



An exploratory study of the influence of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand on the waste management behaviour of the Nelson Mandela Bay Generation Z surfing community.

By



A research project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication

HSB0801

12082 WORDS

at

The IIEVega

Supervisor: Michele O'Hara

Submission date: December 2022

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the **BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication** to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.



Signature

Date: 5 December 2022

ABSTRACT

Environmental Non-Profit Organisations (ENPOs) play an important role in irradiating pollution that directly impacts on coastline beaches and blue flag beach status. A local ENPO, the Sustainable Seas Trust, is renowned for their active community initiatives, such as research and pollution surveying, conservation of marine areas and beach clean-ups. However, the brand is not currently aware of its influence on avid beach goers, such as surfers, and how the brand influences the attitudes and behaviours of surfers to practice responsible waste management behaviour. This research study explored the influence of the ENPO brand on the waste management behaviour of the Nelson Mandela Bay Generation Z surfing community. This study followed a qualitative approach and data was collected from the surfing community through online interpersonal interviews. The data was analysed through deductive thematic analysis and framework analysis, based on the hierarchical themes set out by Keller's (2003) Consumer Based Brand Equity model. This study revealed that surfers are influenced to take part in future beach clean-ups, but did not demonstrate deep connections with the brand. Therefore, more opportunities to engage with the brand must be created to achieve the level of resonance the brand desires to influence responsible waste management behaviour.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 CONTEXTUALISATION	1
1.2 RATIONALE	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION	5
2.2 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE.....	6
2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION/OPERATIOALISATION.....	10
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	12
4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH.....	13
4.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING.....	13
4.2 DATA COLLECTION.....	14
4.4 DATA ANALYSIS.....	15
5. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	16
5.1 THEMES AND MAIN IDEAS.....	17
5.2 INTREPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	18
5.2.1 Awareness of the Sustainable Seas Trust.....	18
5.2.2 Key brand messages.....	19
5.2.3 Word associations with the Sustainable Seas Trust brand.....	20
5.2.4 Influence of the brand's initiatives.....	20
5.2.5 Support for the brand's cause.....	22
5.2.6 Thoughts about the brand.....	23
5.2.7 Emotional connection with the brand.....	23
5.2.8 Importance of the brand in the surfer community.....	25
5.3 FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS.....	26
5.3.1 Salience.....	26
5.3.2 Performance and imagery.....	26
5.3.3 Feelings and judgements.....	27
5.3.4 Resonance.....	27
6. CONCLUSION.....	27

REFERENCE LIST	32
FIGURE 1: Key themes and main ideas extracted from participant responses.....	17
APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER	
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT LETTER	
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE	

1. INTRODUCTION

The following research report explored the influence of an Environmental Non-Profit Organisation and how this brand influenced the sample population's waste management behaviour.

Based on the above, the proposed title for this research study is:

“An exploratory study of the influence of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand on the waste management behaviour of the Nelson Mandela Bay Generation Z surfing community.”

1.1 CONTEXTUALISATION

Over the past three years, world governments have drawn specific attention to the importance of environmental conservation directly and indirectly contributing to environmental crises. Areas that require the most sustainable development are coastal ecosystems and marine areas worldwide, such as coral reefs, salt marshes, dunes and beaches as these areas are often exposed to pollution (Neumann, Ott and Kenchington, 2017). According to Bega (2021), South Africa is placed 11th globally on the marine pollution ranking list due to the high volumes of plastic pollution incurred every year and the increased pressure on its waste management systems.

South Africa's marine coastline plastic pollution and waste management remains an ongoing concern and requires all stakeholders from public and private sectors to play their part in lessening the detrimental effects and curb the influence of threats imposed by negligent behaviour. To support responsible waste management, Environmental Non-Profit Organisations serve as catalysts among both private and public spheres to create opportunities for engagement and awareness and to lobby for public support in their various causes. This is especially evident in coastal cities in South Africa (Van Dyk, 2017).

Surfers are a specific segment of beach goers that visit beaches regularly and not only seasonally and are, therefore, representative of frequent beach goers.

The Sustainable Seas Trust, as a local environmental non-profit organisation, has planned and executed several initiatives in an attempt to remove plastic pollution from Southern African beaches, of which the Litter Monitoring Project and Beach Clean-ups have gained great traction (Ellis, 2021). However, amidst many initiatives and attempts to create pollution-free beaches, these attempts have not been very successful.

In 2021, the Sustainable Seas Trust documented that several days after Beach Clean-ups have been done on two Nelson Mandela Bay beaches, more or less 80kg to 100kg of litter would be collected again by the Trust employees. This could be a result of negligent beachgoer behaviour visiting public beaches and not discarding plastic containers and/or other consumer goods wrapping responsibly (Ellis, 2021). This type of consumer responsibility (or irresponsibility) may stem from the conscious and unconscious variables that shape consumers' attitudes. One very important variable that influence responsible consumer decision-making is brand loyalty and an organisation's reputation in the marketplace (Huo, Hameed, Zhang, Ali & Hashim, 2021). Therefore, how a brand resonates with its audience would have a strong influence on their behaviour in support of a brand's cause.

Van Dyk (2017) explains that the success of non-profit organisations is depended on the trust established between itself as a brand and its various stakeholders. Huo *et al.*, (2021) further purports that this form of trust is associated with brand loyalty. However, very few studies have been done to demonstrate the connection between consumer attitudes and brand loyalty in context of environmental sustainability of South African beaches.

Therefore, an investigation into a segment of beach goers and frequently visit the beach, namely surfers, is important their attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable waste management may demonstrate if the Sustainable Seas Trust have gain their brand loyalty.

1.2 RATIONALE

The researcher is resident in the Eastern Cape Nelson Mandela Bay area and has chosen to focus on accessible beaches and a brand that is active in this locale.

According to Eastern Cape Tours (2017) Nelson Mandela Bay boasts three blue-flag beaches, which are Hobie, Humewood and Kings beach. These three beaches are mostly known as sought-after tourist destinations for holiday makers, water sports enthusiasts and avid beach goers. Blue Flag (2018) explains that blue flag beach status is conferred on beaches that are accessible, safe and free of environmentally harmful pollution and is one of the world's most recognized awards for pristine and safe beaches, marinas and boat operators. However, as beaches in the Eastern Cape are still riddled with litter, often resulting from improper beachgoer behaviour and waste disposal. This behaviour directly influences blue flag beach status which is one of the world's most recognized awards for pristine and safe beaches, marinas and boat operators. Indirectly, this influences economic industries, such as local and foreign tourism, fisheries and water sports and recreational activities. To safeguard an ecosystem upon which so many socio-economic factors are dependent, all efforts must be exhausted to reduce coastline pollution.

The Sustainable Seas Trust brand is one of the leading environmental non-profit organisations to advocate for pollution-free beaches. However, to ensure meaningful influence among Nelson Mandela Bay water sports enthusiasts, in particular surfers who are frequenters at the beach, and to determine if the brand's messages resonate with them means the influence of the brand's equity must be analysed.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

As alluded to above, coastline plastic pollution and waste management in South Africa remains an ongoing concern and negatively effects key economic industries such as local and foreign tourism and fisheries (Bega, 2021). During 2021, plastic litter of up to 50 years old accumulated on the beaches of the South African coastal province of the Eastern Cape. Recently, the Sustainable Seas Trust, conducted a waste audit of Nelson Mandela Bay beaches to determine the main sources of plastic pollution. The

audit determined that 65% of litter was non-recyclable plastic and comprised mostly of consumer goods wrapping and plastic bottles (Ellis, 2021). It can be deduced that negligent behaviour on the part of beach goers or water sport enthusiasts, such as surfers and sailors, may be contributing to plastic pollution on Nelson Mandela Bay's beaches.

The Sustainable Seas Trust seeks to understand the above phenomenon and whether a brand is able to influence attitudes and behaviours towards coastline plastic pollution (Ellis, 2021). As explained above, efforts to curb negative behaviours have been employed by brands such as The Sustainable Seas Trust, but with low efficacy rates.

