



An investigation into the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions in the context of ethical trade certifications in the South African chocolate industry.

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between participants' perceptions and purchase intentions towards ethical trade certification in the chocolate industry. The study made use of a quantitative approach and surveys were distributed through an online google forms link. The study was conducted in order to assist brands and businesses in determining whether investing in ethical trade certifications is a feasible decision and if so which certification category would provide the most return on investment. The study results indicate that South African consumers between the ages of 18-28 do not consider themselves ethical consumer's therefore ethical trade certifications are not something they actively search for when purchasing 'treat products' such as chocolate. However, when presented with the relevant information, study participants did have a slight preference for the Cocoa Life certification over the Fairtrade certification. Given the results obtained from the conducted study brands should invest in ethical trade practices and certifications due to the global shift and demand towards conscious/ethical consumption but it will not drastically influence the average young South African consumer's perception and purchase intentions towards the brand.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Strategic Brand Communications 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 04/12/2022

INTRODUCTION

1.2 Contextualisation

This research study will investigate the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions in the context of the chocolate industry's ethical trade certifications namely the Industry Standard Certifications (ISC) and the Own Brand Certifications (OBC) held by commercial chocolate brands.

In 1994, the Fair Trade Organisation took on the task of regulating the chocolate (cocoa) industry by introducing the Fair Trade Certification, an internationally recognised Industry Standard Certification (ISC) that sought to guarantee consumers that brands possessing the certification met the ethical trade standards set by the Fair Trade Organisation. This certification set the ethical practice benchmark for brands across the chocolate (cocoa) industry for decades.

However, over the last decade some brands have renounced their Industry Standard Certification and adopted Own Brand Certification (OBC) systems that operate independently of the ISC standards. The OBC standards differ across brands and are unregulated by international bodies. These certifications serve as a guarantee to customers that the brand has put into place programs and funds to ensure ethical trade practices are present throughout their chocolate production process.

All ethical trade certifications (ISC and OBC) serve as a signal to consumers of a brand's ethical practices and despite the criticism of OBC consumers now have more choice in which ethical trade certification they choose to support creating an interesting opportunity for brands and businesses across the ethical trade spectrum.

For the purpose of this study, Industry Standard Certification will refer specifically to Fair Trade certification standardised by the Fair Trade organisation and Own Brand Certification will refer to independent general programs used by brands to signal ethical trade such as Cocoa Life by the Cadbury brand. Both of these certifications are visible on the packaging of chocolate products.

1.3 Rationale

Consumer purchasing behaviour is changing as consumers become more aware of the social and environmental impacts of their purchases. This has caused an international rise of the 'conscious consumer', these consumers demand that brands not only prioritise transparency and accountability in their practices but also make serious efforts to align their practices with positive social and environmental demands. However, not all brands have heeded this call, specifically those operating in the commercial chocolate industry. Resulting in many commercial chocolate brands being heavily criticised for their exploitative practices. With this said, the social and environmental impact of chocolate products does serve as an interesting case when studying ethical trade certifications and the impact these have on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions towards respective chocolate products. This is due to the fact that consumers view chocolate as a 'special treat'/reward purchase and according to Darby and Karni (1973) rarely are ethics considered when purchasing these sorts of products. However the rise in consumer interest in ethical consumption may challenge this perception and shift purchase intentions, thus studying special treat/reward products specifically chocolate in the context of ethical trade certifications may challenge traditional views and add to the existing body of work on ethical consumption, ethical perception and purchase intention.

Along with this most existing studies tackling ethical certifications in reference to consumer perceptions and purchase intentions tend to focus on western consumers. Thus a study on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions towards different ethical trade certifications in a South African context would be valuable for brands looking to target South African consumers given the rise in conscious consumption amongst South Africans (MasterCard, 2022).

¹ Please refer to figure X and Y in annexure A to view the respective certifications.

1.4 Problem statement

Today's consumer market is more conscious of its product choices opting for products that align with progressive social and environmental ethical standards (De Ferran and Grunert, 2007) resulting in consumers choosing to boycott brands that do not align with these standards giving brands a monetary and social incentive to implement more ethical business practises at all levels (Lim & Shim, 2019). This shift is mainly seen in consumer goods industries with notoriously exploitative practices such as the chocolate industry (Weatherer, 2021).

Commercial chocolate companies have been criticised for the negative environmental effects and human rights violations that occur during the cocoa supply chain process (Weatherer, 2021). This has negatively affected several brand purchasing relationships with vendors and consumers causing brands to make commitments towards addressing the violations present in their supply chain; because of this many brands have undertaken adopting credible certification systems; this is one way brands have chosen to guarantee consumers that they are sourcing environmentally and socially sustainable cocoa (Weatherer, 2021).

There are two types of certification in the chocolate industry; these are Industry Standard Certification from organisations such as Rainforest Alliance, UTZ and the Fair Trade organisation and Own Brand Certification introduced by chocolate product brands that prefer to engage with suppliers on sustainability issues on their own terms, rather than adopting the Industry Standard Certification criteria and process (Millard, 2021) such as Cadbury's Cocoa Life certification. These different certifications are marked by stickers on chocolate packaging (Millard, 2021).

Ultimately, brands seek to signal ethicality in a manner that will be well received by consumers and will translate to significant profit. Both categories of ethical trade certifications require large investments and effort from brands thus it is in a brands best interest to invest its resources in the ethical trade certification that will generate the most return on investment.

The chocolate industry has reached a pivotal point by providing brands seeking to signal ethicality to consumers with two certification routes to choose from. The problem this study aims to address is, given the rise in conscious consumption and the increasing consumer choice will a specific ethical certification deter consumers from purchasing a chocolate product. This is an important avenue to explore as it may affect the brands profits and could potentially lead to a brand being boycotted by consumers.

This will provide brands within the chocolate industry with a glimpse into which ethical trade certification may potentially lead to the most return on investment by utilising consumer perceptions and purchase

intentions towards the two ethical trade certification categories. Namely ISC with specific reference to Fair Trade certification and OBC with specific reference to Cocoa Life Certification.

Moreover, there is limited research done on South African consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions towards ethical trade certifications despite the population's move towards conscious consumption and the country's unique purchasing landscape. With 76% of South Africans indicating that they would like see brands and businesses taking more social and environmental initiative (Dicey, 2016) with the number only increasing over the last few years and being spearheaded by Generation Z; the next generation of consumers (MasterCard, 2022). Understanding consumers perceptions and purchase intention towards ethical trade certification will be immensely valuable brands and businesses looking to target South African consumers.

1.5 Purpose statement

In response to the increase in consumers' ethical concerns and the increase in investment by brands into acquiring ethical certification, this study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived ethicality and purchase intentions in the context of ethical trade certifications in the chocolate industry, in order to understand which ethical certification would provide brands with the most return on investment. This research is conducted to explain the importance of different certifications on consumer purchase intentions given the impact this will have on brand profitability and relevance in the market. This may provide brands with a better understanding of which ethical certifications to invest in and implement given market favourability.

1.6 Research questions

- What are consumers' ethical perceptions towards different ethical trade certification categories?
- What is the relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and brand purchase intention?
- What is the relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions?

1.7 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 Ethical trade certification categories and perceptions

- H_0 : There is no statically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions.
- H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer perceptions and purchase intentions

- H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions.
- H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and purchase intentions.

Hypothesis 3: Ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions

- H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions.
- H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualisation

	Concept	Operationalisation of Concept
1.	Theory of Reasoned Action	For the purposes of this study, the Theory of Reasoned Action and its two elements will be used to measure the impact of perceived ethicality of different ethical trade chocolate product certifications on the purchase intentions
2.	Attitude as referred to in the theory of Reasoned Action	For the purposes of this study, attitude towards the behaviour will include the participants' the consumers' personal beliefs towards the different ethical trade certifications, the consumers' perceived ethicality of the general brand and the potential self-esteem benefits gained by the consumer from purchasing either certification.
3.	Subjective norm as referred to in the theory of reasoned action	For the purposes of this study, The subjective norm will include the international and local policies surrounding ethical trade that may influence consumers, the beliefs and opinions of the consumer's friends and family.
4.	Industry standard Certification-Fairtrade certification	For the purposes of this study, Fairtrade certification will refer to the certification given to businesses that meet certain human, environmental and business standards set by the Fairtrade International Organisation (Fairtrade International, 2022). These businesses are Fair Trade certified and this is indicated by an official Fair Trade sticker on their packaging. In the questionnaire section of this study Fairtrade certification will be used as one of the certification options available to participants. Fairtrade certification is not to be confused with the larger fair-trade movement.
5.	Own Brand certification-Cocoa Life certification	For the purposes of this study, Own Brand Certification will refer to the ethical certifications' brands give to themselves according to the standards set by their individual ethical programs such as the Nestlé Cocoa Plan and the Cadbury Cocoa Life (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2019). For the purpose of this study, Own Brand Certification will be used as one of the certification options available to

		consumers and will be represented by the Cocoa Life packaging sticker.
6.	Ethical consumerism	For the purposes of this study, ethical consumerism will refer to the overarching economic relationship between the brand and consumers. Consumers demand ethical products from brands in exchange for support/money. Ethical consumerism will reference consumers purchasing products that do not harm the environment, appropriately manage energy, resources and waste and do not employ practices that harm/disregard human rights (Elkington and Hailes, 1988; Tallontire, Rentsendorj and Blowfield, 2001 and Gjerris, Gamborg and Saxe, 2016).
7.	Perception	For the purposes of this study, brand perception will refer to the 'personal social judgments of a brand anchored on their own precise intuitions of the definite brand' (Portal, Abratt, & Bendixen, 2018). This will deal with how consumers perceive the two types of ethically traded chocolate certifications and how this will influence their purchase intentions. Perception also plays a role in the consumers' relationship between the 2 elements of the theory of reasoned action.
8.	Purchase intention	For the purposes of this study, purchase intention will refer to one's personal likelihood to purchase a product from a specific brand as driven by certain motivations (Rezvani, Dehkordi, Rahman, Fouladivanda, Habibi and Eghtebasi, 2012). Consumers' intention to purchase either of the ethically traded chocolate options given the motivations set by the theory of planned behaviour.

Table 1: Conceptualisation

2.2 Theoretical foundation

The theory of reasoned action

The theory of Reasoned Action has been used in environmental literature but largely in studies comparing the utility of its results to those produced by its successor the theory of planned behaviour. First defined by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the theory of reasoned action assumes that when making decisions individuals will consider the advantages and disadvantages of all possible options before committing to what they believe is the best option

The theory of reasoned action takes on a positivistic approach to behaviour research. The logical lens through which this theory was developed and continuous to be utilised requires the target, the action, the context and the timeline to be clearly defined (Montaño, Kasprzyk and Taplin, 2008). The theory of reasoned action states that in order for an individual to intend to perform a specific behaviour a motivator must be set (Fishbein, Martin, and Icek Ajzen, 1975). This intention arises from two determinants namely, attitudes and subjective norms.

