase intentions of athletic footwear in South Africa.	What is the relationship between brand equity and consumer purchase intentions	The study is valuable as it aims to understand the relationship between brand equity in its entirety and purchase intentions of athletic footwear and to what extent brand equity influences these decisions.	David Aaker Kevin Keller	Theme 1: Brand Association Theme 2: Brand Awareness Theme 3: Brand Loyalty Theme 4: Perceived Quality Theme 5: Customer-based brand equity	Paradigm <i>Positivism</i> Epistemology The aim of this study is gain knowledge and therefore the relationship between brand equity and purchase intent of athletic footwear is viewed as a phenomenon worth observing.	Quantitative Population Population Parameters 18-35 years old, residing in the Gauteng province that purchase athletic footwear.	Self-Administered questionnaire	Voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity, presenting data in an ethical factor.	Brand Loyalty has the least influence on consumer purchase intentions with brand awareness having the strongest	A larger sample size be used to gather more understanding of the entire population. A wider race and age demographic be utilised. More time allocated to the conduction of the research.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 6:		Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	
The problem which has been identified is the limited understanding	1. What is the relationship between	Brand Association Brand Awareness	Customer based brand equity	Theme 7:	Ontology To gain knowledge	Probability or non-probability Non-probability sampling	Unit of Analysis Individuals between 18-35 years who purchase	Small sample size made it difficult to generalise findings.	Adding towards future studies on brand equity. Aiding local	

ng of the influence all brand equity facets have on purchase intentions of athletic footwear. Limited studies (Grove, 2020) have investigated this relationship	brand equity and consumer purchase intentions? 2.Which brand equity facet has the strongest relationship with consumer purchase intentions?	Brand Loyalty Perceived Quality			which will be achieved through the observation of the relationship between brand equity and purchase intentions of customers as it relates to athletic footwear.	Sampling method Convenience Size N=30	athletic footwear Data Analysis Method(s) Google Forms. Microsoft Excel	Socially desirable response bias. Time constraints.	brands to understand the importance of brand equity in building a strong and sustainable brand	
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	---	--	--	--