However, no current studies have been done to date to identify how Nelson Mandela Bay surfers perceive the value of the brand which may directly or indirectly influence on their behaviour.

The Sustainable Seas Trust is not currently aware of the extent to which it resonates with Nelson Mandela Bay surfers and whether the waste management events and projects to reduce marine coastline pollution are influencing behaviour.

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence the Sustainable Seas Trust brand has on Nelson Mandela Bay surfers to determine which components of brand equity may need to be adapted to more effectively influence Nelson Mandela Bay surfers to support the brand in its attempt to foster responsible waste management behaviour and subsequently reduce coastline plastic pollution.

Therefore, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. In what way are Nelson Mandela Bay surfers exposed to the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?
2. What attitudes do Nelson Mandela Bay surfers hold towards the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?

3. In what way are Nelson Mandela Bay surfers influenced by the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?
4. What would make Nelson Mandela Bay surfers more loyal to the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research project is to determine the influence of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand, a local environmental non-profit organisation, on waste management behaviour. The objectives which this research project proposes to achieve is to:

1. To better understand what influences local frequent Nelson Mandela Bay surfers to behave responsibly in terms of waste management and pollution
2. To establish how an environmentally responsible brand such as the Sustainable Seas Trust can effectively influence Nelson Mandela Bay surfer behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As part of the literature review section, the theoretical foundation, review of previous literature and conceptualisation/operationalisation of key concepts will be discussed.

2.1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The theoretical framework that will inform this study is Keller's Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2003). Keller's model insightfully demonstrates that the way brands are perceived by people makes a difference in the way they think, act and react about various brands and their marketing messages. In other words, the true value of a brand is shaped through the mindset of its stakeholders and consumers (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015). Keller (2003) further purports that brands that have a strong presence and are held in high regard among their various stakeholders are perceived as more favourable and have increased chances to positively influence their intended target audiences. Essentially, the power of a brand lies in the minds of its stakeholders and consumers.

For brand resonance to be achieved, Keller (2003) suggests six building blocks scaffolded from least to most significant value in the minds of a brands target audience.

This starts with brand salience, which Keller (2003) describes as a deep awareness of a particular brand. This sets the foundation for a brand's ultimate bottom line performance for investors and the image it creates through association with the logo, slogan, symbols, visuals and other corporate identity elements. The next level of the pyramid looks at the judgements a consumer makes based on the quality and credibility of the brand and the emotional responses the brand evokes, such feelings of security, social approval and respect (Farjam and Hongyi, 2015). The last building block to maintain brand equity is resonance which refers to a deeply-rooted relationship which the target audience has with a brand.

Kylander and Stone (2012) explain that the concept of branding forms an important part of Non-Profit Organisations' work, as people associate a brand with different conversations in the marketplace and can result in a heightened brand image which could lead to an increase in influencing behaviour. Furthermore, Non-Profit Organisations associated with a strong brand image which resonate in the minds of their stakeholders and audiences, as they are seen as strong catalysts and drivers of social influence and change.

For the purpose of this study, Keller's six brand equity components will be used as a framework to determine how the Sustainable Seas Trust influences behaviour that promotes sustainable practices and anti-pollution behaviour among the surfer community. Keller's Consumer Based Brand Equity model will set the foundation to determine the level of awareness that Nelson Mandela Bay surfers have of the selected brand, how they believe the brand performs based on their social presence and brand initiatives, how strong the imagery associations are with the brand, the judgements Nelson Mandela Bay surfers have of the brand based on its credibility and the feelings they have towards the brand; and lastly resonance which determines their loyalty which to the Sustainable Seas Trust and their belief in the brand's cause and purpose.

2.2 REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

Mammatt and Ismaiel (2016) explain that United Nations governments have encouraged sustainable developments since 2001. Sustainable Development is a

pressing topic with several world countries pledging their allegiance to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the United Nations General Assembly in 2021 due to the detrimental effects caused by many recent environmental crises such as global warming, climate change, generating unsustainable waste and questionable waste disposal (European Commission, 2022). As part of the Agenda, seventeen Sustainable Development Goals calls for action to all constituents, including economic, social, environmental and governance, to assist in the development of major public projects and to realise the aforementioned goals (Brunet and Aubry, 2016). In support of the above the National Development Plan 2030, set out by the South African Government, aim to encourage the development of environmental sustainable societies which addresses the above Sustainable Develop Goal 14 (South African Government, 2022; European Commission, 2022).

Oliviera, Melo and Goncalves (2017) asserts that communication in the public sphere mostly consists of citizen engagement as well as community development which generally fosters a collective set of values and interests of members within a society. Non-profit Communication provides a platform for engagement and ethical support of citizens and through grassroot campaigns or initiatives, aim to address concerns and/or problems caused by corporate mismanagement or poor governance. Non-Profit Communication can be divided into six sub-fields, of which Health Communication, Development Communication and Environmental Communication are most pertinent today.

Environmental Communication can be described as the study of communication on environmental affairs with the aim of informing, persuading and educating the public to promote good and sustainable environmental practices and to ultimately raise awareness, alter behaviour and to influence public opinion (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018). Furthermore, this sub-field of communication aims to delineate how members of society interpret the natural world and how environmental problems are determined and attempted to be resolved through mediated communication with the public (Oliviera *et al.*, 2017). Most importantly, Environmental Communication is driven through agencies such as Non-Profit Organisations.

Meuchel (2014) asserts that Environmental Non-Profit Organisations (ENPOs) have come into existence to protect, research and become drivers of social change pertaining to the planet and its species and play a significant role in society. Furthermore, Wonnenberg (2017) explains that ENPOs have recently received more attention due to common associations with social movements and protest events, of which World Wildlife, Climate Reality Project and Greenpeace are of the most recognisable international ENPOs hosting various environmental campaigns and events. An example of a South African ENPO is the Sustainable Seas Trust, which serve to educate, research and protect ocean conservation as well as create awareness of plastic pollution (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). Often, ENPOs are tasked to act and make decisions on behalf of minority or groups with very little political influence. Local initiatives such as WESSA (2020) and Blue Flag (2018) explains that anti-pollution initiatives must have strong influences in the coastal communities in which they operate and are often recognised as an eco-label due to their strong connections with environmental education and safety, especially around ocean and marine areas.

According to Seiler and Bortnowska (2020) Non-Profit Organisations share very important information in their mission statements and their values and this is here where consumers make conscious decisions on whether these statements and values truly resonates with them. Van Dyk (2017) explains that within a South African context, perceptions of environmental non-profit organisations are very important to truly drive social change and impact within a society and therefore environmental non-profit organisations should be aware of how members of the public associates themselves with these organisations as brands.

Keller (2003) explains that brands can gain strong brand resonance from its target audiences to instil mindsets and behaviours as illustrated in the Customer Based Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2003). This model illustrates six building blocks, from identity to meaning to responses to relationships. These building blocks required to be “in sync” from brand resonance to be achieved. This model can assist the Sustainable Seas Trust brand to determine the level of salience through awareness the target audiences have on the brand, how they believe the Sustainable Seas Trust perform regarding their initiatives and social standing, how strong the imagery is which

the brand uses to market their messages, the judgements made to determine which initiatives of the brand are followed based on their brand perceived credibility, the feelings they have based on security that the brand is actually making a difference and lastly resonance, which determines the support provided based on the mindsets and actions of supports and their belief in the brand's cause.

The Sustainable Seas Trust brand attempts to use the above theoretical framework to determine brand resonance is achieved. Firstly, salience must be determined through awareness on the brand's official website and their Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram social media accounts (The Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022).

The brand's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram account is used to generate awareness on miscellaneous events and dates, such as conferences, beach clean-ups, world awareness days and awareness campaigns on how to alleviate plastic pollution (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022; Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). The brand's YouTube account hosts several webinar series which informs viewers and subscribers of the detrimental effects of plastic pollution and what actions can be performed to achieve the desired effects (SANO Sustainability Series, 2022).