The theory of reasoned action brings forward two main direct determinants of behavioural intention, namely:

Subjective Norm

The subjective norm is defined as the perceived social pressure to participate or not participate in a certain behaviour (Ajzen and Albarracín, 2007). This social pressure is brought on by individuals or groups such as family, friends and peers (Asare, 2015). This determinant is social in nature and reflects external social influences such as family, friends and peers and pressures towards performing or not performing the behaviour (Bisquolm, 2010).

The theory of reasoned action states that these social pressures cause an individual to develop normative beliefs surrounding the behaviour and whether or not participate in the behaviours (Ajzen and Albarracín, 2007). These normative beliefs determine one's perception of a behaviour and determine one's intention to participate or not participate in a behaviour (Fishbein, 1967).

Attitudes

One's attitudes towards a behaviour consists of one's beliefs and motivational factors that will influence the behavioural intention (Asare, 2015). This determinant is personal in nature and relies on an individual's perceptions of the outcome (Ajzen and Albarracín, 2007). Favourable perceptions brought on by beliefs and motivational factors are most likely to result in the intention to perform the behaviour (Bisquolm, 2010). One's attitude towards a behaviour may be positive, negative or neutral (Fishbein, 1967).

Theory of reasoned action vs theory of planned behaviour

It should be noted that this study chose to utilise the theory of reasoned action as opposed to its successor, the theory of planned behaviour, because this study aims to measure the respondents' behavioural intentions without predicting their behaviour (Dung, 2020). Thus, the determinant directly linked to preformed behaviour (behavioural control) has been omitted from the study leaving only the relevant determinants namely, attitude and subjective norm. As stated by Bisquolm (2010) the importance of the determinants depends on the goals of the individual study as some studies may choose to focus on all the determinants and other studies not.

Limitations/Disadvantages of the theory of reasoned action

The main limitation of the theory of reasoned action is that intentions do not always translate to behaviour or may even be subject to change; especially when there is a significant duration between the intention and the behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1985). This provides significant room for error when looking to predict consumer behaviour in a real-world context. Along with this the theory excludes behaviours that may occur mindlessly, habitually, impulsively or spontaneously (Bentler and Speckart, 1979; Langer, 1989).

A case for the theory of reasoned action

Despite its limitations/disadvantages, the theory of reasoned action is appropriate for this study because the study aims to measure purchase intentions which the theory of reasoned action provides relatively useful determinants for.

A diagram illustrating the link between the theory of Reasoned Action, the Research Problem and the Hypotheses

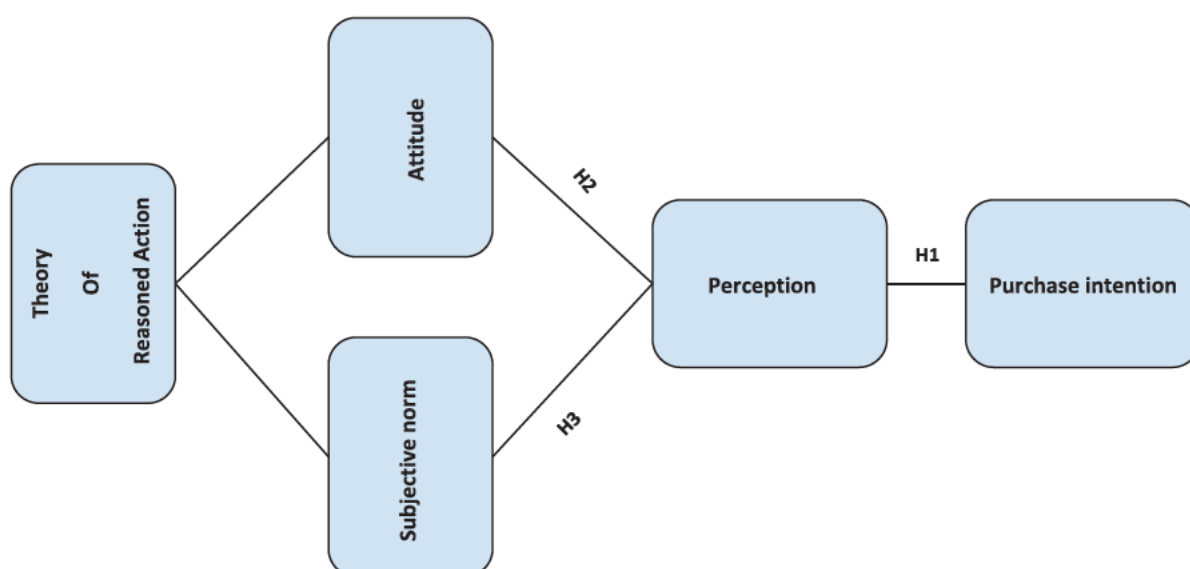


Figure 1: The link between the theory of Reasoned Action, the Research Problem and the Hypotheses.

Diagram explanation

The aim of this study is to determine if there is a notable relationship between participants' perceptions of the ISC and the OBC and their intentions to purchase a chocolate product labelled with either certification. These perceptions are determined using participants' attitudes and subjective norms towards either certification in accordance to the theory of reasoned action.

The two determinants from the theory of reasoned action (attitude and subjective norm) are used to determine the participant's perceptions towards the respective ethical trade certifications in accordance with H2 and H3. The relationship between these perceptions and the participants' purchase intentions are then measured in accordance with H1. Subjective norms will measure how social pressures influence participant's perceptions towards 1. Ethical consumerism 2. The respective ethical trade certifications. On the other hand, attitude will measure a participant's thoughts towards either certification.

How these translate to perceptions and ultimately purchase intentions will assist the researcher in answering the set research questions.

2.3 Review of previous literature

Introduction

This literature review will discuss ethical consumerism and different ethical trade certifications along with how these concepts influence consumer perceptions and purchase intentions as discussed by other authors.

Global consumer trends indicate a shift towards healthier eating, ethical sourcing and company ethics (Holmes and Yan, 2012). Young and McCoy (2016) state that contemporary culture has caused a recognisable shift in attitudes towards product characteristics such as clean, ethical and dietary food labelling's, especially amongst younger generations.

Younger generations are said to be those in university between the ages of 20-25. These consumers are said to be tech savvy, concerned about the environment, community oriented global thinkers with less brand loyalty (Harris, Stiles, & Durocher, 2011). These individuals show greater concern for ethically sourced and environmentally friendly products (Gustin and Ha, 2014; Schubert, 2010; Sloan, 2014). This generation holds emerging purchasing power and their attitudes will change the future of the global food landscape (Young and McCoy, 2016).

Young and McCoy (2016) state that it is necessary to investigate how the young generation's attitude towards chocolate translates to product choice, especially due to the circumstances in which chocolate is consumed i.e. as a treat product.

Ethical consumerism

According to Elkington and Hailes (1988) ethical consumerism is associated with individuals who do not purchase products that may cause harm to one's health, animals and the environment, does not require excessive amounts of energy, resources or waste to produce and does not negatively affect other countries.

Tallontire, Rentsendorj and Blowfield (2001) associate ethical consumerism with the environment, human rights and animal well-being. Whereas authors such as Vitell, Singhapakd and Thomas (2001) state that ethical consumerism is mainly driven by one's moral values and principles rather than external consequences.

Other authors such as Gjerris, Gamborg and Saxe (2016) saw ethical consumerism as more of a duty by expanding the before mentioned definitions to include critical consumerism and political consumerism in an attempt to link ethical consumerism with a sense of responsibility to be taken up by all citizens due to its effects on business practices and global consumer purchasing.

Authors such as Aydin and Kazancoglu (2017) continue this train of thought by associating ethical consumerism with the environment; however, these authors state that a simplistic lifestyle built on clear consumption values is what defines ethical consumerism. This means that those that do not excessively consume and consider the environmental impact of what they do consume can be said to participate in ethical consumption.

The rise in ethical consumerism

In 1997 Bird and Hughes stated that consumers have grown more concerned with the ethical practices of brands and businesses, demanding to know how products have been produced, where products have been produced and which entities and people benefited from the production of these products. This shift towards ethical consumerism has led businesses to not only value corporate goals but to integrate societally relevant ethical and moral values into their operations (Uusitalo and Oksanen, 2004).

Today we see an overwhelming increase in consumer demand for ethically produced goods and services (Schamp, Heitmann and Katzenstein, 2019) such as opting for products labelled Fair Trade (Khan Haleem and Khan, 2019). This is due to the two-fold nature of ethical consumerism; on the one hand consumers are demanding ethical business practices to create a more just society but on the other hand purchasing ethically certified products is a way for consumers to signal their own ethical beliefs and moral values to their peers (Yoganathan, Osburg and Akhtar, 2019).

Participating in ethical consumption allows consumers to actively place their ethical judgements on brands and businesses (Garanti, 2019) while fulfilling their own moral obligations to help (Fuentes & Sörum, 2019). Thus, ethical consumerism can be beneficial to society and businesses while serving consumers' own self-interest.

The rise in ethical consumerism has created a new consumer category known as the ethical consumer. This sort of consumer pays close attention to the practices employed by businesses during the manufacturing stage (Ota, Sakata and Iijima, 2019). During the purchasing process these consumers will examine the different product label types and information (Merlino, Mota, Gutierrez, Borra, Brun, Cocolin, Blanc and Massaglia, 2021).

A brand's ethical trade certification will be visibly placed on the product packaging, this is what ethical consumers look out for when making a purchase. These certifications differ according to the processes of the particular industry. Along with this there can be multiple certifications that deal with ethical trade within one industry. An example of this is the chocolate industry where the Fair trade certification, UTZ and Rainforest Alliance all deal with ethical trade practices (Nieburg, 2018).

The rise of sustainable consumerism indicates that adopting sustainably driven competitive strategies is important for brands wishing to remain relevant in the market. However, as mentioned by Grunert (2014), placing sustainability labelling on products does not guarantee that consumers will be motivated to purchase that product solely based on the social or environmental labelling. Grunert (2014), also states that consumers make purchases according to trade-offs by consciously or subconsciously ranking different product attributes before making a choice. It should also be noted that consumers' understanding of these labels plays a significant role in their ability to process the relevant information correctly (Vecchioa, Mariani and Annunziatab, 2016).

Ethical trade certifications

Brands use labelling to communicate the added value of their products, allowing consumers to make more informed choices in the products they choose to purchase (Vecchioa, Mariani and Annunziatab, 2016). Labelling allows brands to signal moral or differentiating attributes under the guise that consumers will accept this information at face value due to the fact that they are unable to immediately verify any of the labelling information. This includes environmental, social and ethical product features. According to (Darby and Karni, 1973) these untraceable attributes on labels are referred to as a product's credence.

Labels serve to improve the nature of information available to consumers during purchasing while taking on the role of the solution to society's most prevalent consumption related issues (Valor, 2008). Labels influence consumer consumption choices by increasing consumer awareness and responsibility (Caswell and Padberg, 1992). A 2016 study by Young and McCoy indicates that despite public declarations in support of ethical labelling, participants' choice behaviour showed minimal concern for ethical factors when purchasing chocolate. This partially challenges the notion put forth by Valor by indicating that the average consumer has a ranking system that determines their choices and even though they may demand ethical labelling they may not always purchase ethically labelled products.

Labelling plays more than the role of a table illustrating grams or ingredients; it serves to signal to consumers that the products they are purchasing align with their personal beliefs while simultaneously signalling that the brands they choose care about their well-being and align with their moral demands. This signalling from brands allows them to differentiate themselves in the market creating the potential for them to charge premiums for their products (Vecchioa, Mariani and Annunziatab, 2018). This sentiment was tested in a 2016 study by Poelmans and Rousseau, which saw consumers pay more for fair trade labelled chocolate products compared to conventional chocolate products. This sort of incentive encourages brands to charge more for having ethically labelled products without consumers having the resources to verify whether the brand is fully participating in ethical practices.

For the purposes of this study on ethical trade certification labelling on chocolate products the Industry Standard Certification will refer to the Fairtrade certification by the Fair Trade organisation and the Own Brand Certification will refer to the ethical trade certification created by an individual consumer product brand such as Cocoa life by Cadbury.

Industry standard certification

The most well-known Industry Standard Certification in the chocolate industry is the Fairtrade certification which was introduced to monitor inequalities within international cocoa trade (Millard, 2021). This certification concerns itself with ensuring that brands and businesses participate in trade practices that do not exploit suppliers or the natural environment from which product materials are sourced and do not exacerbate any socio-economic issues in the countries they work with (Ota, Sakata and Iijima, 2019). This is all monitored by the Fairtrade Organization.

Brands that wish to obtain an official Fairtrade certification must meet the rigorous criteria set by the organisation. The Fairtrade organisation serves to guarantee consumers that brands that possess this certification meet the social and environmental standards set by the Fairtrade Organisation and are classified as responsible and ethical organisations (Berry and Romero, 2021).

There are many benefits for both organisations and suppliers who adopt Fairtrade certification. Under Fairtrade certification supplies are guaranteed a minimum price and both suppliers and organisations can charge more for their products, generate greater sales and ultimately receive greater revenues (Dragusanu, Montero and Nunn, 2018).

A 2016 study by Poelmans and Rousseau indicates that some consumers greatly value this sort of labelling, others to a lesser extent and others not at all. Despite this, results found in this study do indicate that customers view the Fairtrade certification positively when selecting a variety of chocolates.

Own Brand Certification

Recently some global companies have developed their own programs as a way to tackle social and environmental issues on their own terms (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2019). These companies have developed Own Brand ethical trade certifications as a strategy to move away from certification schemes such as Fairtrade (Woolley, Pozner and DeSoucey, 2018). According to Millard (2021) this is a strategic move employed by brands who wish to positively align their brand image with their response to global issues without setting out to achieve the Fairtrade mission. These brands view ethical trade certifications as a way to directly influence consumer perceptions and positively impact the brands profitability.

It can be argued that brands that implement Own Brand Certification do not actually contribute to creating any real economic or social change for suppliers in developing countries. According to Millard (2021) brands developing Own Brand Certification programs do just enough to create a positive perception of their products without jeopardising market competitiveness (Millard, 2021). However, brands that do employ this strategy have set ambitious social and environmental targets for themselves to actively work towards disproving these claims (Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 2019).

Without delving into the ethics of ethical trade certifications the purpose of this study is to investigate how consumers perceive the respective certifications and how this influences their intentions to purchase chocolate products labelled with either certification.

Certification perceptions and purchase Intentions

The international trade market has become increasingly competitive and demanding causing brands across the board to step up their operations to ensure that their differentiation elements not only set them apart in the market but meet consumer demands better than their competitors (Bianchi and Bruno, 2017). This is especially true with the rise in conscious consumption which not only increased consumer demand for ethically traded products but also created a whole new industry for brands to participate in. This allowed brands and businesses to increase their market share and offered consumers numerous product alternatives (Chung, 2015).

Purchase intention can be defined as a consumer's endeavour to buy a product or service' (Diallo, 2012). Purchase intention can also be defined as one's personal likelihood to purchase a product from a specific brand as driven by certain motivations (Rezvani, Dehkordi, Rahman, Fouladivanda, Habibi and Egtebasi, 2012). As well as one's awareness of their ability to purchase a brand (Shabbir, Kirmani, Iqbal and Khan, 2009).

Portal, Abratt, & Bendixen (2018) define brand perception as the 'personal social judgments of a brand anchored on their own precise intuitions of the definite brand'. Perceptions directly affect a brand's profitability and success because of its influence on purchase intention (Horsfall, 2020) because of this brand's purposeful investment in activities they hope will create a positive brand perception (Horsfall, 2020). One of the ways in which brands build positive perceptions is by incorporating ethical practices into business operations. One such example of this is brands engaging in ethical trade. As stated by Bianchi and Bruno (2017) purchase intention is enhanced by a firm's motives and values and will greatly diminish if brands operate purely on self-interest.

Applying literature and concepts to this study

The purpose of this study is to determine how attitude and subjective norms, collectively known as perceptions influence purchase intentions in the context of the chocolate industry's ethical trade certifications.

Most studies dealing with perceived brand ethicality focus on its effects on brand trust, affect and loyalty (Singh, Iglesias and Bartista-Foguet; 2012) or brand love (Dalman, Buche and Min; 2017) as well as the effects on choice intentions in the clothing (Zanete Garanti, 2019) and cosmetics industries (Oe and Yamaoka, 2022). Along with this most of these studies take place in a western and eastern context indicating that there is a gap in ethical trade studies dealing with African consumers

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm

The chosen research paradigm of positivism deals with verifying hypotheses through experimentation and the use of appropriate variables and measures (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). Positivists believe in an evidence-based approach and rely on scientific methods to provide results that can be interpreted mathematically. The results gathered from this experimentation are used to add to the existing scientific body of knowledge (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). Studies that take a positivist approach investigate explanatory associations or causal relationships between dependent and independent variables (Ponterotto, 2005). Positivist research tends to take a quantitative approach and make use of larger sample sizes because they allow for results to be generalised (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). According to Panhwar (2017) positivism measures the reliability of information through its ability to be observed.

Ontological approach

Through this approach positivism expresses the assumption that there is one objective truth (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). This truth can be recognized, comprehended and measured by the researcher (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). During this study the ontological approach has allowed the researcher to test the correlation between perception (independent variable) and purchase intention (dependent variable).

Epistemological approach

Through this approach positivism expresses objectivism in the testing process (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). During this study the epistemological approach was implemented to ensure that the researcher did not interact with the research participants during the data collection process allowing the participants to draw their own conclusions about the survey questions without the researcher's influence. This ensured that the results obtained accurately expressed the participants' objective truth.

Rationale

The research was conducted through a positivist approach because it allowed the researcher to investigate the potential causal relationship between perception and purchase intention through objective quantitative data collection and data analysis methods (Botha, 2015). Along with this, the approach aligned with the objectivity required to accurately answer the research questions and set hypotheses. The chosen approach ensured that the data gathered and analysed during the research process accurately reflected the respondents' perceptions allowing the study to be generalised.

The study employed a cross-sectional design due to the time limitation of less than a year granted for its completion. Given the allocated timeline for the studies completion and the requirements presented by the research topic and its questions, a quantitative approach was the most appropriate method given its fast and focused nature.

This method's ability to measure variables and describe frequencies, averages and correlations as well as its ability to test hypotheses relating to the relationship between the presented variables (Mohajan, 2021) provided the researcher with the tools necessary to answer the set research questions in a manner that produced generalizable results. Along with this a quantitative approach has been used researchers who have conducted similar peer-reviewed studies on ethical perceptions and purchase intentions (Dalton, 2019; Garanti, 2019; Singh, Iglesias and Batista-Foguet, 2012) thus utilising the same approach as these researchers has increased the reliability of this study.

3.2 Population

Unit of analysis

According to DeCarlo (2018) a unit of analysis is defined as the focus of the study, it takes the form of the individuals under study which the researcher seeks to base findings on at the end of the study. For the purposes of this study the unit of analysis is South African Generation Z and Millennial chocolate product consumers.

Population

According to Polit and Hungler (1999) the population is defined as the aggregate of the individuals that the researcher seeks to study, this aggregate meets a set of specifications set by the researcher. For the purposes of this study the population is Generation Z and Millennial South African consumers who frequently purchase chocolate products. This population was chosen because they are the primary stakeholders for ethical issues (Beltramini, Peterson, and Kozmetsky, 1984).

Target population

According to Gregory, Stevens and Fraser (2017) the target population is defined as the group of individuals that the researcher will conduct research on and draw conclusions from. For the purposes of this study the target population is South African consumers between the ages of 18-28 who frequently purchase chocolate products. According to (Brunjes, 2022) Generation Z individuals fall into the age range of 10-25 and millennial individuals fall into the age range of 26-41. Due to the chosen sampling method and recruitment location for the study, the researcher chose to only investigate the set hypotheses on the oldest set of Generation Z individuals and the youngest set of Millennial individuals; this allowed the researcher to focus on obtaining results from individuals with purchasing power from what is socially considered as a younger market (Smith, 2018). Thus the selected target population was

Generation Z individuals between the ages of 18-25 and Millennial individuals between the ages of 26-28.

Accessible population

According to Fetzer (2020) an accessible population is defined as the segment of the target population that the research has access to. For the purposes of the study the accessible population is consumers who frequently purchase chocolate products between the ages of 18-28 in Gauteng who are willing and able to complete the online questionnaire. The sample for the study will be drawn from the accessible population (Fetzer, 2020).

Population parameters

According to Polit and Hungler (1999) the population parameters refer to the specific characteristics that individuals within the population must possess in order to participate in the study. For the purposes of this study the chosen population parameters are:

1. Individuals within the population must be categorised as belonging to Generation Z or the Millennial Generation, specifically individuals currently in the age range of 18-28.
2. Individuals within the population must purchase chocolate products at least once a month.
3. Individuals within the population must live in Gauteng.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling Method

The study was conducted using probability simple random sampling as this method was the most aligned with the chosen positivist research paradigm and quantitative research approach.

Probability sampling: simple random sampling

According to Easton and McColl (1997), simple random sampling requires the researcher to randomly select a sample from a larger population. This sampling method is used to make statistical inferences about a population (Thomas, 2022). When implementing simple random sampling the researcher must have a list of individuals from the population from which to randomly select a sample (Thomas, 2022).

Conducting research in this manner ensures high internal and external validity and reduces the potential occurrence of confounding variables (Thomas, 2022).

Given the researcher's paradigm and quantitative approach, simple random sampling was the most appropriate sampling method. However, acquiring a list of the entire population would have proven a tedious and impossible task thus some adjustments had to be made. Instead of acquiring a list of the entire population the researcher sent out a request to individuals within the accessible population. This request included details on all the necessary population parameters. A total of 65 individuals from the accessible population agreed to participate in the study. From these 65 individuals 50 official participants were randomly selected.

Sample size

According to LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) the sample size is defined as the number of individuals that will be participating in the study. A larger sample size is generally preferred because it may produce results that are better representative of the entire population (LoBiondo-Wood and Haber, 1998). According to the IIE (2022) guided parameters for NQF level 8 research students conducting quantitative research requires a minimum sample of 50 participants. . Thus the chosen sample for this study was 50 individuals between the ages of 18-28 living in the Gauteng area who purchase chocolate products at least once a month.