In terms of imagery, the Sustainable Seas Trust brand logo elements appear on all above media and social media platforms and is easily identifiable as the source of communication based on the brand's identity placement. In terms of brand performance, the Sustainable Seas Trust have obtained significant amount of followers, subscribes and members on their accounts and several members of the community, including schools, Trust employees and members of the public participate in beach clean-ups (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). Based on judgements, it may be difficult to determine the credibility the brand currently holds among members of the public and beachgoers as beach clean-up events and efforts are often short-lived. This may influence the feelings members of the public may have when visiting beaches during and after beach clean-ups and awareness events and, in return, how the brand resonates with surfers specifically.

The current research study proposes to investigate the research problem of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand not currently being aware of how Nelson Mandela Bay

surfers resonate with the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and which brand equity components may require intervention to gain greater brand resonance. The Keller Consumer Based Brand Equity model will form the basis framework upon which interview questions will be scaffolded.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION/OPERALISATION

The following four concepts, key terms and variables will be unpacked and underpinned as part of this study, which are: sustainability, environmental communication, environmental non-profit organisations (ENPOs), Generation Z, Nelson Mandela Bay surfers and brand equity.

Broadly, the term sustainability can be described as the participatory approach to meeting the current demands of society without negatively impacting future developments through various stakeholders acting socially responsible (TWI, 2022). Sustainability is often reduced down to its three known pillars: economic, social and environmental protection (TWI, 2022). Beattie, Scott and Munichello (2021) posits economic protection which underpins how a business generates its profits, how transparent its accounting methods are and its overall good corporate governance whereas social sustainability refers to the human dimension of sustainability, which includes issues such as unemployment, inequality and fair treatment of business employees and also opportunities for community engagement often encouraged through corporate social responsibility efforts (Murphy, 2012; Beattie *et al.*, 2021). The last pillar of sustainability, the environmental protection, relates to the policies, laws and regulatory frameworks set in place to address environmental issues and concerns (Policy Forum on Development, s.a.). For the purpose of this study, sustainability will be operationally defined and measured in terms of environmental conservation efforts and consciousness and the sustainable use of sea shores.

Environmental Communication can be defined as the study of communication on environmental affairs with the aim of informing, persuading and educating the public to promote good and sustainable environmental practices and to ultimately raise awareness, alter behaviour and to influence public opinion (Pezzullo and Cox, 2018). To demonstrate its operational value to this study, environmental communication will

be referred to as the sub-field of communication which informs, persuades and educates the public on environmentally sustainable ocean and beach use.

Meuchel (2014) conceptualises Environmental Non-Profit Organisations (ENPOs) as public service organisations which serve to protect, research and become drivers of social change pertaining to the planet and its species and play a significant role in balancing out harmful and damaging effects imposed by various societal constituents. A good example of a local ENPO is the Sustainable Seas Trust, which serve to educate, research and protect ocean conservation as well as create awareness of plastic pollution (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). According to Wonnenberg (2017), ENPOs are only as successful as the social standing and following they enjoy among their audiences as well as the perceptions of value citizens in society hold on ENPO brands and their respective marketing strategies. For the purpose of this study, ENPOs will be operationally defined as non-profit organisations who aim to influence, educate, research and create awareness of ocean and beach conservation with the aim of reducing plastic pollution.

Debczak (2019) defines Generation Z citizens as members of society born between 1997-2012 and currently falling within the age bracket of 10-25 years of age. This particular group of young individuals are viewed as digital natives that show strong support on political movements and hold values such as sustainability very high (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Whitmore, 2019). For this study, Generation Z residents will be conceptualised as Nelson Mandela Bay beachgoers between the ages of 18-25 years of age. From an operational point of view, Generation Z residents between the ages of 18-25 will be screened to voluntarily partake in this study, as residents forming part of this age group tend to be students or may be employed and/or part-time employed and of the age to purchase and make their own consumer goods choices. This would be of particular importance to the proposed study as the level of environmental consciousness among this age group of residents may greatly impact on this study.

According to Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism (2022) Nelson Mandela Bay surfers can be conceptually defined as water sports enthusiasts of Gqeberha (formerly known as Port Elizabeth), Kariega (formerly known as Uitenhage), Despatch and Colchester

who visits four of the six metropole surfing beaches. However, Nelson Mandela Bay surfers should be operationally defined due to the impact that this may have on the study. Thus, the above-mentioned surfers can be defined as citizens from Nelson Mandela Bay who visit the three three blue flag beaches at least twice a month. The above criteria would be important as a regular surfer may influence the data collected for this study.

Conceptually, Hayes (2021) explains that Brand Equity generally refers to the value that is added by a brand through the way it is recognised and distinguished from other likely competitors. Brand equity also provides marketers with direction on how to direct a brand towards a favourable future so that the wanted opinions, beliefs and behaviours are associated with the brand (Keller, 2003). Furthermore, Luo (2016) posits that brand equity can also be viewed as brand symbolism that reduces risks, switching costs and draws favourable impressions when customers are exposed to verified and unverified market messages. Based on the operational definition of brand equity, this variable will be measured as part of this study by determining how citizens participating in this study would draw favourable impressions and experiences in line with marketing message received from ENPOs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research project, an interpretivist paradigm is selected as this supports the evaluation of ideas, opinions and beliefs of subjects and aims to identify subjective meanings of observable phenomena and what is accepted as knowledge (Maya and Kelly, 2019).

The proposed study supports the above research paradigm due to the nature of the ideas, opinions and beliefs of people the researcher aimed to obtain data from. Information was gathered from surfers who regularly visit the beach. This enabled the researcher to gain informed opinions from participants who spend time in the natural environment which formed part of this study. As the brand under investigation directly supports anti-pollution behaviour, participants in the actual study commented on their interactions, experiences and beliefs of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and how the brand influenced them.

The study gained knowledge from the participants based on the attitudes and experiences of Nelson Mandela Bay beaches surfers and how they were influenced by the Sustainable Seas Trust based on their current views on coastline plastic pollution and waste management behaviour.

4. RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research approach that guided this study was qualitative and the researcher relied on information shared through the use of words and opinions from participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Furthermore, the appropriate design informed by the research approach is an exploratory research design as this supports the understanding of an unknown situation (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

4.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The researcher identified the proposed population for this research study as the Nelson Mandela Bay surf community which comprised of anyone currently residing in Gqerberha, Kariega, Despatch and Colchester. The Nelson Mandela Bay surfers whom the researcher was interested in interviewing subscribed to the group of young adults commonly known as Generation Z. This particular group of young adults are predominantly aged between 18-25 years of age, which was conceptualised and operationalised by Debczak (2019) as individuals who are from the generational group born between 1997-2012. For the purpose of this study, this sought-after population was described as young adults whom are exposed to the internet and social networking since the advent of the latter and shows the most support towards political movements and sustainability (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Whitmore, 2019). This particular population was also sought-after by the researcher, as Generation Z citizens have greater exposure to online media and social media platforms which are important characteristics of the population the researcher intended to explore on the brand under investigation (Whitmore, 2019).

Due to the population for this study being vast and dispersed among three towns, the researcher identified an accessible population. Fetzer (2020) explains that an

accessible population refers to a particular portion of an entire population which the research has direct access to. The accessible population to the researcher was determined through social association, therefore, Generation Z surfers known to the researcher.

Sampling was referred to the list of people who the researcher made contact with to partake in the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). For this project, non-probability and, in particular, convenience sampling was considered based on the accessibility of the sample population to the researcher. To ensure reliable and trustworthy information could be obtained from the above identified sample, a requirement for Nelson Mandela Bay surfers to partake in this study was visits to any one of the three blue flag beaches at least twice a month. Non-probability sampling comprised an equal opportunity to be approached by the researcher to participate in the study whereas convenience sampling was utilised as the researcher had immediate access to the above-mentioned three blue flag beaches and also the only three blue flag beaches within Nelson Mandela Bay.