Sampling rationale

The use of simple random sampling aligned with the chosen paradigm and methodology while allowing the researcher to accurately engage in the hypothesis testing process. This allowed the researcher to remain objective and conduct the research process in an unbiased manner ensuring that the most representative sample was generated. This allowed the collected data and findings to be easily generalised to the wider population (Olken and Rotem, 1986; Gravetter and Forzano, 2011).

Recruitment method for the sample

Given the chosen sampling method of probability simple random sampling the following recruitment method was used:

The researcher sent out an online request through social media for individuals who would be willing to participate in the study. The researcher stated the required participant criteria as set in the population parameters and asked that only individuals who met the criteria respond to the request to participate in the study from this the researcher was able to obtain 65 responses from individuals willing to participate in the study.

These 65 individuals were used to develop a sample frame from which the final study sample was randomly selected as per the chosen sampling method. The 65 respondents were asked to provide their names and contact details in case they had been chosen to participate in the final study.

Once the 65 respondents were confirmed the researcher entered all 65 respondents' names and contact details into a google sheets form numbered from 1 to 65. The researcher then used a random number generator to choose random numbers between and including 1 and 65 until a total of 50 random numbers were chosen to make up the official research sample.

The researcher then sent out google forms links for the survey to the official research sample using their preferred method of contact.

It should be noted that the 65 online request respondents were guaranteed complete confidentiality as their personal information (name/surname and contact details) were required for the second phase of the simple random sampling. This list of 65 names was subsequently deleted from the records once the researcher obtained the final sample of 50 participants as this was the agreed upon procedure.

Limitations for chosen sampling method

The most prominent limitation for this sort of sampling method was that once the official sample was chosen the researcher was unable to replace any of the participants. Along with this the participants were required to complete all the questions in the questionnaire (Olken and Rotem, 1986) and given the format of the data collection process ensuring that the participants followed through with these requirements was difficult. The researcher ensured these limitations did not interfere with the research process by briefing the participants beforehand and activating the "answer required" setting on all google forms questions sent out to the participants.

3.5 Data Collection technique(s)

The researcher made use of a survey data collection method by distributing an online survey in the form of a Google forms link to the final research sample, hereinafter known as the participants. According to Brickman-Bhutta (2012) online questionnaires are a feasible and cost-effective way to conduct a survey.

The survey was developed on the online survey software program 'Google forms. This online format allowed participants to individually complete the study without any influence from the researcher. This assisted with limiting possible bias errors and maintaining the objectivity required by the chosen positivist paradigm. The chosen method of data collection method also increased research reliability because the data from the participants was immediately stored by the program and could not be tampered with.

The Questionnaire included questions regarding the demographic profile of respondents (age, gender, level of studies, location) as well as questions to measure attitude, subjective norm, ethical brand perception and brand purchasing intention.

Measures for the study concepts used to test participants' perceptions were adapted from the Brunk and Boer's (2018) study on ethical perceptions. The concepts of attitude and subjective norm were adapted from the Asare's (2015) study on the theory of planned behaviour. As stated in the previous chapter the questions developed by Asare for the theory of planned behaviour are appropriate for this study because they contain set measurements for attitude and subjective norm which are relevant to its predecessor the theory of reasoned action.

Due to the variables and data collection methods chosen for the study the researcher made use of close-ended questions. Most of the questions were measured according to a 5-point Likert scale which scored items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and other questions made use of 'yes' and 'no' options.

The study also made use of a discrete choice experiment. This was used to test participant preferences and was applied to questions that required the participants to choose between the options "Both", "Fair Trade Certification", "Cocoa Life Certification" and "Neither". According to Dalton (2019) this technique is the most appropriate for testing scenarios with multiple attributes such as those presented in this study.

Survey structure

Section 1 of the survey: Consent

This section of the questionnaire stated the research information, the reasons for the study, the precautions taken for the study and asked for participants' consent for their answers to be analysed and included in the research study.

It should be noted that this data collection process was completely anonymous and did not require any personal information from participants filling out the survey. The only personal information required from participants was during the recruitment process which used personal information from a larger group to develop a sample frame from which the final sample group was chosen, this is due to the chosen sampling method of simple random sampling.

Section 2 of the survey: Demographics

This section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions such as age, gender, location as well as a question that asked participants how frequently they purchase chocolate. This set of questions sought to ensure that participants met the required population parameters for the study. The questionnaire also asked participants if they identified as conscious consumers as defined in the literature review to determine whether conscious consumption played a role in their recognition of Fair trade and Cocoa Life certifications as well as their attitudes towards Fair Trade and Cocoa Life certifications.

Section 3 of the survey: Recognition

This section of the questionnaire consisted of a recognition question to determine whether participants recognized the Fair Trade and Cocoa Life certifications. This question was used to determine whether consumers seek out ethical trade certifications when purchasing chocolate products. The recognition section was then followed by a brief description on the Fair Trade Certification and the Cocoa Life Certification to help participants answer the upcoming questions.

Section 4 of the survey: Attitudes

This section of the questionnaire consisted of attitude and subjective norm questions adopted Asare (2015) to determine consumers' attitudes towards the respective ethical trade certifications and possible motivators that would influence participants' purchasing intentions as stated by the Theory of Reasoned Action. This was in accordance with the study's chosen theoretical foundation and research questions, which sought to determine consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions towards Fair Trade certification and Cocoa Life certification as stated in previous chapters.

This section also consisted of questions that addressed participants' attitudes towards the general ethicality of trade certifications and their attitudes towards the positive contribution of these certifications in the cocoa industry.

Section 5 of the survey: Perceptions

This section of the questionnaire consisted of a variety of perception based statements adopted from the Brunk and Boer (2018) study, participants were asked to choose which certification best fits the given statement to determine their perceptions of each certification. This section was then used to determine if perceptions of the respective certifications correlated with participants purchase intentions towards either certifications.

Section 5 of the survey: Purchasing Intentions

This section of the questionnaire consisted of three sets of purchasing intention questions in order to:

1. Determine whether participants considered their own ethical values and beliefs when purchasing chocolate.
2. Determine how strong participants' intentions were to purchase Fair Trade certified chocolate products.
3. To determine how strong participants' intentions were to purchase Cocoa Life certified chocolate products.

These questions were aligned with the set research hypothesis which sought to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and participants purchase intentions.

Data collection method rationale

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between participants perceptions and purchase intentions given the impact this relationship may or may not have on the feasibility of ethical trade certification investment for brands and businesses in the chocolate industry thus the chosen data collection method was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect participant data in a manner that not only answered the set research questions but remained aligned with the chosen research paradigm.

² Please refer to annexure B for the research instrument.

3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher made use of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis methods to determine the relationships between the gathered results. The use of inferential statistics will allow for the study results to be generalised to the entire population (Polit and Beck, 2010). The chosen methods align with the study's quantitative approach.

The results were sorted and filtered using a Google Sheets spreadsheet. The researcher performed a descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the participants' answers using Google sheets.

Using descriptive statistical analysis, the researcher was able to determine the mean, mode, standard deviation and frequency for all the relevant study concepts, namely: ethical consumption, attitude, subjective norms and purchasing intentions this allowed the researcher to determine participants' overall perceptions towards the Fair Trade Certification and the Cocoa Life Certification.

In order to determine the relationship between perceptions and purchase intention the researcher made use of inferential statistical analysis methods, specifically a correlation test. This test was used to determine the correlation between perception and purchasing intention.

These data analysis methods were chosen for this study because they allowed the researcher to determine the relationship between perception and purchase intention thereby testing the set hypotheses and answering the set research questions.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Research findings

4.1.1 Descriptive statistics

	Frequency	Relative frequency
Q1: What is your age?		
18-21	22	51%
22-24	13	30%
25-28	8	19%
Q2: What is your gender?		
Male	20	40%
Female	29	58%
Non-binary	1	2%
Q3: In which province do you live?		
Gauteng	50	100%
Q4: How often do you purchase chocolate?		
Once a month	24	48%
Twice a month	18	36%
3+ times a month	8	16%
Q5: Do you recognise the Fair Trade certification		
Yes	15	30%
No	35	70%
Q6: Do You recognise the Cocoa life certification		
Yes	17	34%
No	33	66%

Figure 2: Demographics

The study utilised 50 Gauteng based participants between the ages of 18-28 to determine the relationship between the perception of different ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions towards these categories. The sample group consisted of 40% Females, 58% Males and 2% Non-binary participants. The concepts of attitude and subjective norms were used to determine the participant's perceptions of the two ethical trade certification categories and participants purchase intentions towards these two categories. 48% of participants stated that they only purchase chocolate products once a month, 36% twice a month and 16% three or more times a month. The frequency of participants purchasing chocolate products allowed the researcher to draw conclusions from a group of participants who are likely to be aware of the ethical trade certifications on chocolate products or likely to be the target market for brands in the chocolate industry.

When asked if participants recognised the Fairtrade Certification 30% of participants responded "Yes". When asked if participants recognised the Cocoa Life certification 34% of participants responded "Yes". To ensure that participants were aware of the history and ethos behind each ethical trade certification an information section detailing these characteristics was added to the questionnaire. This ensured that participants were able to answer upcoming questions with a clear understanding of the two certification categories.

A table illustrating the statistic results from the survey

	Mean	Mode	Standard Deviation
Concept 1: Ethical consumption	3,43	4	1,16
Q1: I am a conscious consumer	3,42	4	1,4
Q2: Ethical trade certifications indicate a brands' true ethical performance in the industry?	3,32	3	1,04
Q3: How likely are you to purchase a brand of chocolate that does not have the ethical trade certification that you believe represents your ethical values	3,54	4	1,04
Concept 2: Attitudes towards fair trade certification	4	4	0,78
Q4: Fair Trade Certification is making a positive social and environmental impact.	3,84	4	0,91
Q5: Fair Trade certification is making a positive impact on the cocoa industry	4,22	4	0,71
Q6: Fair Trade Certification respects moral norms.	3,8	4	0,83
Q7: Fair Trade Certification adheres to the law.	4,06	4	0,74
Q8: Fair Trade Certification indicates a socially responsible brand.	3,96	4	0,7
Q9: Fair Trade Certification is good.	4,08	4	0,75
Q10: Fair Trade Certification represents my environmental and social beliefs/values.	4,06	4	0,79
Concept 3: Attitude towards Cocoa Life Certification	4	4	0,82
Q11: Coca life Certification is making a positive social and environmental impact.	4,12	5	0,8
Q12: Cocoa Life Certification is making a positive impact on the cocoa industry	4,08	4	0,9
Q13: Cocoa Life Certification respects moral norms	3,88	4	0,87
Q14: Cocoa Life Certification adheres to the law	3,76	4	0,8
Q15: Cocoa Life Certification indicates a socially responsible brand	4,22	4	0,79
Q16: Cocoa Life Certification s good	4,1	4	0,71
Q17: Cocoa Life Certification represents my environmental and social beliefs/values	4,02	4	0,82
Concept 4: Subjective norm	3,5	4	1,36
Q18: Purchasing the certification I consider most ethical makes me feel good about myself.	3,6	4	1,32

Q19: How likely are your friends and family to influence your purchasing decisions?	3,4	4	1,4
Concept 5: Purchasing intentions	4,19	5	0,84
Q20: Provided that the following factors are the s (price, brand and taste) I would buy a Fair trade Certified chocolate	4,1	5	0,91
Q21: Provided that the following factors are the s (price, brand and taste) I would buy a cocoa life Certified chocolate	4,28	5	0,78

Table 2: Statistical results for concepts

Ethical consumerism

See table 2: Concept 1

Data collected on a 5 -point Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree) and analysed using descriptive statistical data analysis methods showed that participant's identification with ethical consumerism and perceptions towards ethical consumerism were rather neutral with a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 1.16, with a notable majority of participants stating that they would purchase a chocolate product even if it did not have the ethical trade certification that represents their ethical values.

Subjective norms

See Table 2: Concept 4

Data collected on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree) participants' subjective norm was analysed using descriptive statistical data analysis methods. Results show that participants' friends and family have a minimal influence on their purchasing habits with a mean of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 1.4. Results also showed that participants were not likely to gain a positive self-identity from purchasing ethically certified chocolate products with a mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.4. This indicates that participants do not face high levels of internal and external pressure to purchase ethically certified chocolate products thus negatively influencing their likelihood of doing so.

Concept 4.1: Subjective norms	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Would you consider your friends/family conscious consumers?	50	100%
Yes	20	40%
No	30	60%

Table 3: Subjective norms frequency

The above results indicate that 60% of participants are not in social environments in which conscious consumption is a norm thus do not experience social pressures to participate in ethical consumption habits.

Hypothesis 1: Ethical trade certification categories and perceptions

> H₀: There is no statically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions.

> H₁: There is a statistically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions.

Attitudes	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Which of these certifications do you believe is the most ethical?	50	100%
Both	25	50%
Fair Trade	14	28%
Cocoa life	10	20%
Neither	1	2%

Table 4: Attitudes frequency

The results presented in *table 4* indicate that the null for hypothesis 1 be accepted as there is no statically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and ethical perceptions. Despite the moderately higher score obtained by the Cocoa Life Certification this difference does not provide enough reason for brands to invest in an Own Brand Certification on the grounds of being perceived as more either by consumers.

When asked which certification participants found the most ethical 50% of participants stated that they found both certifications equally ethical. However, 28% of participants stated that they found the Fairtrade Certification to be more ethical than the Cocoa Life Certification compared to the 20% of participants who found the Cocoa Life Certification to be more ethical than the Fairtrade Certification.

Participant's attitudes towards the Fair Trade Certification

See Table 2: Concept 2

Data collected on a 5 -point Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) and analysed using descriptive statistical data analysis indicated that participants' attitudes towards the Fairtrade Certification were positive with a mean of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.78.

Participant's attitudes towards the Cocoa Life Certification.

See Table 2: Concept 2

Data collected on a 5 -point Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) and analysed using descriptive statistical data analysis indicated that participants' attitudes towards the Cocoa Life Certification were positive with a mean of 4 and a standard deviation of 0.82.

Hypothesis 2: Consumer perceptions and purchase intentions

- H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions.
- H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and purchase intentions.

Results presented in table 2: Concepts 2, 3 and 5 indicate that the second null hypothesis for the study be rejected as there is a statistically significant relationship between participant's perceptions and their purchase intentions towards the ethical trade certification categories. The observed results of this study support previous studies, such as the 2020 study conducted by Horsfall, by confirming the relationship between perception and purchase intentions. Participants in this study had a more positive perception of the Cocoa Life Certification and this directly translated to participants having stronger intentions to purchase chocolate products with the Cocoa Life Certification as opposed to the Fair trade Certification

Purchasing Intentions towards the Fair Trade Certification and the Cocoa Life Certification.

See table 2: Concepts 2, 3 and 5

Data collected on a 5-point Likert scale (where 1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly disagree) participants purchase intentions were analysed using descriptive statistical data analysis methods. The results indicate that when asked which ethical trade certification they were most likely to purchase participants indicated that they were likely to purchase a chocolate product with the Cocoa Life certification with a mean of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 0.78, whereas the purchase intention for Fair trade certified chocolate product received a mean of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.78.

4.1.2 Inferential statistics

Correlation test

The scatter graphs below illustrate the correlation between the participant's perceptions of each ethical trade certification category and their purchasing intentions towards that category.

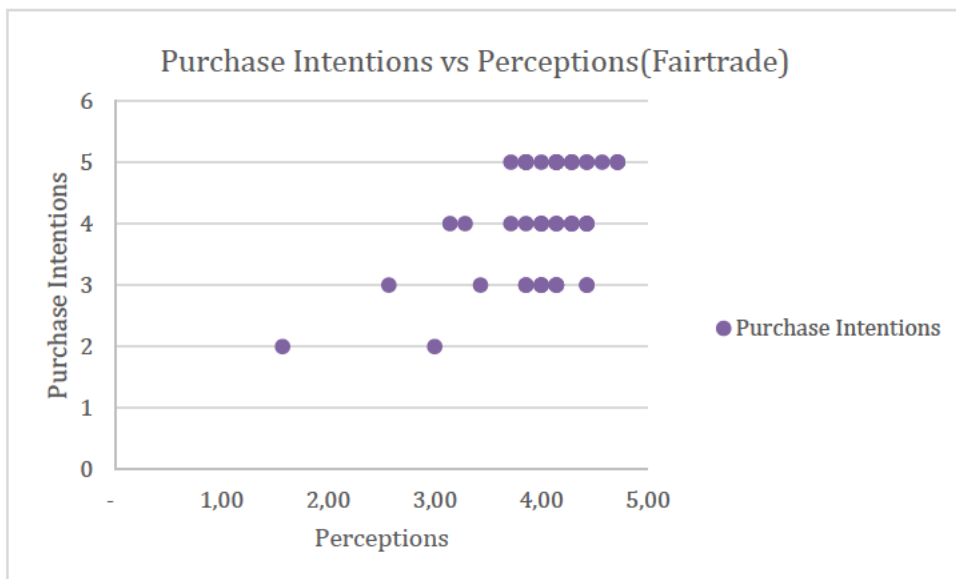


Figure 3: Fairtrade scatter graph

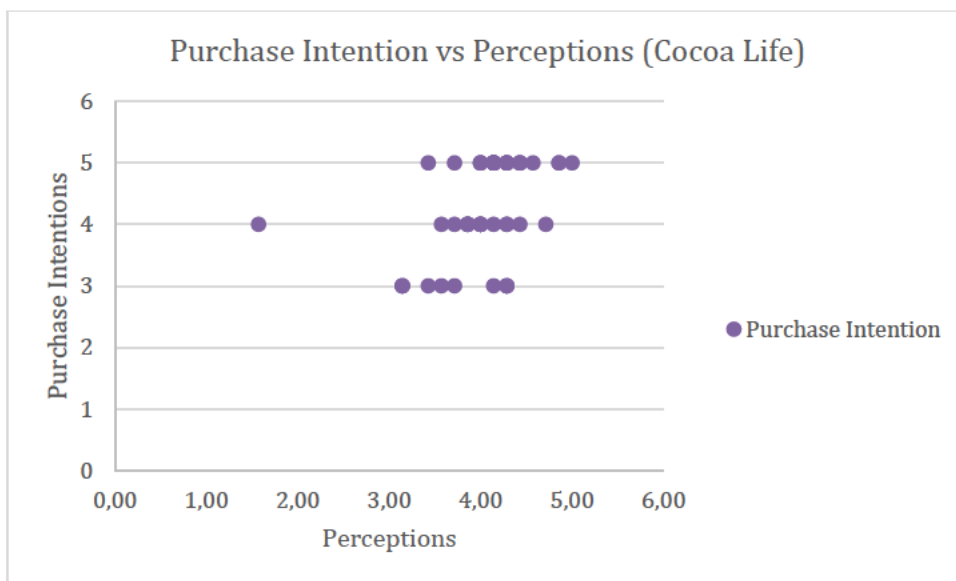


Figure 4: Cocoa Life scatter graph

Hypothesis 3: Ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions

- H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions.
- H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions.

The data collected on participant's attitudes towards the respective ethical trade certification categories and their purchasing intentions towards these respective categories were analysed using a correlation test.

The Cocoa Life Certification received a correlation coefficient of 0.41 and the Fair Trade Certification received a correlation coefficient of 0.49. This indicates a moderate positive correlation between participant's perceptions and purchasing intentions towards each ethical trade certification category.

Although not scoring very high with a correlation of 1 or scoring very low with a negative correlation the study participants' scores were in the lower middle indicating that they are less likely to purchase a chocolate product based on their perceptions towards either certification. This reinforces previous literature which states that solely placing social or environmental labelling on a product does not guarantee that consumers will be motivated to purchase the product. Instead trade-offs will occur where consumers rank different product attributes (Grunert, 2014). The results indicate that participants were willing to purchase a product with an ethical certification labelling but other attributes of the product may be ranked higher when considering the purchase.

Additionally, the relationship between participants purchasing intentions and perceptions towards either certification category cannot be completely ignored. The results do indicate that when directly presented with the *choice of a certification* participants are likely to have a slight preference that may influence their purchase intention.

³ See Annexure C for correlation test tables.

4.2 Interpretation of findings

The analysed results presented in *table 2: concept 1*, indicate that participants do not strongly identify as conscious consumers as defined by Elkington and Hailes (1988); Tallontire, Rentsendorj and Blowfield (2001) and Gjerris, Gamborg and Saxe (2016) nor do they heavily consider ethical consumerism practices when purchasing chocolate products this may be due to participants regarding chocolate products as a “treat purchase” as initially stated by Darby and Karni (1973). The lack of consideration for ethical consumption practices when purchasing chocolate products may also be attributed to participant’s lack of external motivation to do so.

The results indicate that a majority of participants are not in family and friend environments in which conscious consumption is promoted/rewarded, as shown in *table 2: concept 4 and table 3: subjective norms*, the results also indicate that participants do not gain strong levels of positive self-image from participating in conscious consumption. This lack of internal and external motivation better known as subjective norms according to the theory of reasoned action (Asare, 2015; Bisquolm, 2010) has negatively influenced participants' purchasing intentions towards respective ethical trade certifications. This is further expressed in participants' low recognition of the ethical trade certification categories with only 34% of participants recognising the Cocoa Life Certification and 30% of participants recognising the Fair Trade Certification, as shown in *table 1 Q5 and Q6*.

In 2019 Yoganathan, Osburg and Akhtar stated that ethically certified products are a way for consumers to reflect their own ethical beliefs and moral values to their peers, however, the results gathered from this study seem to challenge that notion as participants do not validate their personal ethical beliefs when considering chocolate purchases nor do they seek validation from their peers when considering these sorts of purchases, *refer to data analysis on Concept 4: Subjective norms*.