Based on the above, the researcher approached ten Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfers known through social association to obtain who would like to voluntarily participate in the research study and met the above criteria. For this research project, the sample audience consisted of five Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfers between the ages of 18-25 years who agreed to participate in the research study.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

The method of data collection method utilised was one-on-one online interviews, which the researcher purposefully selected as the most appropriate method to understand the respondents' beliefs, opinions and views on the phenomenon that was investigated to gain valid and reliable information that provided the researcher with adequate data to explore the research problem. The online interviews were conducted via the Microsoft Teams platform. Pre-screening questions formed part of the interview selection process and following pre-screening questions were asked to participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014): have you heard of the Sustainable Seas Trust, do you currently reside in Nelson Mandela Bay, are you between the ages of 18 and 25 and

do you visit Hobie, Humewood and/or Kings Beach at least twice a month. This ensured the participants in this project subscribed to the relevant demographic criteria to contribute appropriately to this study.

The interviews took place in the month of August 2022 via Microsoft Teams as the online meeting platform the researcher and participants had access to. Surfers were asked to give answers to the three pre-screening questions and after answering the three pre-screening questions successfully, the surfers were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the interview. A total of five participants were interviewed.

The aim of the interview questions were to determine the attitudes held towards the Sustainable Seas Trust brand; their associations with Sustainable Seas brand; how Nelson Mandela Bay surfers were exposed to the Sustainable Seas Trust brand; the key messages of the brand that impacted the sample surfers the most; how Nelson Mandela Bay surfers were influenced by the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and thus share if they had a strong emotional connection with the brand and the role the brand plays in their lives.

The following interview questions was posed to each of the participants:

1. How did you find out about the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?
2. What messages from the brand have influenced you?
3. What two words would you associate with the Sustainable Seas Trust logo?
4. Which initiatives have the brand taken that influences you the most?
5. Would you support a clean-up arranged by the brand? Why? Why not?
6. What are your thoughts about the Sustainable Seas Trust brand?
7. Would you say you have an emotional connection with the brand? Why? Why not?
8. Would you say the brand plays an important role in your life? Why? Why not?

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Smart Capital Mind (2012) defined data analysis as the practice in which raw, primary data is organised for the extraction of useful information. This process of organising data is important to identify and understand what the data does and does not contain.

Examples of raw data for this study was obtained through open-ended interview questions and required qualitative analysis.

Medelyan (2022) explains that qualitative data analysis refers to the way data is dissected to determine the meaning of non-numerical and unstructured data gained from open-ended interviews. When conducting interviews, thematic coding is often a preferred method to use when categorising data that respondents shared of their personal experiences. Two types of coding, inductive and deductive coding can be used to identify patterns of similar responses. Deductive coding can be explained as identifying codes in advance and relating the data to them (SAGE Publications, s.a.). Medelyan (2020) further explains that another qualitative analysis method is framework analysis, described as an organised structure of inductive themes which comprises a combination of data descriptors based on a selected framework.

For the purpose of this study, deductive thematic coding and framework analysis was used to analyse the data. The open-ended questions the researcher asked the participants on their experiences and interactions on were structured according to the codes evident in Keller's (2003) Consumer Based Brand Equity Model Framework. Framework analysis was used through a particular code frame which presented a hierarchical set of themes used to code qualitative data (Medelyan, 2022). The framework analysis that was used for this study was Keller (2003) Consumer Based Brand Equity Model Framework, as this represented an hierarchical set of themes; which level of awareness the target audiences have on the brand in question and how they believe the brand performs based on its services, how strong the imagery is which the brand uses to market their messages, the judgements made to determine how the sample audience follows the brand, the feelings they have based on security that they are actually making a difference and lastly resonance, which determines the level of loyalty and support provided based on the mindsets and actions of supports and their belief in the brand's cause and purpose. Further to the above, the researcher coded and categorised data participants shared on their personal experiences (SAGE Publications, s.a.).

5. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS

The aim of the data analysis was to analyse the responses of participants given during the online interviews based on the eight questions asked. These responses were coded and themed and the main ideas were extracted from participants. The responses were further interpreted, discussed and analysed according to the selected framework.

5.1 THEMES AND MAIN IDEAS

The following table summarises the key themes and main ideas:

Themes:	Main ideas:
Awareness of Brand	• Informal Conversations • Advertising • Website • Social Media
Key brand messages	• Slowing down pollution • Community work • Responsible fishing • Protect marine environment
Associations with brand logo	• Wave • Ocean • Fish/Coelacanth • Protection
Influential brand initiatives	• Beach clean-ups • Research
Support for brand's cause	• Strong support for beach clean-ups • Encouraging community support
Thoughts about the brand	• Worthy cause • Must create more public awareness
Connection with the brand	• Strong connections synonymous with lifestyle choices of surfers • Weak connections due to not knowing enough about the brand
Purpose of the brand	• Takes care of ocean water and marine biodiversity

	• Lack of purpose associated with not knowing enough about the brand
--	--

Figure 1: Key themes and main ideas extracted from participant responses

The above table presented the key themes and main ideas derived from participants and informed further interpretations and discussions on the Sustainable Seas Trust brand.

5.2 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The following interpretation, discussion, and insights of the findings will be analysed below according to the themes and main ideas extract from the online interpersonal interviews held with the participants.

5.2.1 Awareness of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand

Based on the answers from the participants, all participants have informally heard of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand, either through informal conversations or directly connecting with the brand through its various communication platforms. Participant 5 very recently became aware of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand but have not connected or engaged with the brand via their communication platforms. Participants 2 and 3 shared that information about the brand was gained from the Sustainable Seas Trust website and participants 1 and 4 were fully aware of the brand and the brand's identity due to their advertising efforts through their vehicle wrapping and through connecting with the brand through their Facebook and Instagram social media pages.

Keller (2003) explains that brand awareness is determined through its salient efforts and strong imagery used by the brand to market itself. The Sustainable Seas Trust utilises social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to advertise their brand, generate awareness about who they are as a brand and the initiatives they are involved, such as miscellaneous events and dates, conferences, awareness campaigns and beach clean-ups (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). 12 Point Signworks (2019) further explains that vehicle wrapping as a great form of advertising and is one

of the most effective ways Non-Profit Organisations can spread awareness throughout their communities.

In the analysis of this findings, it is evident that participants followed the brand through connecting directly with the brand's communication platforms, were more mindful of the brand and its imagery and could confidently identify and speak about the brand. However, if a participant only heard about the brand through conversations, could not confidently identify with the brand. This is confirmed by Keller's (2003) explanation that strong awareness can be determined through the recognition of a brand's imagery.

5.2.2 Key brand messages

Most participants that took part in the study expressed that the most common brand message they found influenced them on the Sustainable Seas Trust brand was linked to anti-pollution and slowing down of pollution. Secondary messages that influenced them was about creating awareness about the environment and the importance of protecting the environment. Participant 3 shared that messages and images regarding the community at work shared on the brand's website greatly influenced him, as this showed people taking care and actively protecting and preserving the marine environment. Participant 2 shared how strongly the message of anti-pollution resonated with him when recently visiting one of Nelson Mandela Bay's blue flag beaches, Pipe beach, after a storm leaving several plastic products washed up from the beach. Participant 5 shared that key message was in the name of the brand: *Well, it's in the name, you know, it's sustainable. It has something to do with responsible fishing.*

The above coincides with Seiler and Bortnowska (2020), stating that Non-Profit Organisations share very important information such as their mission statement values through their communication platforms and this helps media consumers make conscious decisions to support them and leading to their messages influencing them.

In the analysis of this finding, it is evident that the participants were well-informed of the brand and feel that the brand's key messages influenced them. However, no

participants shared that a key message from the Sustainable Seas Trust brand is to educate communities on marine protection and conservation.