Despite this, the participants did indicate a slight preference in ethical trade certifications. As seen in *table 4* the results indicate that 50% of consumers believe that both ethical trade certifications are equally ethical and 28% of participants believe that the Fair Trade Certification is more ethical than the Cocoa Life Certification. However, when participants' overall positive perceptions towards each certification were measured the results indicated that the Cocoa Life Certification scored moderately higher than the Fair Trade Certification. This slightly higher positive perception towards Cocoa Life increased participants' purchasing intentions towards chocolate products possessing the Cocoa Life Certification.

CONCLUSION

5.1 Validity, reliability, and/ or trustworthiness

According to Sürücü and Maslakci (2020) in order to produce accurate results in quantitative research the validity and reliability of the scales used must be ensured.

5.1 Validity

As stated by Sürücü and Maslakci (2020) validity is concerned with ensuring that the instrument used in the quantitative study accurately covers the full range of content related to the variables used. To ensure the validity of the research findings the questions in the survey sent out to the participants were adopted from tested peer-reviewed studies that deal with the variables at length.

5.2 Reliability

As stated by Sürücü and Maslakci (2020) reliability is concerned with the accuracy of the research instrument and its results. For an instrument and its results to be reliable the instrument must consistently produce the same results (Sürücü and Maslakci, 2020). To ensure the reliability of the findings the split-half method will be used. As stated by Heale and Twycross (2015) strong result correlations indicate high reliability in the research and weak correlations in the results indicate weak reliability in the research thus using the split half method to test the correlation in the results will assist in ensuring that the results are reliable. The researcher also used methods from similar existing peer-reviewed studies (Dalton, 2019; Garanti, 2019; Singh, Iglesias and Batista-Foguet, 2012) which serve to increase the reliability of the research.

5.3 Ethical considerations

For the fact that the survey will take place primarily online the following ethical considerations have been considered.

1. Participants

The researcher ensured that the participants gave informed consent and were of age to participate in the study. Seeing that the data collection and analysis took place online the researcher ensured that the participants' data was kept safe and confidential by storing it on a 2-step verification drive that only the researcher could access.

2. Presented work

To ensure that the presented work met ethical standards the researcher did not plagiarise by and consulted with the Vega Pretoria Campus librarian for referencing checks. The researcher also ensured

that the presented work meets ethical standards by objectively dealing with the data collected. This means that the researcher did not tamper with the results in favour of producing a specific result.

5.4 Anticipated contribution, implications of study and its successfulness

The research will contribute to the existing body of literature on the relationship between perceptions and purchase intentions in the context of ethical/conscious consumption and ethical trade certifications. It will also shed light on how the global conversation and shift towards more ethical purchasing habits translates to the localised average South African consumer.

This will assist brands operating in the local chocolate industry and possibly related industries to accurately invest their resources into ethical certifications and signals that will provide a notable return on investment. Future studies dealing with a similar topic should investigate how consumer perceptions and purchase intentions differ between those in the confectionary/chocolate industry and those in the clothing or luxury items industry as these are both considered 'treat' products. Along with this future studies could investigate the qualitative reasons for the findings from this study as this would contribute to the existing body of knowledge by understanding 'why' consumers are not as responsive towards ethical consumerism and ethical trade certifications.

This study was successful in that it answered the set research questions and hypotheses in a manner that credibly contributes to the existing body of literature.

5.5 Limitations of the study

Due to the study's data collection occurring primarily online, the researcher was unable to control the participants' environment to ensure that there were no external influences that may have interfered with the participants' answers. Along with this the researcher's choice of paradigm prevented the ability to assist participants when answering the questions to prevent question misinterpretation.

The chosen quantitative research approach does not account for understanding why participants produced these results and thus does not provide brands with the valuable information that this information may contribute to their strategies and investment decisions. Along with this the theoretical approach section of this proposal the chosen theory (The theory of Reasoned Action) does present a few limitations for the study such as not accounting for spontaneous, mindless, impulsive and habitual behaviours and the study does not consider that intentions may not translate to behaviours.

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Annexure A



Figure 1: Fairtrade Certification



Figure 2: Cocoa Life Certification

Annexure B

Research Instrument

Ethical Trade Certification Survey

To whom it may concern

I, Thando Kimora Lee Magidela, am a student at IIE-Vega (a brand of the Independent Institute of Education). I am currently conducting research for my Honours degree in Strategic Brand Communications in which I am investigating consumer perceptions and purchasing intentions towards different ethical trade certification categories in the chocolate industry.

- 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.
- Your participation will be anonymous.

The study has been approved by my supervisor and the IIE-campus ethics committee.

I can be contacted at: thandomagidela@gmail.com if you have any questions or concerns.

Please note:

The survey consists of 5 short sections and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete



(not shared) [Switch accounts](#)



*Required

I consent to participating in this study *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Next

Clear form

Demographic Questions

What is your Age? *

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-24
- ☐ 25-28
- ☐ 29 +

What is your Gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other: _____

How often do you purchase chocolate? *

- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Twice a month
- ☐ 3+ times a month

Back

Next

Clear form

Ethical Consumption Questions

Conscious consumer: a consumer that actively and regularly purchases products from businesses and brands that have assured them that the products do not harm the environment, do not misuse energy and resources or produce excessive harmful waste and do not employ practices that harm/ disregard human rights.

Given the above definition on a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

I am a conscious consumer

- | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Strongly Disagree | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Strongly Agree |

Do you recognise this certification? *



☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you recognise this certification ? *



☐ Yes

☐ No

Explanation of Ethical Trade Certification

This section will provide you with information on Fair Trade certification and Cocoa Life certification. Please read through it to answer the upcoming questions.

Fair Trade certification



Fair Trade Certification

The Fair Trade organisation focuses on improving the trading conditions for cocoa farmers by:

1. Fairtrade cocoa farmers are paid a Fairtrade Minimum Price for their goods, as a safeguard when market prices drop.
2. Organic production is incentivised with a higher minimum Price.
3. Farmer organisations also receive a Fairtrade Premium which they invest in projects of their choice.

Fairtrade pushes the envelope to establish living incomes for small-scale farmers.

Brands that have this ethical trade certification claim to offer ethically sourced cocoa products

(Fair Trade organisation, 2022)

Cocoa Life Certification



Cocoa Life Certification

Cocoa life is cocoa sustainability program that focuses on addressing the challenges faced by cocoa farmers namely:

1. Lack of knowledge of farming techniques, limited access to planting materials, pests and disease.
2. Environmental challenges such as climate change, ageing trees, unfertile soil.
3. Social challenges such as limited access to education, gender inequality, fewer leadership roles for women.
4. Financial challenges such as poverty and lack of access to finance.

This program focuses on making a difference in the lives of cocoa farmers by creating inclusive and empowered communities and educating on forest conservation and restoration.

Brands that have this ethical trade certification claim to offer ethically sourced cocoa products

(Cocoa Life, 2022)

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Next

Clear form

Attitude Questions

This section of the survey will examine participants attitudes towards Fair Trade certification and Cocoa Life certification.

Given the above information on Fair Trade certification and Cocoa life certification please answer the following questions

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Fair Trade Certification is making a positive social and environmental impact.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Coca life Certification is making a positive impact social and environmental impact.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Fair Trade certification is making a positive impact on the cocoa industry

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Strongly Agree

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Cocoa Life certification is making a positive impact on the cocoa industry

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Which of these certifications do you believe is the most ethical? *

- ☐ Cocoa Life Certification
- ☐ Fair Trade Certification
- ☐ Both
- ☐ Neither

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Ethical trade certifications indicate a brands' true ethical performance in the industry?

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

On a scale of 1 to 5 how strongly do you agree with this statement *

Purchasing the certification I consider most ethical makes me feel good about myself.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

On a scale of 1 to 5 *

how likely are you to purchase a brand of chocolate that does not have the ethical trade certification that you believe represents your ethical values.

1 2 3 4 5
I am not likely to purchase ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ I am likely to purchase

On a scale of 1 to 5 how likely are your friends and family to influence your purchasing decisions *

1 2 3 4 5
Not likely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very likely

Would you consider your friends/family conscious consumers? *

☐ Yes
☐ No

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Next

Clear form

Ethical Trade certification

Which ethical trade certification do you think best fits the given statements.

Fair Trade Certification respects moral norms *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification respects moral norms *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification respects moral norms *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification respects moral norms *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification adheres to the law *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification adheres to the law *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification adheres to the law *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification adheres to the law *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification indicates a socially responsible brand *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification indicates a socially responsible brand *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification indicates a socially responsible brand *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification is good *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification is good *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Fair Trade Certification represents my environmental and social beliefs/values *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Cocoa Life Certification represents my environmental and social beliefs/values *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Provided that the following factors are the same (price, brand and taste) I would buy a Fair Trade Certified chocolate

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Provided that the following factors are the same (price, brand and taste) I would buy a cocoa life Certified chocolate. *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Back

Submit

Clear form

Annexure C

How to read correlation table

- The rows labelled P1-50 indicate each participant's responses to the attitude based question in the questionnaire.
- The section labelled A is the collection of all participants responses to the attitude based question in the questionnaire
- The column labelled B is the average to each participant's response to the attitude based questions.
- The column labelled C is each participant's purchasing intentions towards the ethical trade certification category.
- The block marked correlation indicates the correlation between the perceptions and purchasing intentions for that ethical trade certification category.

	A							B	C
	Participants Perceptions of Fair Trade Certification							Perception s	Purchase Intention s
P1	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,71	5
P2	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4,43	4
P3	4	5	4	5	4	3	5	4,29	5
P4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,00	3
P5	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	4,43	3
P6	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3,43	3
P7	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	4,14	5
P8	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	3
P9	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	4
P10	3	3	1	4	3	4	4	3,14	4
P11	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3,00	2
P12	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4,71	5
P13	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4,29	5
P14	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,86	3

[illegible]

P3 9	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,86	3
P4 0	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,86	4
P4 1	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	3,29	4
P4 2	3	3	4	5	4	5	4	4,00	4
P4 3	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4,29	4
P4 4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4,29	4
P4 5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4,43	4
P4 6	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4,14	5
P4 7	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4,71	5
P4 8	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4,43	4
P4 9	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4,00	4
P5 0	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	4,00	4
								Correlation	0,49

	A							B	C
	Perception of Cocoa Life Certification							Perceptions	Purchase Intention
P1	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	3,43	3
P2	4	2	4	4	4	4	2	3,43	5
P3	5	3	4	2	5	4	4	3,86	4
P4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	5
P5	4	4	4	2	5	4	3	3,71	5
P6	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4,43	5
P7	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	4,14	5
P8	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,29	5
P9	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4,00	4
P10	5	5	1	3	5	5	4	4,00	5
P11	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4,86	5
P12	3	3	3	4	4	5	4	3,71	4
P13	5	5	4	3	5	4	4	4,29	3
P14	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4,43	5
P15	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3,57	3
P16	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1,57	4
P17	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	3
P18	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5,00	5
P19	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	5
P20	3	3	1	4	3	4	4	3,14	3
P21	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	4,14	5
P22	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3,14	3
P23	5	5	4	3	4	4	5	4,29	5
P24	5	5	4	4	4	5	3	4,29	5
P25	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	4
P26	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,29	3

P2 7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,00	4
P2 8	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4,14	5
P2 9	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3,71	3
P3 0	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,86	4
P3 1	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4,57	5
P3 2	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,29	3
P3 3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4,00	4
P3 4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3,86	4
P3 5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,29	5
P3 6	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4,86	5
P3 7	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4,00	5
P3 8	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,29	4
P3 9	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,14	5
P4 0	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4,00	4
P4 1	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3,14	3
P4 2	3	3	4	3	5	5	5	4,00	5
P4 3	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4,43	5
P4 4	4	3	4	5	5	5	3	4,14	5
P4 5	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3,57	4
P4 6	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4,71	4
P4 7	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4,43	4
P4 8	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4,29	4
P4 9	5	4	5	3	5	3	4	4,14	5
P5 0	4	3	3	3	5	4	5	3,86	4

Correlation	0,41
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Annexure D

Concept document

Project details		
Your Name: Thando Kimora Lee Magidela	Student Number: [REDACTED]	
Supervisor: Anthony Wingfield	Date: 05/12/2022	Version:5

Proposed Title	
Title	An investigation into the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions in the context of different ethical trade certifications in the chocolate industry.

Research details	
Problem statement	Today's consumer market is more conscious of its product choices opting for products that align with progressive social and environmental ethical standards (De Ferran and Grunert, 2007) resulting in consumers choosing to boycott brands that do not align with these standards giving brands a monetary and social incentive to implement more ethical business practises at all levels (Lim & Shim, 2019). This shift is mainly seen in consumer goods industries with notoriously exploitative practices such as the] chocolate industry (Weatherer, 2021). Commercial chocolate companies have been criticised for the negative environmental effects and human rights violations that occur during the cocoa supply chain process (Weatherer, 2021). This has negatively affected several brand purchasing relationships with vendors and consumers causing brands to make commitments towards addressing the violations present in their supply chain; because of this many brands have undertaken adopting credible certification systems; this is one way brands have chosen to guarantee consumers that they are sourcing environmentally and socially sustainable cocoa (Weatherer,2021). There are two types of certification in the chocolate industry; these are Industry Standard Certification from organisations such as Rainforest Alliance, UTZ and the Fair Trade organisation and Own Brand Certification introduced by chocolate product brands that prefer to engage with suppliers on sustainability issues on their own terms, rather than adopting the Industry Standard Certification criteria and process (Millard, 2021) such as Cadbury's Cocoa Life certification. These different certifications are marked by stickers on chocolate packaging (Millard, 2021). Ultimately, brands seek to signal ethicality in a manner that will be well received by consumers and will translate to significant profit. Both categories of ethical trade certifications require large investments and effort from brands thus it is in a brands best interest to invest its resources in the ethical trade certification that will generate the most return on investment. The chocolate industry has reached a pivotal point by providing brands seeking to signal ethicality to consumers with two certification routes to choose from. The problem this study aims to address is, given the rise in conscious consumption and the increasing consumer choice will a specific ethical certification deter consumers from purchasing a chocolate product. This is an important avenue to explore as it may affect the brands profits and could potentially lead to a brand being boycotted by consumers. This will provide brands within the chocolate industry with a glimpse into which ethical trade certification may potentially lead to the most return on investment by utilising consumer perceptions and purchase intentions towards the two ethical trade certification categories. Namely ISC with specific reference to Fair Trade certification and OBC with specific reference to Cocoa Life Certification. Moreover, there is limited research done on South African consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions

	towards ethical trade certifications despite the population's move towards conscious consumption and the country's unique purchasing landscape. With 76% of South Africans indicating that they would like see brands and businesses taking more social and environmental initiative (Dicey, 2016) with the number only increasing over the last few years and being spearheaded by Generation Z; the next generation of consumers (MasterCard, 2022). Understanding consumers perceptions and purchase intention towards ethical trade certification will be immensely valuable brands and businesses looking to target South African consumers.
Purpose statement	In response to the increase in consumers' ethical concerns and the increase in investment by brands into acquiring ethical certification, this study aims to investigate the relationship between perceived ethicality and purchase intentions in the context of ethical trade certifications in the chocolate industry, in order to understand which ethical certification would provide brands with the most return on investment. This research is conducted to explain the importance of different certifications on consumer purchase intentions given the impact this will have on brand profitability and relevance in the market. This may provide brands with a better understanding of which ethical certifications to invest in and implement given market favourability.
Research question/s	What are consumers' ethical perceptions towards different ethical trade certification categories? What is the relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and brand purchase intention? What is the relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions?
Hypotheses/ Objectives	Hypothesis 1 Ethical trade certification categories and perceptions ➤ H0: There is no statically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions. ➤ H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between ethical trade certification categories and perceptions. Hypothesis 2: Consumer perceptions and purchase intentions ➤ H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. ➤ H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between consumers' ethical perceptions and purchase intentions. Hypothesis 3: Ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions ➤ H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions. ➤ H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the ethical trade certification categories and purchase intentions.
Research rationale	Consumer purchasing behaviour is changing as consumers become more aware of the social and environmental impacts of their purchases. This has caused an international rise of the 'conscious consumer', these consumers demand that brands not only prioritise transparency and accountability in their practices but also make serious efforts to align their practices with positive social and environmental demands. However, not all brands have heeded this call, specifically those operating in the commercial chocolate industry. Resulting in many commercial chocolate brands being heavily criticised for their exploitative practices. With this said, the social and environmental impact of chocolate products does serve as an interesting case when studying ethical trade certifications and the impact these have on consumer perceptions and purchase intentions towards respective chocolate products. This is due to the fact that consumers view chocolate as a 'special treat'/reward purchase and according to Darby and Karni (1973) rarely are ethics considered when purchasing these sorts of products. However the rise in consumer interest in ethical consumption may challenge this perception and shift purchase intentions, thus studying special treat/reward products specifically chocolate in the context of ethical trade certifications may challenge traditional views and add to the existing body of work on ethical consumption, ethical perception and purchase intention. Along with this most existing studies tackling ethical certifications in reference to consumer perceptions and purchase intentions tend to focus on western consumers. Thus a study on consumer perceptions and purchase

	intentions towards different ethical trade certifications in a South African context would be valuable for brands looking to target South African consumers given the rise in conscious consumption amongst South Africans (MasterCard, 2022).
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Literature overview						
Key theories	The theory of Reasoned Action. This theory assumes that when making decisions consumers will consider the advantages and disadvantages of all possible options before committing to what they believe is the best option. The theory of reasoned action brings forward two main direct determinants of behavioural intention, namely: attitude and subjective norms.					
Seminal authors/ Sources	Bahn, 1986-Kenneth D. Bahn, How and When Do Brand Perceptions and Preferences First Form? A Cognitive Developmental Investigation, Journal of Consumer Research, Volume 13, Issue 3, December 1986, Pages 382–393, doi.org/10.1086/209077 Bearden, W. O., & Woodside, A. G. 1977. The effect of attitudes and previous behaviour on consumer choice. The Journal of Social Psychology.129-137.doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1977.9713302 Beltramini, Richard F., Robert A. Peterson, and George Kozmetsky. "Concerns of college students regarding business ethics." Journal of Business Ethics 3, no. 3 (1984): 195-200. Machleit, K.A., & Wilson, R.D. 1988. Emotional Feelings and Attitude toward the Advertisement: The Roles of Brand Familiarity and Repetition. Journal of Advertising, 17: 27-35. Murthi and Srinivasan, 1999.Consumers' Extent of Evaluation in Brand Choice-The Journal of Business Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 1999), 229-256 Psychology, 103(1), 129–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1977.9713302					
Literature review Themes	Theme 1 Ethical consumerism	Theme 2 Industry standard Certification	Theme 3 Own brand certification	Theme 4 perception	Theme 5 Purchase intention	Theme 6
Sources	Batista-Foguet, Singh, Iglesias.2011.Does Having an Ethical Brand Matter? The Influence of Consumer Perceived Ethicality on Trust, Affect and Loyalty. Journal of Business Ethics, 111.541–549.[Online].DOI 10.1007/s10551-012-1216-7[Accessed 31 March 2022]. Beltramini, F. Peterson,R and Kozmetsky,1984.Concerns of college students regarding business ethics. Journal of Business Ethics, 33(3):195-200. Brunk,H and Boer,C.2018.How do Consumers Reconcile Positive and Negative CSR-Related Information to Form an Ethical Brand Perception? A Mixed Method Inquiry. Journal of Business Ethics, 161(1): 1-16.[Online].DOI:1 0.1007/s10551-018-3973-4[Accessed 1 April 2022]. Darby,R and Karni,E.1973. Free competition and the optimal amount of fraud. Journal of Law and Economics,16:67–88. Brickmann-Bhutta, C. 2012.Not by the Book: Facebook as a Sampling Frame.Sage Journal,41(1).[Online].Doi.org/10.1177/0049124112440795 [Accessed 31 March 2022]. Canning,S.2010.Cadbury signs up for Fair Trade.Australian,The,19 April 2010.[Online].Available at: https://ezproxy.iielearn.ac.za/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bwh&N=201004191 027483166&site=ehost-live&scope=site[Accessed 1April 2022]. Dwivedi, Abhishek, Johnson, Wilkie, and De Araujo-Gi.2018. Consumer emotional brand attachment with social media brands and social media brand equity.European Journal Marketing, 53(06):1176-1204. Garanti,Z.2019.Ethical Brand Perceptions and Their Impact on Brand Loyalty and Brand Choice Intentions: Mediating Role of Emotional Brand Attachment Journal of Yasar University, 14(56):448-459. Gillani,A.Kutaula,S.Leonidou,L.Christodoulides,P.2018.The Impact of Proximity on Consumer Fair Trade Engagement and Purchasing Behavior: The Moderating Role of Empathic Concern and Hypocrisy.Journal of Busines Ethics,163(3):557-577.[Online].DOI:10.1007/s10551-019-04278- 6[Accessed 1 April 2022] Hull,N.2022.Cadbury faces child labour claims on its cocoa farms.Daily Mail, 4 April 2022.[Online]. Available at: https://web-p-ebscohostcom.ezproxy.iielearn.ac.za/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=2c694432-0e46-4ba7-9503-daf172 3853bc%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtG2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=156062233&db=bwh[Acc essed 5 April 2022] Pérez,A.de los Salmones,M.2018.Information and Knowledge as Antecedents of Consumer Attitudes and Intentions to Buy and Recommend Fair-Trade Products.Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Poelmans,E. Rousseau,S.2015.How do chocolate lovers balance taste and ethical considerations?British Food Journal,118(2):343-361.[Online]DOI 10.1108/BFJ-06-2015- 0208[Accessed 30 March 2022]. Marketing,30(2):111-133.[Online].DOI:10.1080/10495142.2017.1326358[Accessed 1/04/2022] Polit and Beck.2010.Generalization in quantitative and qualitative research: Myths and strategies. International Journal of Nursing Studies 47(1):1451-1458. Zerbini,C.Vergura,D and Luceri,B.2018.How fair-trade claims and emotional empathy affect the consumer's propensity to buy fair chocolate?.British Food Journal,121(7):1605-1613.[Online].DOI 10.1108/BFJ-07-2018-0417[Accessed 3 April 2022] Key concepts Brand Perception,Brand purchase intention, The Reas					
Key Concepts	Purchase intentions, Perceptions, conscious consumption/ethical consumption, industry standard certification Own brand certification.					