5.2.3 Words associations with the Sustainable Seas Trust brand

The two words most participants associated with the Sustainable Seas Trust logo is “wave” and “ocean”. Participant 2 and 5 identified the word “fish” as most overtly evident in the Sustainable Seas Trust brand logo. Participant 3 and 4 identified the “fish” in the logo as a coelacanth, a very rare marine fish. The coelacanth marine species was believed to have been extinct more than 10 million years ago, but was rediscovered in 2019 off the South Coast of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Fraser, Henderson, Carsens, Duke & Burton, 2020). Both participants identified the importance and significance of this extinct species being rediscovered. Participant 3 shared: *Especially with the coelacanth and everything being rediscovered in Durban or whatever it was in our coastline, which is very cool.* Participant 4 shared: *That’s a coelacanth. So rare marine species. So obviously protection.* This rare marine fish plays a fundamental part in the history of the Sustainable Seas Trust, as the Trust originated from the African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) (Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022).

Keller (2003) purports that when a brand has strong, favourable and unique associations it is also likely to have higher recall opportunities and strong brand links from its consumers. When a brand portrays a strong image and what the brand stands remains in the minds of consumers, this can create real brand meaning.

From the above analysis, it is evident that participants could identify the most meaningful elements that make up the Sustainable Seas Trust brand identity. Furthermore, two participants identified the coelacanth as a unique part of brand logo, which plays an incremental role in the founding and existence of the brand and signifies the importance of conserving marine environments. These associations prove that Nelson Mandela Bay surfers could recall elements of the brand imagery and that the brand has real meaning to Nelson Mandela Bay surfers.

5.2.4 Influence of brand’s initiatives

It was found that most participants identified beach clean-ups as the most influential initiative from the Sustainable Seas Trust brand, but some participants were not openly aware of any initiatives the brand hosts. Even though beach clean-ups were disclosed, no participants articulated that they have taken part in a beach-clean up organised through the brand. However, Participants 1, 2 and 3 openly expressed that they would participate in beach clean-ups if they were aware of this. Participant 3 shared: *I just go to the beach on a Saturday morning and there's people cleaning up the beach like oh, it's a beach clean-up and you don't hear anything about, which is a little disappointing.* Participant 5 explained he witnessed beach survey taking place, possibly collecting information for a beach area to determine the impact pollution may have on a particular area: *I have run into people on the beach before and asked them what they were up to and they were to be honest, I completely forgot. Well, I forgot the ends and outs of it, but I know they were taking a survey of a certain beach area. If they were checking out pollution. I'm not sure what they were checking out and they're just happen to be checking out a beach area to survey when I was there. So yeah, so obviously they were and see the impact on a certain beach area and collecting info on that particular area.*

From the above analysis, it is clear that all participants are aware of the two most important initiatives that the brand is involved in, such as beach clean-ups and research which is connected to the core purpose of the brand (The Sustainable Seas Trust, 2022). Meuchel (2014) affirms the above by stating that Environmental Non-Profit Organisations have come into existence to protect, research and become drivers of social change. Wonnenburg (2017) further connects the above findings by explaining that most Environmental Non-Profit organisations are gaining a significant amount of attention about events and social movements which leads to many Environmental Non-Profit Organisations having great success with the current initiatives. From the analysis of this finding, Keller (2003) points out that strong brand imagery used to market a brand's message can lead to judgements made about the brand and its initiatives.

From the above, it is evident that participants that are aware of key messages and associate the brands imagery with these key messages are more likely to be influenced and take part in the brand's initiatives. However, active participation in

brand's initiatives would only be possible if Nelson Mandela Bay surfers are aware of when these initiatives will take place. The origins and/or purpose of the brand leads to people making judgements on the perceived credibility and what the brand stands for and constant reinforcement and open communication on key messages and initiatives would lead to greater support and drive towards social change.

5.2.5 Support for brand's cause

From the above, it was found that all participants wanted to be involved in beach-clean ups organised by the Sustainable Seas Trust brand. Both Participant 1 and 3 would not only like to participate themselves, but also encourage other people to get involved. Participant 1 explained: *Yes I will. I will participate. And also I would try to encourage other people to participate in it because with the whole saving the environment, it does not come from one company, it should actually come from everybody else, you know. So I think the more people that go to the beach clean-up, the faster the slowing down the pollution will be, you know.* Participant 3 also affirmed the above: *Yeah definitely. And get more participants get more hands on and also get their name out there as a cause. This organisation cares about the environment, cares about the ocean. Let's support them sort of thing, which is quite important for non-profits.*

Participants 2 and 5 showed strong interest in supporting beach clean-ups, however, explained that the impact of such initiatives are often short-lived. Participant 2 explained: *Often placing beach pick-ups in bins will be blown straight out again. For this to really work, pick-ups must be put in bags on a back of a bakkie and be removed immediately.* Participant 5 shared the same sentiment: *I do kind of feel like that's a losing battle. You know, the stuff is gonna be there in 10 minutes after you done.*

As alluded to by Meuchel (2014) and Wonnenburg (2017) in the previous question, Environmental Non-Profit Organisations become the drivers behind social change and the events hosted by Non-Profit Organisations and the support towards their causes are what makes them impactful. As asserted by Bega (2021), coastline pollution and effective waste management remains an ongoing concern.

The Sustainable Seas Trust (2022) as one of the leading Environmental Non-Profit organisations aims to change the attitudes and behaviours towards coastline pollution of those known to the brand and, by implication, to set off broader social change and mass participation. However, as discussed in the previous finding, people will only support the brand's initiatives if constant reinforcement and open communication on key messages initiatives take place.

5.2.6 Thoughts about the brand

From the participant interviews, general positive thoughts were shared on the brand under investigation. Both Participants 1 and 2 explained that they feel this is a clever movement, specifically due to the vast amount of pollution in the ocean reported annually and for a small town such as Gqeberha, the brand can really make a difference. Participant 4 explains that the Sustainable Seas Trust is a great organisation, but should focus on creating more public awareness on their initiatives to become truly influential: *So to create public awareness I think is paramount for them. Not necessarily through mass media, but you know, maybe small public-centric things at the beachfront. But yeah, they could for instance approach members of the Surf Community and beyond. You know, maybe like the Nelson Mandela Bay Surf Executive. And I think they would be willing to be involved in some way.*

WESSA (2020) and Blue Flag (2018) manifests the above by stating that anti-pollution initiatives often have strong influences in the coastal communities in which they operate. From the above, it is clear the Sustainable Seas Trust holds a favourable image in the minds of the Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfer sample. However, because Environmental Non-Profit Organisations hold little political influence and act on behalf of minority groups, public participation is vital (Van Dyk, 2017).

From the above analysis, it is evident that positive thoughts are held by the Nelson Mandela Bay surfing sample on the Sustainable Seas Trust brand. However, when these positive thoughts are not reinforced by key brand messages and open communication on how to become involved in brand initiatives are not initiative, this may result in little public participation.

5.2.7 Emotional connection with the brand

From the study, most participants have identified that they do not have a strong connection with the brand. Some participants explain that they do not have a strong connection with the brand as they feel they do not know enough about the brand to experience an emotional connection. However, these participants feel that the brand stands for something important and would support a beach clean-up initiated by the brand.

Other participants feel that they do have a strong connection with the brand and subscribed this emotional connection to their lifestyle choices and spending a great amount of time in the ocean. Participant 1 shared: *I've spent my whole life in the ocean so to see a company actually doing something to protect the ocean yard, I would definitely say that there's an emotional connection for sure. Because I'm always so busy with fishing and surfing and diving in the ocean. That's just definitely a strong connection there.* Participant 4 shared the same sentiment: *As a surfer protecting the environment, particularly an environment I use a lot is very close to my heart.* Participant 4 further asserts that a complex emotion, such as pride and a deep sense of connection means that he would try as far as possible to support the brand and help them achieve their goals.

Keller (2003) asserts that feelings of people towards a brand is based on the security of knowing enough about the brand and that they are actually making a difference. From the above analysis, it is evident that the two participants that connected the ocean environment directly to their lifestyle felt a much stronger connection to the brand and its cause than the other participants who may not have consciously made this connection.

The above analysis proves that feelings towards a brand can become strong when the brand's initiatives play an incremental role in the everyday lives of its target audience. When the effects of brand initiative are evident to their key stakeholders, a strong emotional connection can be made. Ample knowledge on the brand could also affect how strongly people feel towards a brand. However, should the effects of brand initiatives not be witnessed or experienced and not enough knowledge on the brand exists among its intended audience, a deep connection may not be felt or experienced.

5.2.8 Importance of brand in the surfer community

Based on the participants' responses, mixed reviews were shared based on the importance of the brand in the lives of Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfers that took part in this study. Some participants shared that the brand played a very important role in their lives. Participant 2 shared a detailed account of a recent surf incident that led to a serious health condition due to polluted ocean water which greatly impacted on his life and surfing ability. Participant 1 shared that the brand played an important role in his life as Nelson Mandela Bay oceans consist of a large marine biodiversity and that not taking care of this habitat means that this biodiversity will not be taken care of: *It is therefore important for me to keep it clean.* Other participants shared they feel the brand does not play an important role in their lives. Participant 3 explains that the brand does not play a significant role in his life due to not being fully aware of the brand and its constant presence. However, feels that the brand is in some way important based on his water sports lifestyle: *They're not apart of my life, if that makes sense. But the fact that they're cleaning up where I enjoy to be makes them a part of my life.* Participant 4 shares the same sentiment: *I would say both yes and no. It does play a role in looking after our marine environment and species. But I simply do not know enough to comment more.* Participant 5 states that the Sustainable Seas Trust brand does not play an important role in his life and subscribes this to not being fully aware of the brand's core purpose: *An important role in my life? Probably not, but I would be much more interested in them if I know what was going on.*

Keller (2003) asserts that the kind of relationship consumers hold with a brand depends on the level of identification with the brand. If consumers feel "in sync" with a brand, they will most likely experience brand resonance and may demonstrate a sense of loyalty towards the brand, but if the knowledge on the brand is non-existent or not favourable, they may choose not to develop a sense of loyalty towards the brand.

Based on the above analysis, it is evident that the Sustainable Seas Trust does not resonate with all participants in this study. As explained by Keller (2003), the likelihood of resonance being achieved is based on the identification and knowledge, support and deep connections made with the known cause and purpose of the brand.

5.3 FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

From a Framework Analysis perspective, the application of the Keller's Consumer Brand Based Equity Model (2003) demonstrates the presupposed hierarchical levels to build brand equity. Therefore, the model explains that meaning can not be established if a sound brand identity has not been formed; brand responses can not take place if the right meaning was not developed; and a relationship can not be shaped if supportive responses have not been evoked. The hierarchical levels that supports the above model are: salience, performance and imagery, feelings and judgements and resonance (Keller, 2003). To demonstrate the above level of resonance the Sustainable Seas Trust has achieved among the Nelson Mandela Bay surfer community sample, the presupposed influence of the hierarchical levels are discussed below.

5.3.1 Salience

Keller (2003) describes salience as the level of awareness people hold on a brand and the extent to which the brand can be recognised and recalled. Highly salient brands have depth and breadth of awareness and is often thought of in a variety of settings.

From the above findings and analysis, it can be deduced that the Sustainable Seas Trust brand has achieved salience among the Nelson Mandela Bay surfing community sample, as some participants were generally aware and have become aware of the brand across multiple communication platforms. Participants that only relied on word-of-mouth and informal conversations of the brand could not instantly recognise and recall the brand.

5.3.2 Performance and imagery

A brand's performance can be described as the ways in which the service of the brand aims to meet the consumer's needs and how the brand is rated in terms of its service quality and brand imagery with the focus on the intangible attributes of a brand to fulfil psychological and social needs (Keller, 2003). From the above findings and analysis, the Sustainable Seas Trust brand performs well and the sample audience is aware of the brand's key services and messages, such as: beach clean-ups, research and protecting the marine environment. The brand's image is viewed as unique and

distinctive and is associated with the brand's core purpose (Keller, 2003). Furthermore, the brand's imagery is accepted, and the main associations made with the brand by the sample audience is strongly tied to its defined identity. However, if a strong identity is not evident, superficial associations are made about the brand and their services and imagery can not be commented on, It can therefore be deduced that if a brand's performance and imagery associations can only be seen as strong, favourable, and unique when the foundation of a well-defined brand identity is set.

5.3.3 Feelings and judgements

Keller (2003) purports brand feelings and judgements are how consumers think and feel about the brand and how the performance and imagery associations lead to the forming of different opinions. These opinions and feelings can be experienced either positive or negative or can be either mild or intense. Furthermore, these judgements and feelings often only influence consumer's behaviours favourably when they experience positive encounters with the brand (Keller, 2003). From the above findings and analysis, general positive feelings are harboured on the Sustainable Seas Trust brand, because of elevated brand awareness, performance and imagery. However, due to limited encounters with the brand, consumer judgements have been effected and no support have been shown by the Nelson Mandela Bay surfer community sample towards their main initiatives. It can therefore be deduced that even if elevated brand awareness and positive brand performance and imagery is present, it may not be enough to influence consumer behaviour to make the necessary judgements to take part in brand initiatives.

5.3.4 Resonance

The final component as part of the Keller's (2003) Consumer Based Brand Equity Model Framework is brand resonance, which is interpreted as intense and deep connections consumers make with a brand and is needed to form loyal relationships with a brand. This requires all other brand equity elements to be "in sync" and leads to consumers actively wanting to connect and interact with a brand and to share their experiences with others. From the above study findings, brand resonance only appeared to be strong when participants' lives were immediately impacted by circumstances that are indirectly controlled by the brand. However, for most participants in this study, brand resonance was not realised due to limited encounters

with the brand and no active participation by the community sample with the brand. Therefore, it can be deduced that brand relationships were not formed as the required judgements and feelings towards the brand were not present, again, even though brand salience, performance and imagery were present.

From the above framework analysis, brand resonance among Nelson Mandela Bay surfer community sample was not fully achieved as not all building blocks as proposed by Keller's (2003) Consumer Based Brand Equity Model were aligned to support the development of loyal relationships with the brand.

From the above data analysis and findings, the researcher can confidently report that the research questions and objectives for this study have been addressed. From the above, it is evident that Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfers are exposed to the Sustainable Seas Trust brand through the brand's website, social media pages, such as Instagram and Facebook and also through informal conversations with their peers. Furthermore, research initiatives of the brand have been noticed and reported, showcasing that the brand is in fact active in its community. This proves to answer the first research question of how Nelson Mandela Bay surfers are exposed to the brand under investigation. Furthermore, the attitudes Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfers hold towards the brand and its causes and/or initiatives is fairly positive, however, little information is shared and maintained by the participants about the brand, which answers the research question on the prevailing attitudes which Nelson Mandela Bay surfers have towards the brand. The third research question pertaining to how the sample is influenced by the brand can be answered based on the level of enthusiasm shown by the participants to take part in beach clean-ups and encouraging members of the boarder community to do the same. However, the above study shows that the Generation Z Nelson Mandela Bay surfing sample community have a relatively low emotional connection with the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and little resonance with the brand is evident. Therefore, brand loyalty, as identified in research question four, is not evident. However, this can possibly be garnered through public-centric awareness campaigns on prime beach areas to give the surfing community opportunities to directly engage with the brand and to connect with the brand and share a common interests in taking care of the ocean through practicing and advocating responsible waste management and anti-pollution behaviour.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research report discussed how the Sustainable Seas Trust influenced the waste management behaviour among the Nelson Mandela Bay surfing community sample through awareness and active community initiatives, but low brand resonance is evident due to no participants in the study sample taking part in any of the brand's community initiatives. The four research questions were answered and yielded that Nelson Mandela Bay surfers have been exposed the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and hold strong positive attitudes towards the brand. Surfers that took part in the study were influenced to take part in future beach clean-ups, but did not demonstrate deep connections with the brand, as no participants have taken part in any of the beach clean-up initiatives hosted by the brand. This was largely due to few community encounters with the brand and little advertising and public awareness generated around when the beach clean-up initiatives take place.

The findings of the study can be described as valid, reliable and trustworthy. Branson (2015) defines validity as helping a researcher to make meaning out of data. For the purpose this research study, internal validity was tested by researcher who asked another researcher and supervisor to work through the interview questions to point out any errors and vagueness, which was done. External validity was proved as the results of the research study generally showed high consistency throughout the responses of each interviewed participant. Reliability was tested by determining if the questions for the interviews focus on exploring the influence of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand and that it does in fact focus on determining if Nelson Mandela Bay surfers were influenced by the brand on their waste management behaviour. The research study can be deemed as reliable as all four research questions were answered and key insights were extracted on how the brand can improve their interactions and influence among the Nelson Mandela Bay surfing community to ultimately impact on their waste management behaviour.

For the purpose of the proposed research study the ethical considerations that were considered by the researcher and applicable to this study were: voluntary

participation, informed consent, avoidance of harm as well as confidentiality (Du Plooy *et al.*, 2014; Strydom *et al.*, 2007). Du Plooy *et al.* (2014) states that many institutions require researchers to adhere to certain ethical principles when conducting research on humans or animals. Therefore, the following four ethical principles that researchers in social sciences should adhere to is voluntary participation, informed consent, avoidance of harm and confidentiality. Trochim (2006) states that the principle of voluntary participation requires that people are not forced to take part in the research and that they can decide whether to participate in the research study or not and informed consent as the principle that should adhere to fully informing participants of the procedures and risks involved in the research and that participants must give their consent before participating in the interview. Strydom *et al.* (2007) explains that subjects can be harmed physically or psychologically, and the researcher should protect subjects from any form of harm, discomfort or unpleasantness and should attempt to minimise the impact of this throughout the interview process. Trochim (2006) expresses that the researcher must guarantee participants confidentiality and that the disclosed interview feedback and audio and/or transcripts of the participants will not be made available to anyone not directly involved in the research study.

For this study, the researcher approached several Nelson Mandela Bay surfers known to the researcher by social association to ask if they would like to voluntarily participate in an online interview to answer a few questions on the Sustainable Seas Trust brand. The surfer sample was asked to sign a consent form, agreeing to voluntarily participate. After the form was signed, the researcher shared how the interview will take place and asked for the participants' schedules and availability to set up a MS Teams Call. The researcher further explained and asked permission for each participant to transcribe and record each online interview, which only the researcher, supervisor and transcriber had access to. Furthermore, the researcher guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of each participant and that none of their names or details will be shared with anyone.

Further to the above, several limitations were considered, such as: availability and access to proposed sample, timing; due to the sample audience and researcher's availability (Du Plooy *et al.*, 2014). Another limitation was network access of both researcher and participants.

In terms of access, the researcher could only approach potential participants known to the researcher by social association that would visit any three blue flag beaches at least twice a month, are between the ages of 18-25 and currently side in Nelson Mandela Bay. This posed as a limitation because participants must pass all pre-screening questions to be in a favourable position to voluntarily participate in the study. Timing was a critical factor as the interviews could only be conducted during the month of August 2022, indicated as the data collection month and both the researcher and participants were occupied during daytime hours. Lastly, network access posed as a great limitation to this study as both the researcher and participants required internet access to join the MS Teams Call for the interview, as planned. Due to loadshedding and internet outages across Nelson Mandela Bay, two online interviews had to be rescheduled. However, all interviews were conducted in August 2022 and the data gathering provided the researcher immense insight into the influence of the Sustainable Seas Trust brand on the waste management behaviour of the Nelson Mandela Bay Generation Z surfing community.

REFERENCE LIST

Andrews, T. 2012. What is Social Constructionism? *Ground Theory Review*, 1 June 2012. [Online]. Available at: <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/06/01/what-is-social-constructionism/> [Accessed 5 April 2022].

Aina, A.O. and Ezeuduji, I.O. 2021. Generation Z Attitude towards Domestic Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *ACTA UNIVERSITATIS DANUBIUS*, 17(6): 206-223. [Online]. Available at: https://www.google.com/search?q=Do+generation+Z+members+go+to+the+beach+more+in+south+Africa&rlz=1C1GCEU_enZA919ZA919&og=Do+generation+Z+members+go+to+the+beach+more+in+south+Africa&aqs=chrome..69i57j33i160.17004j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 [Accessed 3 April 2022].

Bantom, K. 2022. Pleas to help keep beach clean. News24, 18 January 2022. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/Local/Peoples-Post/pleas-to-help-keep-beaches-clean-20220117> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Baran, S.J. and Davis, D.K. 2015. *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment and Future*. 7th Edition. United States of America: Cengage Learning.

Beattie, A., Scott, G. and Munichello, K. 2021. The 3 Pillars of Corporate Sustainability. *Investopedia*, 29 June 2021. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100515/three-pillars-corporate-sustainability.asp> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Bega, S. 2021. Plastic pollution in 2019 cost South Africa staggering R885bn. Mail & Guardian, 17 September 2022. [Online]. Available at: <https://mg.co.za/environment/2021-09-17-plastic-pollution-in-2019-cost-south-africa-staggering-r88534-billion/#:~:text=South%20Africa%20is%20the%2011th,problem%20is%20likely%20to%20grow.%E2%80%9D> [Accessed 12 October 2022].

Blue Flag Global. 2018. Blue Flag. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.blueflag.global/> [Accessed 10 June 2022].

Brunet, M. and Aubry, M. 2016. The Three Dimensions of a Governance Framework for Major Public Projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, 34(8): 1596-1607. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0263786316300904#:~:text=Three%20dimensions%20are%20proposed%20for%20governance%20frameworks%20for%20major%20public%20projects.&text=Those%20three%20dimensions%20concern%20efficiency%2C%20legitimacy%20and%20accountability> [Accessed 1 May 2022].

Debczak, M. 2019. Revised Guidelines Redefine Birth Years and Classifications for Gen X, Millennials and Generation Z. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/609811/age-ranges-millennials-and-generation-z> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davis, F., Bezuidenhout, R. 2014. *Research Matters*. Juta: Claremont.

Ellis, E. 2020. Fifty-year-old plastic goods still litter Eastern Cape beaches, survey finds. *Daily Maverick*, 16 January 2020. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-16-fifty-year-old-plastic-goods-still-litter-eastern-cape-beaches-survey-finds/> [Accessed 9 June 2022].

European Commission. 2022. The EU and the United Nations – Common Goals for a Sustainable Future. [Online]. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/eu-and-united-nations-common-goals-sustainable-future_en [Accessed 1 May 2022].

Farjam, S. and Hongyi, X. 2015. Reviewing the Concept of Brand Equity and Evaluating Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Models. *International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration*, 1(8): 14-29. [Online]. Available at:

<https://researchleap.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Reviewing-the-Concept-of-Brand-Equity-and-Evaluating-Consumer-Based-Brand-Equity-CBBE-Models-1.pdf>
[Accessed 8 May 2022].

Francis, T. and Hoefel, F. 2018. 'True Gen': Generation Z and its implications for companies. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies>
<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies>
[Accessed 3 April 2022].

Hayes, A. 2021. Brand Equity. *Investopedia*, 22 February 2021. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brandequity.asp> [Accessed 3 May 2022].

Huo, Hameed, Zhang, Ali and Hashim. 2021. Modeling the impact of corporate social responsibility on sustainable purchase intentions: insights into brand trust and brand loyalty. *ECONOMIC RESEARCH-EKONOMSKA ISTRAŽIVANJA*. Francis & Taylor Group. [Online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2021.2016465> [Accessed 10 June 2022].

Introduction to reliability and validity. 2015. YouTube video, added by Scott Branson [Online]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr817y5pfo>. (Accessed 10 June 2022).

Keller, K.L. 2003. Understanding Brands, Branding and Brand Equity. *Interactive Marketing*, 5(1): 7-20. [Online]. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/palgrave.im.4340213.pdf> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Kylander, N. and Stone, C. 2015. The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 16 February 2012. [Online]. Available at: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_role_of_brand_in_the_nonprofit_sector [Accessed 8 May 2022].

Luo, Y. 2016. Brand Equity of Non-Profit Organisations: Conceptualising customer brand-based equity of Chinese Non-Profit Organisations. [Online]. Available at: https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/28829/1/6296_Talay.pdf [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Mammatt, J., Lange, Y. and Ismaiel, Z. 2016. *Make it your business: engaging with the sustainable development goals*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/sustainable-development-goals-south-africa-focus.pdf> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Maya, C. and Kelly, L. 2019. Research Paradigms and why Pragmatism Works. *Development-Humanitarian Research Group*, 2 December 2019. [Online]. Available at: <https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/devt-hum/2019/12/02/on-selecting-a-research-paradigm-and-why-pragmatism-worked-for-us/> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Medelyan, A. [s.a.]. Coding Qualitative Data: How to Code Qualitative Research. Insights. [s.a.]. [Online]. Available at: <https://getthematic.com/insights/codingqualitivedata/#:~:text=Thematic%20coding%2C%20also%20called%20thematic,ar%20e%20most%20frequent%20in%20feedback> [Accessed 27 May 2022].

Meuchel, C. 2014. 25 Top Environmental Non-Profits. *Moneyminder*, 9 April 2014. [Online]. Available at: <https://moneyminder.com/blog/top-environmental-non-profits/> [Accessed 2 May 2022].

Milner, T. and Rosenstreich, D. 2013. A review of consumer decision-making models and development of a new model for financial services, *Sydney Business School*. [Online]. Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1404&context=gsbpapers> [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Moon, K. and Blackman, D. 2015. A Guide to ontology, epistemology, and philosophical perspectives for interdisciplinary researchers. *Integration and Implementation Insights*, 2 May 2017. [Online]. Available at: <https://i2insights.org/2017/05/02/philosophy-for-interdisciplinarity/> [Accessed 5 April 2022].

Montmasson-Clair, G. 2018. Getting to Sustainable in South Africa. *Green Economy Coalition*, 19 February 2018. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.greenecomonycoalition.org/news-and-resources/getting-to-sustainable-in-south-africa#:~:text=While%20South%20Africa's%20National%20Development,on%20a%20highly%20unsustainable%20path> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Murphy, K. 2012. Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15487733.2012.11908081> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism. 2022. [Online]. Available at: https://www.nmbt.co.za/nelson_mandela_bay.html [Accessed 12 June 2022].

Neumann, B., Ott, K. and Kentchington, R. 2017. Strong Sustainability in Coastal Areas: A Conceptual Interpretation of SDG 14. *Sustainable Science*, (12): 1019-1035. [Online]. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11625-017-0472-y.pdf> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2019. Qualitative research designs and data-gathering techniques. Maree, K. ed. 2019. In: Maree, K. 2019. *First Steps in Research*. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Oliveira, E., Melo, A.D. and Goncalves, G. eds. 2017. Strategic Communication for Non-Profit Organisations: Challenges and Alternative Approaches. [eBooks]. Available on EBSCOhost at: https://ezproxy.iielearn.ac.za/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e020mww&AN=2174179&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_C [Accessed 1 May 2022].

Pezzullo, P. and Cox, R. 2018. One-Planet Talking Point. International Environmental Communication Association, [s.a.]. [Online]. Available at: https://theieca.org/sites/default/files/optp/%20OPTP%231-EC_What_and_Why.pdf [Accessed 6 April 2022].

Policy Forum on Development. s.a. Working Group: Environmental Pillar of Sustainable Development. [Online]. Available at:

[file:///C:/Users/iroelofse/Downloads/group discussion environmental pillar-final.pdf](file:///C:/Users/iroelofse/Downloads/group%20discussion%20environmental%20pillar-final.pdf)
[Accessed 5 May 2022].

Radu, V. 2019. Consumer Behaviour. *Omnivert*, 2 March 2019. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.omniconvert.com/blog/consumer-behavior-in-marketing-patterns-types-segmentation/> [Accessed 5 April 2022].

SAGE Publication. [S.A]. Chapter 8: Survey Research. [Online]. Available at: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/43589_8.pdf [Accessed 27 May 2022].

SANO Sustainability Series. 2022. YouTube video, added by Sustainable Seas Trust. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03TfW10ufoE> [Accessed 18 June 2022].

Seiler, B. and Bortnowska, H. 2020. Mission Statements and Values of Polish Non-Profit Organisations. *Scientific Quarterly Organization and Management*, 4(52): 117-146. [Online]. Available at: <https://moneyminder.com/blog/top-environmental-non-profits/> [Accessed 2 May 2022].

Smart Capital Mind. 2012. What is data analysis. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.smartcapitalmind.com/what-is-data-analysis.htm> [Accessed 27 May 2022].

South Africa. 2018. South Africa's Blue Flag Beaches. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.southafrica.net/za/en/travel/article/south-africa-s-blue-flag-beaches> [Accessed 10 June 2022].

South African Government. 2022. National Development Plan 2030. [Online]. Available: <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Executive%20Summary-NDP%202030%20-%20Our%20future%20-%20make%20it%20work.pdf> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. and Delport, C.S.L. 2007. Research at Grassroots: For yhesocial Sciences and Human services Professions. 3rd edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Sustainable Seas Trust. 2022. Bay to host crucial pan-African 'zero plastics' conference. *HeraldLive*, 27 April 2022. [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.heraldlive.co.za/business/2022-04-27-nelson-mandela-bay-to-host-crucial-pan-african-zero-plastics-conference/#:~:text=COVID%2D19-,Nelson%20Mandela%20Bay%20to%20host,%2DAfrican%20'zero%20plastics'%20conference> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Sustainable Seas Trust. 2022. [Online]. Available at: <https://sst.org.za/> [Accessed 6 May 2022].

Sustainable Seas Trust. 2022. *Sustainable Seas Trust*. [Facebook]. 18 June 2022. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SustainableSeasTrust/> [Accessed 18 June 2022].

Sustainable Seas Trust. 2022. Sustainable Seas Trust. [Twitter]. 18 June 2022. Available at: <https://twitter.com/SeasTrust> [18 June 2022].

The Writing Studio. 2022. Reliability and validity. [Online]. Available at: <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=66>. [Accessed 10 June 2022].

TWI. 2022. What is Sustainability and why is it so important? [Online]. Available at: <https://www.twi-global.com/technical-knowledge/faqs/faq-what-is-sustainability> [Accessed 5 May 2022].

Van Dyk, L. 2017. Perceptions from the Bottom Up: Relationships between Non-Profit Organisations and their Corporate Donors. In: Oliveira, E., Melo, A.D. and Goncalves, G. eds. 2017. *Strategic Communication for Non-Profit Organisations: Challenges and Alternative Approaches*. [eBooks]. Available on EBSCOhost at: https://ezproxy.iielearn.ac.za/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e020mww&AN=2174179&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_C [Accessed 1 May 2022], Chapter 7: 121-146.

WESSA, 2020. Blue Flag Beach Criteria. [Online]. Available at: <https://wessa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Beach-Criteria-and-Explanatory-Notes-2020.pdf> [Accessed 6 May 2022].

Whitmore, G. 2019. How Generation Z is changing Travel for older generations. *Forbes*, 13 September 2019. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/geoffwhitmore/2019/09/13/how-generation-z-is-changing-travel-for-older-generations/?sh=1d92400478f7> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

Wiid and Diggines (2013) as cited in Du Plooy-Cilliers, F., Davis, F., Bezuidenhout, R. 2014. *Research Matters*. Juta: Claremont.

Wonnenberg, A. 2017. Environmental Non-Profit Organisations in Public Discourses: Challenges and Opportunities of Political Institutionalisation. In: Oliveira, E., Melo, A.D. and Goncalves, G. eds. 2017. *Strategic Communication for Non-Profit Organisations: Challenges and Alternative Approaches*. [eBooks]. Available on EBSCOhost at:
https://ezproxy.iielearn.ac.za/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e020mww&AN=2174179&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_C [Accessed 1 May 2022], Chapter 5: 77-102.