Provisional Research Approach

Paradigm	<u>Paradigm</u> The chosen research paradigm of positivism deals with verifying hypotheses through experimentation and the use of appropriate variables and measures (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). Positivists believe in an evidence-based approach and rely on scientific methods to provide results that can be interpreted mathematically. The results gathered from this experimentation are used to add to the existing scientific body of knowledge (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). Studies that take a positivist approach investigate explanatory associations or causal relationships between dependent and independent variables (Ponterotto, 2005). Positivist research tends to take a quantitative approach and make use of larger sample sizes because they allow for results to be generalised (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). According to Panhwar (2017) positivism measures the reliability of information through its ability to be observed.	<u>Epistemology</u> Through this approach positivism expresses objectivism in the testing process (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). During this study the epistemological approach was implemented to ensure that the researcher did not interact with the research participants during the data collection process allowing the participants to draw their own conclusions about the survey questions without the researchers influence. This ensured that the results obtained accurately expressed the participants' objective truth.	<u>Ontology</u> Through this approach positivism expresses the assumption that there is one objective truth (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). This truth can be recognized, comprehended and measured by the researcher (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). During this study the ontological approach has allowed the researcher to test the correlation between perception (independent variable) and purchase intention (dependent variable).	
Approach/ design	The study employed a cross-sectional design due to the time limitation of less than a year granted for its completion. Given the allocated timeline for the studies completion and the requirements presented by the research topic and its questions, a quantitative approach was the most appropriate method given its fast and focused nature.			

Provisional Research Plan	
Population	Unit of analysis According to DeCarlo (2018) a unit of analysis is defined as the focus of the study, it takes the form of the individuals under study which the researcher seeks to base findings on at the end of the study. For the purposes of this study the unit of analysis is South African Generation Z and Millennial chocolate product consumers. Population According to Polit and Hungler (1999) the population is defined as the aggregate of the individuals that the researcher seeks to study, this aggregate meets a set of specifications set by the researcher. For the purposes of this study the population is Generation Z and Millennial South African consumers who frequently purchase chocolate products. This population was chosen because they are the primary stakeholders for ethical issues (Beltramini, Peterson, and Kozmetsky, 1984).

	Target population According to Gregory, Stevens and Fraser (2017) the target population is defined as the group of individuals that the researcher will conduct research on and draw conclusions from. For the purposes of this study the target population is South African consumers between the ages of 18-28 who frequently purchase chocolate products. According to (Brunjes, 2022) Generation Z individuals fall into the age range of 10-25 and millennial individuals fall into the age range of 26-41. Due to the chosen sampling method and recruitment location for the study, the researcher chose to only investigate the set hypotheses on the oldest set of Generation Z individuals and the youngest set of Millennial individuals; this allowed the researcher to focus on obtaining results from individuals with purchasing power from what is socially considered as a younger market (Smith, 2018). Thus the selected target population was Generation Z individuals between the ages of 18-25 and Millennial individuals between the ages of 26-28. Accessible population According to Fetzer (2020) an accessible population is defined as the segment of the target population that the research has access to. For the purposes of the study the accessible population is consumers who frequently purchase chocolate products between the ages of 18-28 in Gauteng who are willing and able to complete the online questionnaire. The sample for the study will be drawn from the accessible population (Fetzer, 2020).
Sampling	Sampling Method The study was conducted using probability simple random sampling as this method was the most aligned with the chosen positivist research paradigm and quantitative research approach. Probability sampling: simple random sampling According to Easton and McColl (1997), simple random sampling requires the researcher to randomly select a sample from a larger population. This sampling method is used to make statistical inferences about a population (Thomas, 2022). When implementing simple random sampling the researcher must have a list of individuals from the population from which to randomly select a sample (Thomas, 2022). Conducting research in this manner ensures high internal and external validity and reduces the potential occurrence of confounding variables (Thomas, 2022). Given the researcher's paradigm and quantitative approach, simple random sampling was the most appropriate sampling method. However, acquiring a list of the entire population would have proven a tedious and impossible task thus some adjustments had to be made. Instead of acquiring a list of the entire population the researcher sent out a request to individuals within the accessible population. This request included details on all the necessary population parameters. A total of 65 individuals from the accessible population agreed to participate in the study. From these 65 individuals 50 official participants were randomly selected. Sample size According to LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (1998) the sample size is defined as the number of individuals that will be participating in the study. A larger sample size is generally preferred because it may produce results that are better representative of the entire population (LoBiondo-Wood and Haber, 1998). According to the IIE (2022) guided parameters for NQF level 8 research students conducting quantitative research requires a minimum sample of 50 participants. . Thus the chosen sample for this study was 50 individuals between the ages of 18-28 living in the Gauteng area who purchase chocolate products at least once a month.

Data collection method(s)	The researcher made use of a survey data collection method by distributing an online survey in the form of a Google forms link to the final research sample, hereinafter known as the participants. According to Brickmand-Bhutta (2012) online questionnaires are a feasible and cost-effective way to conduct a survey. The survey was developed on the online survey software program 'Google forms. This online format allowed participants to individually complete the study without any influence from the researcher. This assisted with limiting possible bias errors and maintaining the objectivity required by the chosen positivist paradigm. The chosen method of data collection method also increased research reliability because the data from the participants was immediately stored by the program and could not be tampered with. The Questionnaire included questions regarding the demographic profile of respondents (age, gender, level of studies, location) as well as questions to measure attitude, subjective norm, ethical brand perception and brand purchasing intention. Measures for the study concepts used to test participants' perceptions were adapted from the Brunk and Boer's (2018) study on ethical perceptions. The concepts of attitude and subjective norm were adapted from the Asare's (2015) study on the theory of planned behaviour. As stated in the previous chapter the questions developed by Asare for the theory of planned behaviour are appropriate for this study because they contain set measurements for attitude and subjective norm which are relevant to its predecessor the theory of reasoned action. Due to the variables and data collection methods chosen for the study the researcher made use of close-ended questions. Most of the questions were measured according to a 5-point Likert scale which scored items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and other questions made use of 'yes' and 'no' options. The study also made use of a discrete choice experiment. This was used to test participant preferences and was applied to questions that required the participants to choose between the options "Both", "Fair Trade Certification", "Cocoa Life Certification" and "Neither". According to Dalton (2019) this technique is the most appropriate for testing scenarios with multiple attributes such as those presented in this study.
Data analysis method(s)	The researcher made use of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis methods to determine the relationships between the gathered results. The use of inferential statistics will allow for the study results to be generalised to the entire population (Polit and Beck, 2010). The chosen methods align with the study's quantitative approach. The results were sorted and filtered using a Google Sheets spreadsheet. The researcher performed a descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the participants' answers using Google sheets. Using descriptive statistical analysis, the researcher was able to determine the mean, mode, standard deviation and frequency for all the relevant study concepts, namely: ethical consumption, attitude, subjective norms and purchasing intentions this allowed the researcher to determine participants' overall perceptions towards the Fair Trade Certification and the Cocoa Life Certification. In order to determine the relationship between perceptions and purchase intention the researcher made use of inferential statistical analysis methods specifically a correlation test. This test was used to determine the correlation between perception and purchasing intention.

	These data analysis methods were chosen for this study because they allowed the researcher to determine the relationship between perception and purchase intention thereby testing the set hypotheses and answering the set research questions.
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Ethical considerations and limitations	
Ethics	Ethical considerations For the fact that the survey will take place primarily online the following ethical considerations have been considered. Participants The researcher ensured that the participants gave informed consent and were of age to participate in the study. Seeing that the data collection and analysis took place online the researcher ensured that the participants' data was kept safe and confidential by storing it on a 2-step verification drive that only the researcher could access. Presented work To ensure that the presented work met ethical standards the researcher did not plagiarise by and consulted with the Vega Pretoria Campus librarian for referencing checks. The researcher also ensured that the presented work meets ethical standards by objectively dealing with the data collected. This means that the researcher did not tamper with the results in favour of producing a specific result.
Limitations	Due to the study's data collection occurring primarily online, the researcher was unable to control the participants' environment to ensure that there were no external influences that may have interfered with the participants' answers. Along with this the researcher's choice of paradigm prevented the ability to assist participants when answering the questions to prevent question misinterpretation. As previously mentioned in the Theoretical Approach section of this proposal the chosen theory (The theory of Reasoned Action) does present a few limitations for the study such as not account for spontaneous, mindless, impulsive and habitual behaviours and the study does not consider that intentions may not translate to behaviours.

Annexure X



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Thando Kimora Lee											
Last name(s)	Magidela											
Title of study	An investigation into the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions in the context of different ethical trade certifications in the chocolate industry.											
Qualification	Bachelor of Arts in Strategic Brand Communications											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☒	Mx	☐
First and last names	Mr Anthony Wingfield											
Co-supervisor Details (if applicable)												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Click or tap here to enter text.											

Explaining your research process						
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☒	Interpretivism	☐	Constructivism	☐
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐
	Functionalist	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐
	Other:					
Research design:	Interview	☐	Questionnaire (self-administered)	☒	Focus group	☐
	Ethnography / Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐
	Other (if so, state)	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	Minimum of 50 adults ages 18-28					
Target sampling group	Purposive	☐	Random	☐	Snowball	☐
	Convenient	☒	Stratified	☐	Census	...

methods/artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	<i>Explain selection process</i>	Given the time constraints the researcher will make use of convenience sampling the questionnaire will only be distributed to individuals that the researcher can confirm are 18 years or older.
Ethics		
Documentati on submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper's letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒
	Participant or respondent consent form	☐
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	☐

Campus ethics committee recommendation	
Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included. ☐ Accepted as is and provide letter ☐ Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor ☐ Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Supervisor signature	
	Click or tap to enter a date.
Co-supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature	
	Click or tap to enter a date.

Annexure Y

Blurb for self-administered questionnaire

To whom it may concern,

I, **Thando Kimora Lee Magidela** am a student at IIE-Vega (a brand of the Independent Institute of Education). I am currently conducting research for my **Honours degree** in **Strategic Brand Communications** in which I am **investigating consumer perceptions and purchasing intentions towards different ethical trade certification categories**.

- 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.
- Your participation will be anonymous.

The study has been approved by my supervisor and the IIE-campus ethics committee. I can be contacted at: [REDACTED] if you have any questions or concerns.

I hereby acknowledge and give my full consent to the participation to this study as stipulated above.

(Single choice).

☐ YES

Annexure Z



Date

Student name: Thando Kimora Lee Magidela

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Pretoria

Re: Approval of RESE8419/RMET8429 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS/PGDip 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 and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with 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:

3. 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.

4. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
8. 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: Anthony Wingfield

Signature:

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name:

Signature:

