



# **EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF BRAND TRIBES RELATIVE TO BRAND LOYALTY AND CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS CONCERNING THE IPHONE.**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

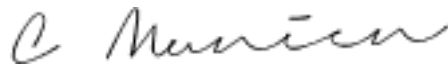
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## DECLARATION

I *Charne' Catherine Munien*, hereby declare that this dissertation and the work reported herein was composed by and originated entirely from me. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and references are given in the list of sources.

(Vega School of Branding)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Munien'.

Signed: C. C. Munien

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## LIST OF KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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**Brand Identity** - the value system of the brand proposed and presented by brand owners or a company.

**Brand loyalty** – describes the consumer's intention to continue buying the same brand, or buying more of the same brand.

**Brand Tribe** - a group of people who are linked by a shared belief around a brand. Its members are not simple consumers; they are also believers and promoters.

**Consumer-brand relationship** - relationship between a brand and a consumer based on the assumption that brands are humanised in the minds of consumers, and therefore a brand and a consumer can develop bonds as partners.

**LSM** – living standard measurement. Haupt (2012) defines an LSM as a “set of marketing differentiators which group people according to their living standards, using criteria such as degree of urbanisation and ownership of cars and major appliances (assets). Essentially, the LSM is a wealth measure based on standard of living rather than income.”

**Generation Y** -The term Millennial generally refers to the generation of people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. The Millennial Generation is also known as Generation Y, because it comes after Generation X (Main, 2013).

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This research study involves examining the impact of brand tribes relative to brand loyalty and consumer relationships concerning the iPhone. As such the branding techniques that influence brand loyalty, competitive advantage and the role these elements play in the facilitation of brand tribes have been explored. Furthermore this study explores the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the youth market in the LSM categories 7-10 within South Africa. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand. The outcome of this study is a strategic model that facilitates and measures the success of the formation of brand tribes.

The study took the form of an interpretive case study in which a mixed-method research approach was employed. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires with Apple iPhone consumers and interviews with Apple employees. The literature review also informed a large aspect of the study.

The purpose of this study was to understand the inner workings of brand tribes, using Apple, a successful brand with a communal following as a case study. From the research findings, the most significant insights included the notion that brand tribes are built on the foundations of brand's mirroring the behaviour of friendship through creating sincere emotional connections, positive brand experiences and connectivity. Overall it was found that the formation of brand tribes is highly beneficial to the success of the brand and this study poses a strategy to build brand tribes that contribute significant value to the lives of consumers as well as brands.

# Chapter 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

---

Chapter 1 outlines the details of the proposed research in relation to the notions of brand tribalism and its relationship to consumer purchase behaviour, brand loyalty and competitive advantage within the Apple iPhone brand. This chapter forms the foundation to the study, introducing the topic, providing an understanding of the Apple iPhone brand and exploring the background to the research questions. Furthermore this chapter states the research problem within the mobile phone industry, the research objectives, aims, assumptions, limitations and significance of the study. Lastly it provides a rationale behind the study, a proposed journal and a brief chapter outline.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO APPLE IPHONE

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In an effort to provide clarity and understanding surrounding the notion of brand tribalism and the factors influencing it, an interpretive case study of a brand with a strong communal following has been explored. The Apple brand, specifically in relation to the iPhone, has been selected as the focus of this research study and thus a brief background on the brand is necessary.

Apple Inc. is a global technology brand that stretches across several exceptionally competitive markets, using the Apple brand as a strategic tool for success (Marketing Minds, 2015). Today the brand's product scope spans over a range of technology including the iPod, iPhone, iPad, iMac, Apple Pay and the Apple watch. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be limited to the Apple iPhone, which was brought into the market in 2007 and received a highly significant positive response from already loyal iMac and iPod users and even being named the innovation of the year by Time magazine (Marketing Minds, 2015).

Dormehl (2014) from CultOfMac.com describes iPhone users as having "an admitted blind loyalty to the Apple brand". This statement was the result of a research study conducted with 2000 respondents in which 78% commented that they "couldn't imagine having another phone now". It is this type of unwavering intense loyalty that is thought to influence the formation of the Apple iPhone brand tribe (Dormehl, 2014). The same research shows that members of the fiercely loyal iPhone community will no longer consider other mobile phones on the market due to their trust and association with the Apple brand (Dormehl, 2014). "The innovative, beautifully-designed, highly ergonomic and technology-leading products which Apple delivers are not only designed to match the brand promise, but are fundamental to keeping it" (Marketing Minds, 2015). Therefore, this case study is aimed at understanding how brand tribes are formed within the iPhone community and how this impacts consumer purchase decisions, brand loyalty and strategic success.

## 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

---

### 1.2.1 Preface to the Problem

The South African mobile phone market is growing exponentially in popularity and product offerings thus creating the need for competitive advantage. A brand tribe consists of “formal or informal groups of consumers whom share the same awareness, passion and loyalty for a brand or portfolio of brands” (Gallagher, 2013). The brand tribe, cult or consumer community is advantageous to the creation, communication and evolution of the brand (Taute, Sierra & Heiser, 2010). Today more than 29-million South Africans use mobile phones leaving a broad and complex market of competitive strategies to win over the mobile consumer market (SA Info, 2015). Thus, mobile brands struggle to find new strategies to break through the advertising clutter to create consumer loyalty. Consumers wanting to purchase a mobile phone suffer from the psychological phenomenon of “option paralysis” and thus base their loyalty on other factors (Gallagher, 2013). One of the strongest bonds in the public sphere is “community”; this could be the stepping-stone to a new strategy to create intense brand loyalty.

**1.2.2 The research problem is thus:** to explore the impact of brand tribes as a strategic tool to establish consumer-brand relationships and brand loyalty within the competitive mobile phone industry and the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the youth market (age 18-25) in the LSM categories 7-10 within South Africa. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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- What fuels consumer purchase behaviour and brand loyalty in the mobile phone industry?
- How can brand strategists use the leadership of brand tribes to gain strong consumer-brand relationships for strategic success?

- How does one measure the success of, brand loyalty and consumer-brand relationships for brands with a strong communal following?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

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To answer the research questions the following objectives have been set:

- To gain insight into consumer purchase behaviour within the mobile phone industry.
- To develop a strategic model that leads to the formation of brand tribes.
- To determine the measure of success, loyalty and competitive advantage for the iPhone brand.
- To ascertain from iPhone retailers whether brand tribes and brand tribe initiatives are beneficial to the success of the brand.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH AIMS**

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The research aim is defined as statements of intent that are aspirational in what the researcher aims to achieve by the end of the research study (South Hampton Solent University, 2010). The aim of this particular study is to utilise the Apple brand as an interpretive case study for understanding the causal factors that lead to the formation of brand tribes and how this can be used to generate brand loyalty, strategic success and influence consumer purchase decisions in the competitive South African mobile phone industry.

#### **1.6 ASSUMPTIONS**

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Patidar (2013) defines an assumption as “principles that are accepted as being true based on logic or reasons, but without proof or verification”. The foundation of this research is built upon the following assumptions, which are considered universal:

- Apple iPhone is a highly successful brand for which consumers exhibit high levels of brand loyalty.
- Apple iPhone has a significant communal following throughout the world, which can be defined as a brand tribe.
- The Apple iPhone brand exhibits significant competitive advantage within the mobile phone industry.
- The theories of brand loyalty, consumer relationships and brand tribes are intrinsically linked.
- The South African mobile phone industry is highly competitive and cluttered with brands competing for the consumer's attention.
- The South African youth market no longer responds to traditional advertising communications and thus new strategies are required.

## 1.7 RATIONALE

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Holistic branding has become an essential part of the advertising landscape. One holistic approach to branding is the facilitation of brand tribes, which is beneficial to the brand through the creation of significant brand equity (Thompson, Rindfleisch & Arsel, 2006).

**1.7.1 Social:** The facilitation of the formation of a brand tribe requires strong social consumer-brand relationships based on strong social values and beliefs. The creation of the brand's image is highly dependent on the consumer's idea of the brand's reputation and the social conversation surrounding the positives and negatives of the brand (Thompson, *et al.*, 2006). Thus it is important to analyse the strength of the relationships that consumers develop with brands. More specifically analysing the trend of joining brand tribes or brand communities as a way of sharing feelings and preferences to particular brands.

**1.7.2 Personal:** As an avid consumer of mobile phones and a member of generation Y, I recently conducted a fair amount of research on the brand of cell phone I would invest in. The leading cell phone brands were Apple and

Samsung and with very little physical differences, I posed the question, why should I choose one brand over the other? Upon further research and interviews I discovered that there was a distinct and passionate opinion amongst the Apple user community. It was here that I discovered my interest in how this fierce form of brand loyalty and community came to exist.

**1.7.3 Field:** The field of branding is a vast and complex landscape of strategies. Product features and lifestyle associations have become less effective methods of competitive advantage as cell phone offerings have become increasingly similar. Thus brand loyalty and the role of the consumer in the formation of the brand has become vital to the survival and success of the brand. The benefits of research into brand tribes would be to determine whether this is a working strategy for brand success. Formulating a strategic model to form brand tribes can lead to strategies that organically create brand ambassadors, extreme loyalty and lifelong consumer-brand relationships. There is limited literature on the methods brands use to create and lead brand tribes, thus this research is relevant to the field of branding and advertising.

## **1.8 DELIMITATION AND DEMARCATION**

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### **1.8.1 Methodological Limitations**

This study was researched specifically in relation to the products, targeting and advertising of the Apple iPhones in South Africa. All primary research was conducted in the greater Durban area. Public consumer research was conducted within the age group of 18 to 25. Research with the employees of Apple was conducted with the appropriate permission granted to approach these individuals (Appendix 5). In conjunction with this secondary research was conducted on the strategies of Apple from reliable secondary sources.

### **1.8.2 Theoretical Limitations**

The study was conducted within the topics of brand tribes, brand loyalty and consumer behaviour. This could be extended to a discussion on competitive advantage and holistic brand practices as well as the social psychology

behind consumer purchase decisions, however this will not be covered in this research paper. Other elements related to the formation of brand tribes that will not be covered in this research paper include the formation of the brand identity, the building of the brand and the formation of brand tribes outside of the mobile phone industry.

## **1.9 PROPOSED JOURNAL**

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The following journal is proposed for the above dissertation topic to be published in:

### **Journal of Product & Brand Management**

Corporate Brand and Corporate Brand Management (1995-2015):

Foundations, Developments, and Recent Insights.

**1.9.1 Motivation:** This is a global journal that covers various topics on business and brand management. It includes articles and research relevant to the formation of brand tribes, brand architecture and brand loyalty. The research in the journal evokes the understanding that many of the world's most valuable and favourable brands are corporate brands. This particular dissertation would be a useful contribution to the journal as it is expanding upon and further researching similar concepts already expressed in relation to the global corporate brand, Apple.

**1.9.2 Audience:** The likely audience that this research is targeted at are the Apple Company, brand managers, university students wanting to conduct similar studies or wish to gain a strategic model into the development of brand tribes. The above journal has a relevant audience specialising in branding and business and thus may take interest in the research findings.

## **1.10 BRIEF CHAPTER OUTLINE**

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- Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study
- Chapter 2: A Discussion and Review of Relevant Literature
- Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodologies
- Chapter 4: Research Findings, Analysis and Interpretation
- Chapter 5: Concluding Thoughts

## **1.11 CONCLUSION**

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The study has now been put in the relevant context of the research, following this Chapter two focuses on a discussion of the most relevant literature pertaining to the research topic.

# CHAPTER 2

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

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Literature on brand tribes, cults and brand communities was sought and discussed in order to gain a better understanding of the purpose, objectives and importance of this dissertation. This research covers literature surrounding the theories of tribalism in relation to the Apple brand within the South African mobile phone industry.

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE**

---

Chapter 2 presents a discussion of relevant and current literature and theoretical frameworks pertaining to the research objectives and the aims of this study. This can be seen as the first collection of data, which is secondary in nature and plays a fundamental role in informing the research findings. The literature in this review will cover the notions of consumer brand relationships, brand loyalty, brand tribes, electronic tribes, competitive advantage and how this influences consumer purchase decisions within the Apple iPhone brand. This research aims to provide a fundamental and cohesive understanding of all factors related to the formation of brand tribes through a discussion that aligns with the research aims and objectives. The literature discussed in this chapter further informs the study by forming a foundation on which the primary data collection, in the form of a questionnaire and interview questions will be based.

## **2.2 CONSUMER BRAND RELATIONSHIPS**

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“Consumers are now developing unique and vibrant relationships with their brands and conceptualising the nature of these relationships has become increasingly important” (Taute, Sierra & Heiser, 2010). The relationship between the consumer and the brand can be measured in terms of brand personality, brand attachment, brand love and the brand experience (Cova & Pace, 2006). Fournier (1998) states “brand relationships are salient in the mind of the consumer, taking a variety of forms and a number of life cycle variations”. It is likely that brands with strong consumer relationships, which can be characterised as cults and tribes (Taute, *et al.*, 2010), are more likely to be stable and successful. This form of brand community unites loyal consumers in a “structured social relationship through a shared social and interpersonal experience” (Cova & Pace, 2006).

Sung and Choi (2010) discuss the notions of consumer-brand relationships in relation to commitment. This is based on the understanding that consumers imbue brands with human characteristics, thus consumer-brand interactions

can be guided by the norms that govern human relationships (Aggarwal, 2004). Apple iPhone users have been seen to exhibit an exceptional commitment to the brand, representing the feeling of attachment that is generally experienced in human relationships (Sung & Choi, 2010).

Lam, Ahearne, Hu & Schillewaert (2010) further reiterate the concept of brand commitment by demonstrating that according to social identity theory, consumers that experience high levels of satisfaction with a brand are unlikely to switch over to a competing brand, even when the market is disrupted by a competitive offering.

It is thus relevant to assess the extent to which Apple iPhone has a positive consumer brand relationship. Although there are many models that measure the extent of the consumer brand relationship, as discussed above, this study is informed by the strategic model depicted below (Figure 2.1) developed by Metrix (2014), an Australian research firm, as it is a recent and all inclusive model of the various elements of a positive consumer-brand relationship. The model below is based on the fundamental assumption that the brand needs to establish a high level of trust with the consumer in order to consider it a positive relationship. It also highlights that faith, brand experience, satisfaction, service recovery, repeat purchases and recommendations are the priority indicators of brand trust and positive consumer brand relationships (Metrix, 2014).

Stages of a Positive Consumer-Brand Relationship

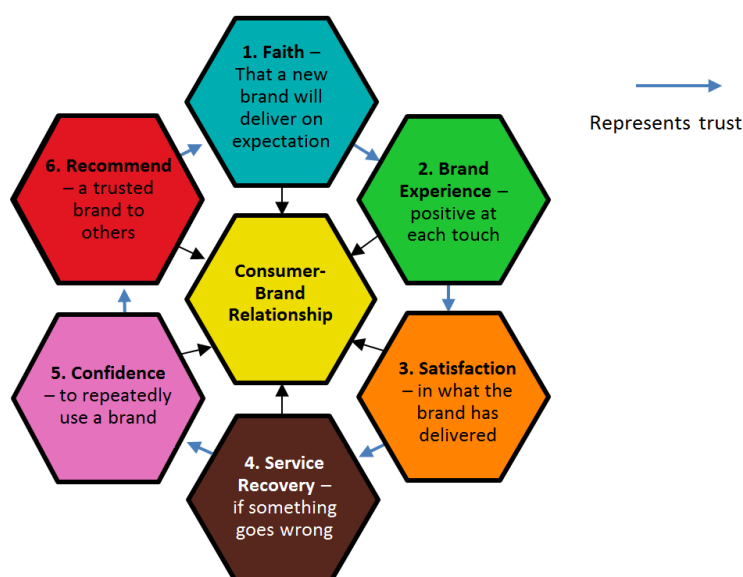


Figure 2.1 Consumer Brand Relationship – Trust Model (Metrix, 2014)

## 2.3 BRAND LOYALTY

---

Brand loyalty is defined as “the extent of the faithfulness of consumers to a particular brand, expressed through their repeat purchases, irrespective of the marketing pressure generated by the competing brands” (Uthayakumar, 2013). Brand loyalty is thought to be at the heart of the value of the brand and a brand with even small but intensely loyal customer base can form significant equity (Aaker, 2000). This is thought to be the reason why brands such as Apple find their success in long-term performance measures such as brand loyalty and brand equity (Gasca, 2014). Wernerfelt (1991) suggests that brand loyalty is an important and fundamental asset in strategic marketing, allowing for benefits such as increased price flexibility, market share, performance and repeat purchases. Concepts that influence or are linked to the notion of brand loyalty include consumer brand relationships, brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand personality (Loureiro, 2010).

However different generations and age groups are more or less receptive to various products and communication strategies. The youth form one of the largest market segments in South Africa and thus have the potential for exceptional buying power (Jurisic, 2011). It has been discovered through a recent study conducted on the relationship between millennials (age 18-33) and brand loyalty that the youth believe that brands today will have to work harder to earn the loyalty of youth consumers (Marketing Charts, 2014). Another interesting and relevant finding is this study was that out of seven industry categories, 59% of the millennial respondents said they were most loyal to their mobile phone brand (Marketing Charts, 2014). Consequently if a brand can lead a loyal tribe of young South African millennials, it may exert lifelong brand loyalty and favourable post purchase behaviour. Often brands spend large budgets on attaining customers but pay little attention to keeping them however creating brand loyalty can leverage profitable brand equity (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

The brand that is the focus of this study (Apple) has exhibited the unprecedented ability to foster exceptional brand loyalty amongst iPhone users. Dormehl (2014) from CultOfMac.com describes iPhone users as having “an admitted blind loyalty to the Apple brand”. This statement was the result of a research study conducted with 2000 respondents in which 78% commented that they “couldn’t imagine having another phone now” (Dormehl, 2014). It is this type of unwavering intense loyalty that is thought to influence the formation of the Apple iPhone brand tribe. The same research shows that members of the fiercely loyal iPhone community will no longer consider other mobile phones on the market due to their trust and association with the Apple brand.

David Aaker’s “Loyalty Pyramid” as seen in *figure 2.2* can be used to demonstrate the various dimensions of brand loyalty within the Apple brand tribe (Krihely, 2013). Aaker (in Krihely, 2013) identifies an enthusiastic brand community and customer loyalty as brand building assets. He states that the loyalty pyramid below plays a fundamental role in building brand equity (perceived brand value and strength) and is characterised by 5 stages of loyalty with priority placed on creating “committed buyers” (Krihely, 2013). “The top level has a pride of discovering and being users of a brand. The brand is very important to them either functionally or as an expression of who they are” (Aaker, 1991). The value in creating committed customers is not in the business they generate but the impact they have upon others.



Figure 2.2 Aaker’s Brand Loyalty pyramid (Krihely, 2013).

## 2.4 BRAND TRIBES

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The theory of brand tribalism is a fairly new concept researched mainly by Bernard Cova (2006), Stefan Pace (2006) and Seth Godin (2008). It defines a community of individuals who are united by an emotional attachment to a product or brand. A brand tribe consists of “formal or informal groups of consumers whom share the same awareness, passion and loyalty for a brand or portfolio of brands” (Gallagher, 2013). This concept has risen from a postmodern, technologically advanced society built on synergy and anarchism (Cova & Pace, 2006). The current youth of generation Y have become highly individualistic are now seeking more traditional values of social connectivity through shared emotions and passions (Cova & Pace, 2006). Much of today’s modern academic literature on branding suggests that brands should form deeper, more affective relationships with their consumers. Some authors may argue that competitive advantage can no longer be sustained through product attributes and perceived positions (Taute, *et al.*, 2010). Today’s consumers want to feel as though they are part of a community, bonded by shared brand beliefs and interests (Taute, *et al.*, 2010). Brand managers today are being advised to allow consumers to co create the brand’s image in order to make them feel as though they are part of something bigger.

The brand tribe, cult or consumer community is thought to be advantageous to the creation, communication and evolution of the brand (Taute, *et al.*, 2010). Today more than 29-million South Africans use mobile phones leaving a broad and complex market of competitive strategies to win over the mobile consumer market (SA Info, 2015). Thus, mobile brands struggle to find new strategies to break through the advertising clutter to create consumer loyalty. One of the strongest bonds in the public sphere is “community”, this could be the stepping stone to a new strategy to create intense brand loyalty.

The formation of brand tribes has particular social significance in the formation of the self identity, particularly with the younger members of society. According to social identity theory, social group members, such as Apple

iPhone owners, self identify with the group and model their attitudes, emotions and behaviours accordingly (Tajifel & Turner, 1985). These controls solidify the membership to the tribe and define the tribe's unique position in society (Tajifel & Turner, 1985). Thus brand tribes act as micro or sub-cultures defined not by geography but rather by shared experiences, emotions and realities (Cova & Pace, 2006).

Seth Godin (2008) is a theorist who speaks about "tribe management" and made the insightful discovery that one of the greatest assets to brands is the ability to deliver powerful, personal and relevant messages to people who want to receive them. Furthermore, it adds to the fact that people want to connect with each other, not to companies. Managing brand tribes through leadership is a way of bringing about this value (Godin, 2008). Seth Godin's (2008) book, "Tribes, We Need You To Lead Us" covers recent and relevant literature that enables brands to lead their tribes. He points out that brand tribes are forming and increasing in numbers everywhere and that it is up to the brand to give them something to start a conversation about. Godin (2008) profoundly states, "The market for something to believe in is infinite". Instead of utilising strategies to compete with other brands for the consumer's attention, marketers are now encouraged to make people a part of their brand through forming and leading branded communities.

## **2,5 ELECTRONIC TRIBES**

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The invention of the Internet has brought about a whole new level of branding and consumer power. Today the formation and rapid growth of online electronic tribes structured around consumer interests is observed (Kozinets, 1999). To be effective in this new environment, one must consider the implications of the existence of both the virtual community and community participation. Marketers need to take into account the fact that virtual communities are more active, less discerning and provide a wealth of valuable cultural information (Kozinets, 1999). The literature surrounding electronic tribes is particularly relevant in the context of this research study, as the focus

is on the Apple iPhone, which is a medium through which electronic tribes are facilitated.

The electronic tribe (or e-tribe) can be defined as an online platform where individuals are able to communicate with like-minded people as if they are within the same geographical distance with the aid of electronic communication media (Olaniran, 2006). The e-tribe provides a meaningful opportunity for cultures and subcultures to come together to discuss, share or develop common interests (Olaniran, 2006). In the case of Apple, there are a multitude of online platforms facilitating the discussions of the various members of the brand's e-tribes. A prevalent example of this is the "Cult of Mac" phenomenon, which started as a book written by Leander Kahney (2004) describing the relationship between Apple fans and brand loyalty. Today "Cult of Mac" has grown exponentially through the online medium with websites, blogs, social media accounts and articles by millions of global Apple users sharing opinions, feelings and news about their common love for the Apple brand (Kahney, 2004).

Creating a holistic comprehension of e-tribes requires understanding the perspectives and influence virtual communities have on the individual (Olaniran, 2006). It is recommended by Olaniran (2006) that marketers should recognise virtual community consumption groups as segmented groups of consumers. This can be referred to as a "communal segmentation strategy" and involves strategists and organisations understanding the different types of e-tribes and their different computer or smartphone mediated interactions (Olaniran, 2006). The Apple iPhone brand has distinctively mastered the art of leading and facilitating the conversation of their online e-tribe by providing web – based platforms where Apple iPhone users are encouraged to "join the conversation" with other members of the Apple community (Apple, 2014). According to the study discussed earlier in the brand loyalty segment of research (Dormehl, 2014), 25% of the respondents stated that their loyalty to Apple was due to the fact that their friends and family had iPhones and they wished to retain Apple-specific features such as FaceTime. Thus the creation

of iPhone-specific applications, features and functions provides yet another medium through which Apple's e-tribe is facilitated and strengthened. According to Goggin (2009), the iPhone is one of the best evolutions in mobile communication when it comes to taking account of the things users expect from Internet and computing cultures.

## **2.6 MOBILE PHONE INDUSTRY**

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The rise of smart phone technology has allowed consumers to have the world at their fingertips. The capabilities and features of these phones have caused extreme competition in the cellular market with Apple iPhone positioned as the competitive leader (Bamburic, 2014). Thus it is relevant to understand the literature surrounding the mobile phone industry to gain accurate insight into the scope and background of the research problem.

The use of mobile and smartphones in South Africa has increased from 17% of young adults in 2000 to 76% in 2010 (Nielsen, 2010). The growth of the usage of smartphones has also lead to an increase in South Africans using the Internet to 10 million South Africans in 2012 (SA info, 2012). With regard to revenue, the smartphone industry generated more than 60% of the total telecommunications revenue in 2010 with a figure of R118 billion (Stats SA, 2010). Smartphones have quickly become an integral part of South African consumer's daily routine as evident by the large amount of time consumers spend interacting with their mobile phones (Petzer, Mostert, Kruger & Kuhn, 2014). This has resulted in an increase in competitive smartphone features from an array of brands, which now allow consumers to conduct social and commercial transactions from their mobile phones while growing the consumer's impression and experience of the brand.

In order to create and sustain competitive advantage in the complex smartphone market, it has become vital for smartphone marketers to build relationships with their users so that consumers will not be easily swayed to switch to a fierce competitor brand (Petzer *et al*, 2014).

A particularly difficult audience to retain in terms of brand loyalty and market share is the South African youth, characterised as 'generation Y' between the ages of 18 to 25. A recent study has suggested that a driver of disloyalty amongst young adults is indicated by a price increase, a friend or family members recommendation or the establishment of newer, more attractive brands (Marketing Charts, 2014). Lazervic's (2012) study on "Encouraging Brand Loyalty in the Y Generation Consumers" found that integrated marketing communication strategies should be utilised in order to increase the perceived congruence between the generation Y consumer and the brand. The findings of Lazervic's (2012) youth study also discusses the importance of creating consumer brand relationships in order to generate brand loyalty, which has significant relevance to this research study. It has been suggested that the reason for smartphone leader, Apple's, competitive advantage lies in the hands of the fierce brand loyalty of their consumers (Ezeh & Azzawi, 2012). Thus it is relevant to explore Apple's marketing and communication strategies for instilling brand loyalty among South African young adults, in order to determine an integrated marketing solution to penetrating the highly competitive smart phone market.

## **2.7 CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR/COMPETATIVE ADVANTAGE**

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Consumer purchase behaviour revolves around the purchase decisions made by consumers influenced by marketing communications, word of mouth, brand impressions and perceptions (Sata, 2013). In the current highly competitive mobile phone market, manufacturers constantly fight to find competitive edge and differentiating elements to persuade consumers to select their brand instead of a competitor's (Sata, 2013). The purchase decision is influenced by various factors to do with the characteristics of the consumer and the attributes and associations of the product itself. A crucial part of this research paper includes discovering whether the formation of brand communities strengthens competitive advantage and facilitates loyal purchasing behaviour amongst South African young adults in relation to the Apple iPhone brand.

The Apple iPhone brand has become a powerful force in creating meaningful images in the mind of the consumer (Keller, 1993). Creating a strong brand image can lead to a high level of familiarity with the brand and can thus influence consumer buyer behaviour in the crucial decision making process (Rodrigo, 2012). The literature surrounding consumer purchase behaviour has traditionally been discussed in relation to adults (Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978), however in recent years young adults have been recognised as a specialised segment of the market, particularly with regard to mobile phone products and services (Moschis & Moore, 1979). For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that consumer purchase behaviour among young adults is influenced by a number of factors including mass media, family, peers, social class and maturation (Moschis & Moore, 1979). Sriram and Chintagunta (2010) state that consumer purchase decisions specific to durable technological product categories are broadly affected by the elements of perceived quality and competitive pricing strategies, depending on what the consumer values. The Apple iPhone brand imbues a high perception of quality that consumers are willing to pay for, however a factor particularly influencing the consumers purchase decision of the Apple iPhone is the anticipation of declining prices over time (Sriram & Chintagunta, 2010)

Engel, Blackwell and Kollat (1968) have developed a model of consumer buying decision process which is well recognised in the branding and marketing community as a reliable tool for understanding the consumer's decision process. The model consists of 5 steps as seen in figure 2.3 and is applied to the iPhone product.



Figure 2.3 Consumer Buying Decision Process (Engel, Blackwell & Kollat, 1968)

## **I. Need recognition / Problem awareness:**

The first and most important step considers the notion of the consumer's need for the product, if there is no need, there is no purchase. The recognition of the consumer's need for an iPhone can stem from internal stimuli (the need to be socially accepted) or external stimuli (appealing advertising). Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs (Figure 2.4) is the best-known and most widely used classification of needs and wants. The Apple iPhone product and communications appeals most to the consumer's higher level needs of esteem and self-actualisation on Maslow's hierarchy.



Figure 2.4 Maslow's Hierachy of Needs (Mcleod, S. 2014).

## **II. Information search**

The next stage in the process involves the consumer seeking information about the product. Internal information consists of impressions and experiences with the iPhone already present in the consumer's mind and external information is obtained from word of mouth, iPhone reviews, media coverage and advertising.

## **III. Alternative evaluation**

Next the consumer evaluates the different options and alternatives offered to them, this is based upon the judgment of smartphone features, functionality, perceived value and consumer reputation. The emphasis for each attribute is considered to hold different levels of influence for different consumers.

#### **IV. Purchase decision**

The fourth stage is based on the consumer making the decision to purchase the iPhone, this is influenced by the previous steps as well as the quality of the shopping experience. Factors such as promotion, return policies, staff service and display can sway the decision of an undecided consumer.

#### **V. Post-purchase behavior**

Lastly, once the consumer has purchased the iPhone, an evaluation of the products ability to meet the consumer's needs and expectations takes place. Engel, Blackwell and Kollat (1968) suggest that this process can result in either a satisfied consumer or a disappointed consumer and consequently positive or negative results or reviews surrounding the brand conversation. Consumers are a powerful force in influencing a brand's reputation, thus the Apple brand ensures superior customer service, product quality and communication strategies.

### **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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The following existing theoretical frameworks have been used and adapted in order to inform and conduct the research study.

- David Aaker's "Loyalty Pyramid" was used to demonstrate the various levels of brand loyalty within the Apple community (Krihely, 2013).
- The South African Audience Research Foundation's Living Standard Measure (LSM) tool was utilised to segment the research respondents. (SAARF. 2000).
- Maslow's (1943) 5-stage hierarchy model (Mcleod, 2014).
- Consumer Buying Decision Process (Engel, Blackwell & Kollat, 1968)
- The literature of Bernard Cova, Stefan Pace and Seth Godin was utilised in order to explore niche markets, subcultures and tribes in order to synthesise a tribal model applicable to the formation of brand tribes.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

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From the literature review it has become clear that brand tribalism in the mobile phone industry is a complex and valuable strategy relating to the factors of brand loyalty, consumer-brand relationships, competitive advantage and consumer purchase behaviour. This literature review was constructed in order to provide understanding, context and background specifically relative to this research study. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology and research approach to this study, which is influenced by the literature review.

# CHAPTER 3

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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The purpose of this research is to determine method or approach a brand should take in order to facilitate the formation of a brand tribe through the analysis of the brand tribe within the Apple iPhone community. A further aim is to determine a method of measuring the success and value of the formation of a branded community and how this impacts the brand. Overall, the research conducted aims to determine whether the formation of brand tribes within the mobile phone industry plays a vital role in facilitating brand loyalty, competitive advantage, consumer brand relationships and the overall success of the brand.

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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To reiterate, the aim of this study was to explore the impact of utilising brand tribes as a strategic tool to establish competitive advantage and brand loyalty within the competitive mobile phone industry and the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the South African youth market in the LSM categories 7-10. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand. This chapter involves a discussion surrounding the research methodologies used to achieve these aims and answer the research objectives stated in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 includes a discussion and rationale of the chosen research methodologies and research design. Following this the chapter unpacks the adopted approach, research population, research sample, interview schedule and questionnaire schedule. Lastly this chapter covers the data collection and analysis techniques, validity and reliability, delimitation and demarcation and ethical considerations of the study.

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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To fulfil the research objectives and answer the proposed research questions, an interpretive case study on Apple's brand and electronic tribes has been conducted. The following research methodologies were utilised and implemented to assist in gaining accurate, credible and insightful results.

#### **3.2.1 Mixed Methods Approach**

This study required a sequential mixed methods approach to the collection of relevant data. "A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand a research problem" (Creswell, 2012). "Sequential mixed method procedures are those in which a researcher seeks to elaborate on the findings of one method with another method" (Creswell, 2003 p4-9). The study employed utilising both quantitative and qualitative measures of research in tandem in order to leverage the strengths of both techniques and

offset the weaknesses (Bryman & Bell, 2014). This methodology was chosen as the best-suited approach to fulfil the research objectives as each objective calls for different outcomes. Research conducted with employees of the Apple brand required open-ended questions that will generate insight into the brand's strategies and the employee's practices. The research conducted in the public sphere required quantitative empirical data surrounding the notions of brand loyalty and consumer relationships. In essence the qualitative data was collected to strengthen the quantitative research findings by gaining additional social insight into the Apple iPhone brand tribe.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative Research played a significant role in this study, forming a part of the mixed method approach. Bryman and Bell (2014) define qualitative research as an approach that emphasises words as opposed to empirical data, predominantly focused on “the inductive generation of theory from data” (Bryman & Bell, 2014 p28 – 31). Qualitative research emphasises an understanding of the way in which individuals interpret their social world and viewing social reality as both constantly shifting and emergent. Bryman and Bell (2014) suggest that qualitative research is informed by constructionism and interpretivism and it is from this paradigm that the qualitative research questions were constructed. This study utilised the qualitative research methods of an interview with Apple employees and open-ended questions within the public questionnaire. The qualitative research was also informed by secondary research as seen in Chapter 2, the literature review.

### **3.2.3 Quantitative Research**

Quantitative research played a fundamental role in this study and forms a part of the “mixed method” approach. It is described by Bryman and Bell (2014) as “a distinctive research approach that entails the collection of numerical data, regards the relationship between theory and research as deductive, prefers a natural science approach in general (and positivism in particular), and adopts an objective conception on social reality” (Bryman & Bell, 2014 p28 – 31). This approach encouraged quantification in research collection and data

analysis. It involved adopting a deductive approach to testing theories and their relationship to the research (Bryman & Bell, 2014 p28 – 31). This research in particular tested the theories of brand loyalty, consumer brand relationships and competitive advantage in relation to the formation and leadership of brand tribes. This research approach followed the confirmatory scientific method in order to test the above stated theories as well as the hypothesis of this study. The quantitative research was conducted in the form of self-administered public surveys through both online and offline platforms featuring closed-ended questions.

#### **3.2.4 Case Study**

A case study is distinguished by its focus on understanding a bounded situation or system, in a geographical area or organisation. Bryman and Bell (2014 p110-120) define a case study as “the detailed and intensive analysis of one or more cases which the researcher aims to study in depth”. This style of research is thought to be a common method of analysing a particular organisation’s complexity and particular nature in business (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Thus, a case study is the appropriate description for the research conducted in this study specific to the Apple iPhone brand within Durban, South Africa. The study involved the intensive examination of the context of brand tribes within the system of the Apple iPhone brand. The case study provides a vehicle through which mixed method research approaches are optimised, adopting a positivist epistemological position (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Thus a case study approach is particularly complimentary to the mixed methods approach discussed earlier. Furthermore, Stake (1995) in Bryman and Bell (2014) states that case studies can be distinguished by three differences described as “Intrinsic Cases”, “Instrumental case studies” and “Multiple/collective cases”. This research study can be described as an “Instrumental case study” that uses the Apple brand to understand the broader concept of brand tribes.

### **3.2.5 Ethnographic Research**

According to Denzin & Lincoln, (2003, p. 390-391) ethnography “is principally defined by its subject matter” focusing on understanding common cultures through patterns in human behaviour. Thus the research for this case study was ethnographic in nature and involved gathering data with a specific focus on the culture of the Apple iPhone user group (Bryman & Bell, 2014). This involved in particular a structured observation of iPhone users utilising previously designed qualitative questions to facilitate the non-participative observation (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

## **3.3 SAMPLING**

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A quantitative study was conducted in order to gain numerical values for the number of brand loyal consumers part of the Apple brand tribe. The study also required a qualitative survey of consumers that fall into the Y generation who are targeted by the Apple mobile phone communications. This qualitative research interview was used to gain opinions, feelings, associations and strategies from both young adult consumers as well as members of the Apple Corporation.

### **3.3.1 The Population And The Sample**

The population of the study plays a fundamental role in research as it consists of “the universe of units from which the sample is to be selected” (Bryman & Bell, 2014 p170). Other authors have described it as “the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions” (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: p53). A concept that is intrinsically linked to the population is the ‘sample’, which Bryman and Bell (2014 p170) define as “the segment or subset of the population that is selected for investigation”. The sheer size of the research population of iPhone users renders it impractical to conduct an all-inclusive study and thus samples of the population were drawn upon for data collection purposes (Welman *et al.*, 2005). An important factor to consider when selecting a sample for research is the accuracy with which the sample represents the

population. The sample should thus feature the same properties in the same proportions as the actual population (Welman *et al.*, 2005: p125). The representative sample that reflects the population accurately can be difficult to implement and thus a “probability sample” has been utilised for this study. A “probability sample” is described as one that “has been selected using random selection methods so that each unit in the population has a known chance of being selected” (Bryman & Bell, 2014 p171). This method of selection was used in order to avoid sampling error and bias. Sample size is another important factor to consider in this research and is affected by the variables of time and cost (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Sampling bias is reduced and precision is increased when the sample size increases (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

According to Welman *et al.*, (2005) a representative sample must include at least 25 and not more than 500 units. Other authors state that fewer than 30 respondents in a statistical study are unsound (Sekaran, 2003). For this study the sample size of the questionnaire was 62 units and the sample size of the interview was 5 units. Bryman and Bell (2014) describe the 4 types of probability sampling as the simple random sample, the systematic sample, the stratified random sample and multi-stage cluster sampling. In order to ensure accuracy this study consists of stratified random sampling, which involves dividing the population into subgroups or strata, based on one or more essential variables (Wolverton, 2009; p374). The strata in this study are consumers over the age of 18 in the LSM category of 7-10 in the Durban area. This sampling technique was chosen as the research targets general, rather than specific, consumers in upper LSM categories of 7-10. Stratified random sampling is an effective sampling technique as the population has been divided into different strata from the onset, and is thus highly representative of the population. Lastly an element of non-probability sampling took place in the form of interviews with Apple employees. This limited the population in order to gain the desired purposive data on the Apple brand. A subset of this is judgment sampling, which involves choosing candidates that are “in the best position to provide the information required”

(Sekaran and Bougie, 2010: p277); as such this method has been employed to gain insight into the Apple brand.

### **3.3.2 Geographic Sampling**

The geographic borders of the sample for this research study included the greater Durban area within KwaZulu-Natal. Majority of the research was obtained in areas with a high frequency of youth aged 18 to 25, such as prevalent universities and colleges in the greater Durban area.

## **3.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

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Below the research instruments and processes used to collect the data for this research study are introduced and discussed.

### **3.4.1. Research Tools**

In order to conduct the research study for optimum results the following tools were used:

- A Computer to:
  - Gather secondary data surrounding the Apple Brand
  - Develop an understanding of brand tribes
  - Conduct online surveys
  - Communicate with Apple employees
  - Collect Data on Apple Case studies and the mobile phone industry
- A pen and notebook to:
  - Collect data during/after interviews
  - Record any observations
- Samples of Apple phones & Communications
- Printer
- A recording Device to record interviews

### **3.4.2. Questionnaire Construction**

The questions in this study were designed to explore the issues brought up in the research questions in both qualitative and quantitative formats. Each question was constructed in order to provide relevant insights and findings that correlate with the proposed objectives found in Chapter 1. The research design is divided into two sections, the first of which applies to the larger probability sample and the second applies to the smaller judgemental sample.

#### **Section A:**

This consists of questionnaires conducted in the public sphere with youth aged 18 – 25 both online and offline (Appendix 1). This consists of 21 questions, 12 of which were quantitative and 9 were qualitative in nature. The questions were structured around existing theories surrounding brand loyalty, consumer relationships, competitive advantage and brand tribalism. These questions were informed by the primary literature review conducted in Chapter 2.

#### **Section B:**

This consists of interviews conducted with employees of the Apple brand in order to gain insight into answering the research questions. This was done to ensure that Apple does have a brand tribe so that the research can continue the core study (Appendix 2).

### **3.4.3 Data Collection and Field Work**

**Secondary Data:** This consisted of collecting preliminary secondary research relating to the theories of brand tribalism, brand loyalty, competitive advantage and consumer relationships.

**Primary Data:** The first primary data collection took place in the public sphere in the form of online questionnaires with youth aged 18-25 who own Apple iPhone products. Next interviews were conducted with the employees of the Apple brand at two iPhone retailer stores in Durban in order to gain insights into their brand loyalty strategies. Interviews

were conducted with the customer service channels of Apple in order to determine the satisfaction and level of loyalty of consumers.

#### **3.4.4 Interview Schedule**

The interview schedule is depicted by the order of appendices 1 and 2. It aims to organise the structure of the data collection process. The process began with conducting research in the public sphere, both quantitative and qualitative, in the form of questionnaires. The research then moved to conducting interviews with Apple employees in order to gain insight into the loyalty of Apple iPhone users and the Apple communication strategies. All of the above data collection methods were used in order to gain insight into the formation of brand tribes as well as the relationship between brand communities and brand success.

#### **3.5.1 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

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According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p92) the validity of a measurement instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is actually intended to measure. Testing the validity of the research instrument is generally a practice utilised when conducting quantitative research, although recent mixed method studies have been known to pursue demarcating the reliability of the research instrument (Cohen, 2010 p332). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) as discussed in Cohen (2010) states that the nature of reliability involves measuring the extent to which meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the research subject. Thus, a statistician was recruited in order to test the validity of the quantitative questions as well as the reliability of the qualitative research. The results can be found in Appendix 3.

#### **3.5.2 Pilot Study**

According to Cooper and Schindler (2006) a pilot test is conducted to detect weaknesses in research methodology and the data collection instruments. A pilot study was conducted with a small probability sample of the population in order to pre-test the research instruments and the reliability of the quantitative

research aspect (Appendix 3). The pilot study was analysed by a South African statistician and the following resulted:

- Questionnaires were emailed to 4 respondents who completed the research instruments timeously.
- The email was sent with a cover letter explaining the nature of the study (Appendix 4)
- The research instruments yielded 95% of the answers in the questionnaire.
- Respondents were chosen as part of the sample population required for research, this being youth within the greater Durban area aged 18-25 that fall into the LSM 7-10 category.
- The respondents concluded that the quantitative questions were a good reflection of the analysis however, the qualitative questions required more instruction as some respondents became confused.
- As a result, the consumer questionnaire was restructured to provide respondents with a sound understanding of each question.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

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This research study has been conducted utilising a sequential mixed methods approach and thus the various data have been analysed in this sequence in order to draw accurate, valid, reliable and insightful results. The data was analysed utilising the following methods:

**3.6.1 Qualitative Data Analysis:** The qualitative data collected from the interviews with Apple employees and consumer questionnaires underwent a thematic analysis. This is defined as “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest 6 steps to conducting thematic analysis as follows: 1. Becoming familiar with the data. 2. Generating initial codes. 3. Searching for themes. 4. Reviewing themes. 5. Defining and naming themes. 6. Producing the report.

**3.6.2 Quantitative Data Analysis:** This research consists of the public questionnaires from which the quantitative data was gathered. This data was analysed by a South African Statistician in the form of variance analysis for the quantitative data where risk of deviation from the expected average result/mean was considered (Rutherford, 2006). Furthermore the data has been analysed by the statistician utilising Excel as the analysis tool in order to accurately present the findings in a meaningful and valid way. (See Appendix 3)

### **3.7.1 DELIMITATION AND DEMARCATION**

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This study was researched specifically in relation to the products, targeting and advertising of the Apple iPhones in South Africa. All primary research was conducted in the greater Durban area. Public consumer research was conducted within the age group of 18 to 25. Research with the employees of Apple was conducted with the appropriate permission granted to approach these individuals (Appendix 4). In conjunction with this secondary research was conducted on the strategies of Apple from reliable secondary sources. The study was conducted within the topics of brand tribes, brand loyalty and consumer behaviour. Elements related to the formation of brand tribes that were not covered in this research paper include the formation of the brand identity, the building of the brand and the formation of brand tribes outside of the cellular industry.

As this is a small-scale study, it is necessary to state the sample limitations. The public quantitative sample consisted of a small-scale probability sample of 62 units under the constraints of age (18 to 25) within the LSMs 7-10. The qualitative interview sample was limited to a judgemental and convenient sample of employees of Apple in order to gather the specific intended data.

### **3.7.2 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research; every researcher has a responsibility to protect the participants in an investigation (Drew, 2007). This involves taking into consideration the

notions of informed consent, voluntariness, prevention of harm, privacy and integrity (Drew, 2007). All possible ethical considerations relative to this particular study have been stated below.

This study involved speaking to the youth aged 18 to 25, which was conducted in the online public sphere. This required consent from the students themselves and was implied by the voluntary completion of the online questionnaire. This study was not held on any private property without the permission of the owner and did not part-take in the surveying of children under the age of 18. Majority of the research was conducted among consumers which are open public sources and do not have ethical implications. Overall all the research conducted was anonymous, participants were aware that they may volunteer and withdraw at any stage during the process and no harassment ensued. Permission has been granted for recording devices to be used. Unlike older technology, modern day recording devices are unobtrusive and do not disrupt the research process.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

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As is evident the research methodology is the key feature behind the study. The next chapter will discuss the research findings generated from the implementation of the methodology.

# CHAPTER 4

## **4. Presentation & Discussion of Findings**

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The following chapter will present and discuss the findings that resulted from this research study. The purpose is to analyse the qualitative and quantitative findings in order to draw an insightful discussion on the formation of brand tribes, brand loyalty and consumer brand relationships. This discussion will be examined in the relevant context structured according to the research objectives. This research covers the findings surrounding the theories of brand tribalism in relation to the Apple brand within the South African mobile phone industry.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

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BusinessDictionary.com (n.d) defines the term analysis as “A systematic examination and evaluation of data or information, by breaking it into its component parts to uncover their interrelationships”. This involves utilising logical and sound reasoning to review data gathered throughout the research study from various sources in order to form findings or draw conclusions.

As this research study was informed by a mixed methods approach, the analysis methods of both quantitative and qualitative analysis is relevant to discuss. This form of analysis and research involves a multi-strategy concerned with discovering a new understanding of techniques and trends through quantitative analysis and open-ended, unpredictable insights from qualitative analysis (Bryman, 2009).

Quantitative research requires an understanding of the types of variables that are elicited through the questionnaire design. The quantitative element of the consumer questionnaires consisted of a variation of dichotomous, nominal and ordinal data variables (Bryman & Bell, 2014, p313). The quantitative research strategy was utilised in order to use numerical data to test the relationships between variables. Specifically the impact that brand loyalty, consumer brand relationships and brand tribes have on the success of the iPhone brand in South Africa.

Qualitative data was collected in order to gain in depth insights into the minds of iPhone consumers as well as the strategies of iPhone retailers. The goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon (Maree, 2007). The qualitative analysis of the research study illustrates a description of trends drawn from the thematic analysis.

Overall this chapter focuses on the coding, tabulating and analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected through online surveys with young iPhone consumers and interviews with iPhone retailers. The results are

represented throughout the graphs and tables throughout the chapter. The data analysis was performed as per the research methodology.

#### **4.1.1 Problem Statement**

To reiterate, the problem statement is restated below:

“To explore the impact of brand tribes as a strategic tool to establish consumer-brand relationships and brand loyalty within the competitive mobile phone industry and the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the youth market (age 18-25) in the LSM categories 7-10 within South Africa. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand”.

#### **4.1.2 Objectives & Research Questions**

The research objectives and questions will be referred to throughout this chapter and thus have been restated below for easy reference:

##### *Research Questions*

- What fuels consumer purchase behaviour and brand loyalty in the mobile phone industry?
- How can brand strategists use the leadership of brand tribes to gain strong consumer-brand relationships for strategic success?
- How to measure the success of, brand loyalty and consumer-brand relationships for brands with a strong communal following?

##### *Research Objectives*

- To gain insight into consumer purchase behaviour within the mobile phone industry.
- To develop a strategic model that leads to the formation of brand tribes.
- To determine the measure of success, loyalty and competitive advantage for the iPhone brand.

- To ascertain from iPhone retailers whether brand tribes and brand tribe initiatives are beneficial to the success of the brand.

## **4.2 DATA ANALYSIS**

---

The analysis of the data collected throughout the research is discussed in segments according to the research objectives. A brief discussion on the statistical or thematic finding will then follow in order to outline the most significant findings from the questions. As discussed earlier the research was segmented into an online consumer questionnaire for iPhone users and an interview schedule for Apple employees. The online questionnaire was created through the online software, Google Forms that allows researchers to develop, distribute and analyse surveys online with a number of customisable features (Google Forms, 2015). The interviews were conducted at the Gateway and Pavillion iStores in Durban where the researcher followed the research schedule. These qualitative findings are also discussed according to the research objectives in order to draw insights into the retail strategies involved in facilitating the formation of the iPhone brand tribe.

As this study was conducted in the form of a case study with the Apple iPhone brand, it is important to note the analytic approach taken with this research. Bryman and Bell (2014) suggest utilising a deductive analytic approach. In the case of this study, the deductive approach relies on theoretical propositions that reflect a set of research questions, a review of the relevant literature and a related coding system. In terms of analysing the qualitative research from iPhone consumers and retailers, techniques such as content analysis, thematic and coding in order to draw sound and relevant findings (Bryman and Bell, 2014, p357). Yin (2009) identifies four components of sources of information including notes, documents, tabular materials and narratives, these sources have been thoroughly analysed throughout this chapter. It is important to note that in order to preserve the integrity of the research, the qualitative consumer responses have not been altered.

### 4.2.1 Demographics

Demographic variables such as gender, age, race and sex were explored. Below is a representation of the demographics of the online consumer questionnaire.

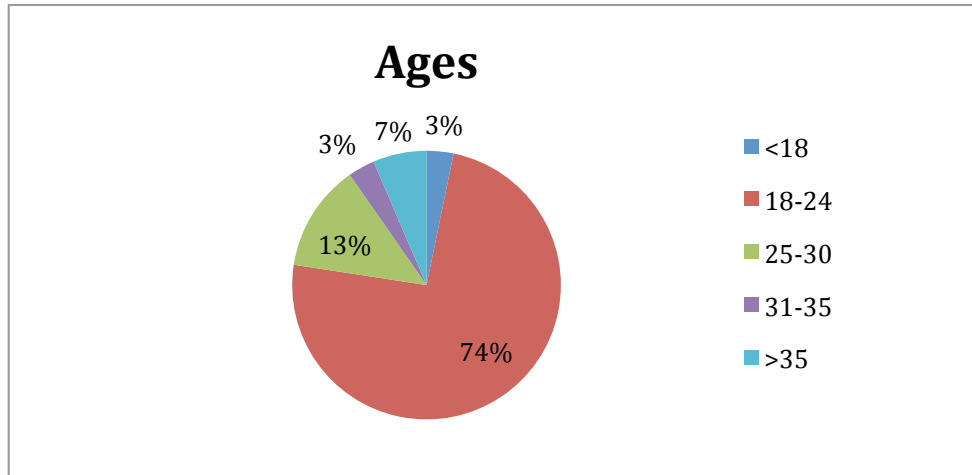


Figure 4.1 Ages

The results of the answers to the question of age indicate that the majority of iPhone users form part of the younger demographic. This leads to the assumption that the qualities iPhone possess are attractive to the younger audience. Considering a large percentage of the South African population falls within this demographic we can assume that iPhone dominates this market especially among higher income families.

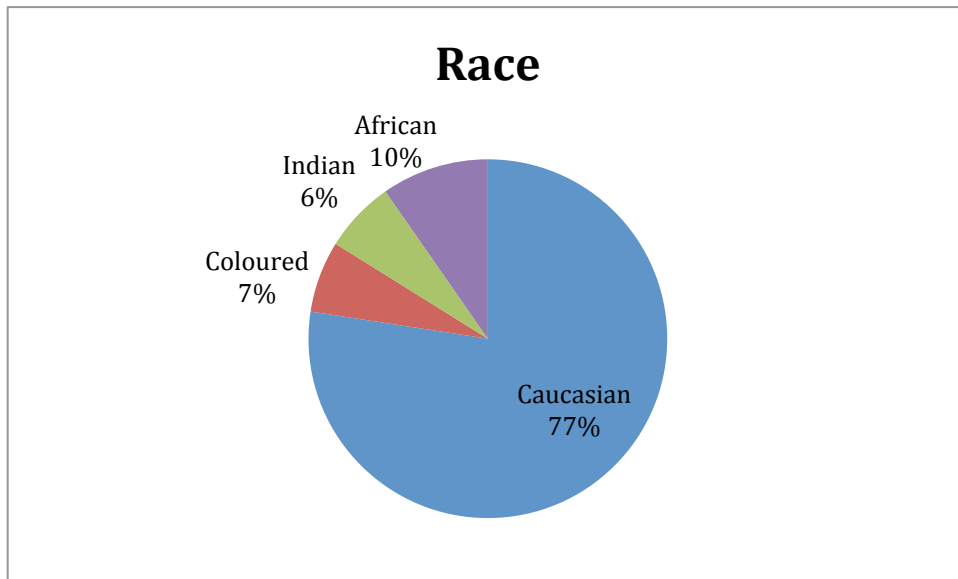


Figure 4.2 Races

The data relating to the race demographic shows an overwhelmingly large proportion of iPhone users are Caucasian. In interpreting these results it is clear that Apple iPhone products are preferred by consumers with high levels of disposable income. This corresponds with the data that shows price as a major influencing factor when deciding on a phone brand to purchase. However, one must also consider that the survey was performed online and the results of this data may be skewed due to lack of Internet access available to other demographics as a result of financial constraints.

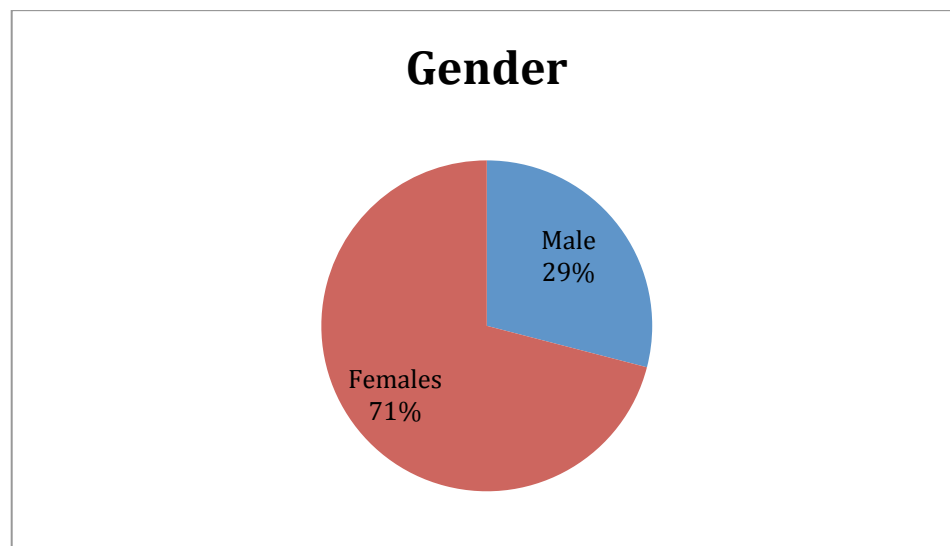


Figure 4.3 Genders

The majority of iPhone users stated that they are female.

#### 4.2.2 Objective 1

*To gain insight into consumer purchase behaviour within the mobile phone industry.*

The research that follows has been structured to ascertain findings that are relative to the first research objective stated above.

Question 2: What influenced the purchase decision of your current mobile phone?

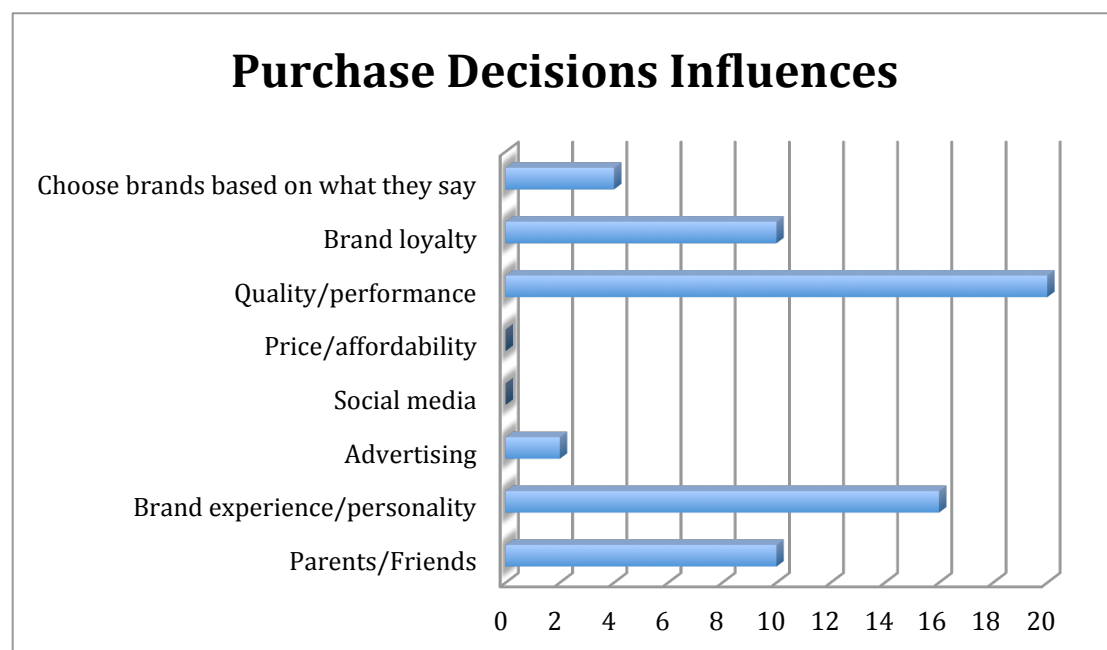


Figure 4.4 Purchase Decision Influence

Respondents were asked which of the above factors influenced their purchase decision when choosing the Apple iPhone. A majority of 32% of respondents stated that quality and performance was the driving force behind their purchase decision and 26% stated it was brand experience and personality that swayed them. Price and affordability did not feature as a key driver of the consumer purchase decision.

Question 5: Would you make a repeat purchase of Apple products?

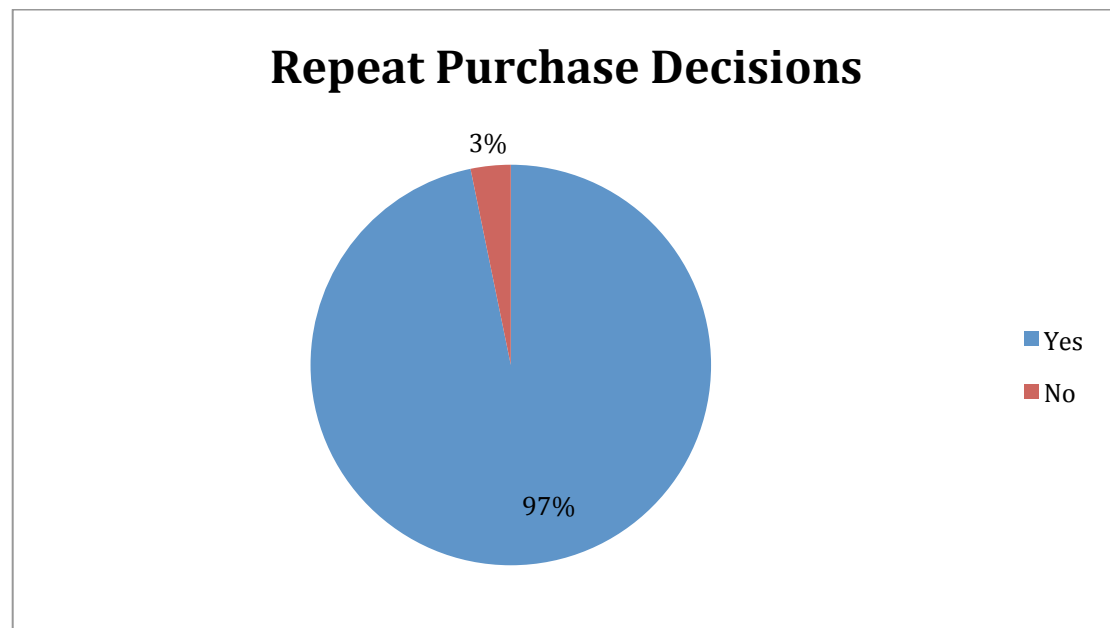


Figure 4.5 Repeat Purchase Decisions

Respondents were asked whether they would make a repeat purchase of the Apple brand. An overwhelming 97% stated that they have the intention of repeatedly purchasing Apple products and only 3% do not. This question indicates the levels to which consumers are satisfied with the Apple brand and would continually purchase the Apple range of products.

#### *Please Elaborate why?*

Respondents were asked to elaborate why they had a repeat purchase intention. A summary of the most significant responses are recorded below and give insight into what consumers find favourable about the brand and its market offering.

Table 4.1 Repeat Purchase Intentions

| Summary of Significant Responses                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Best after sale service I've had                                                           |
| Usability Functionality Reliability                                                        |
| Apple is awesome. Everything else just can't compare.                                      |
| I love the seamlessness between my iPhone and MacBook                                      |
| The quality of the products are of a high standard and I suits my lifestyle as a designer. |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I enjoy Apple products and the style in which they are designed, I also like the fact that they are universal                                                                                                               |
| I like the features, the looks and the software, Most of my appliances are apple and it makes it easy to access all my information from iCloud, I love the brand                                                            |
| I love apple products because of their reliability and the good customer service at Apple stores                                                                                                                            |
| I love apple - I have a Mac and iPad as well I think all their products are Beautifully designed and is great user experience                                                                                               |
| Quality, Reliability& User Friendly. Apple is a culture.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| I feel that apple caters for my needs and provides good quality products that are reliable and user friendly. Apple is my brand that I use because of my experiences I have had with it.                                    |
| Best phone ever                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Apple have a very intentional and effective brand identity. They offer me exclusivity and represent creativity, and those ideas appeal to me.                                                                               |
| aesthetically pleasing, easy to use, suits my personality, adds to status, currently all my products are Apple so switching one would upset my pretty Apple cart!                                                           |
| I dont like the fancy and premium appeals of the brand, but using high spec apple tech is a wonder of ergonomic and intuitive functionality. They do stuff in the most efficient and logical way.                           |
| I personally have not had a horrible experience with my prouducts at first yeah maybe it was quite different to your usual techno products but that's why their great they are so different and not totally user friend lot |
| Good quality and brand loyalty                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Easy to use, but still advanced                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Superior quality                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| I've been satisfied with the product                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The product has never let me down.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Good quality. I love my iPhone.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| It's fast and efficient. All my products are apple. iOS software upgrades are available to make your model of apple as good as the latest models                                                                            |
| Reliable and a product I have used previously - no reason for change.                                                                                                                                                       |
| They are very solid! Easy to use; reliable; just amazing !                                                                                                                                                                  |
| It's simplicity and durability.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| The iPhone is reliable                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| I have an Apple laptop, and a computer and syncing my files are so easy also the fact that you don't really have to install an anti-virus.... As viruses are somewhat hard to come by on apples...                          |
| It is a trusted brand and I have enjoyed the products so far.                                                                                                                                                               |
| The simplicity of the design and ease of functionality, together with the synchronicity of owning                                                                                                                           |

multiple Apple devices is what will make me continue to purchase Apple products.

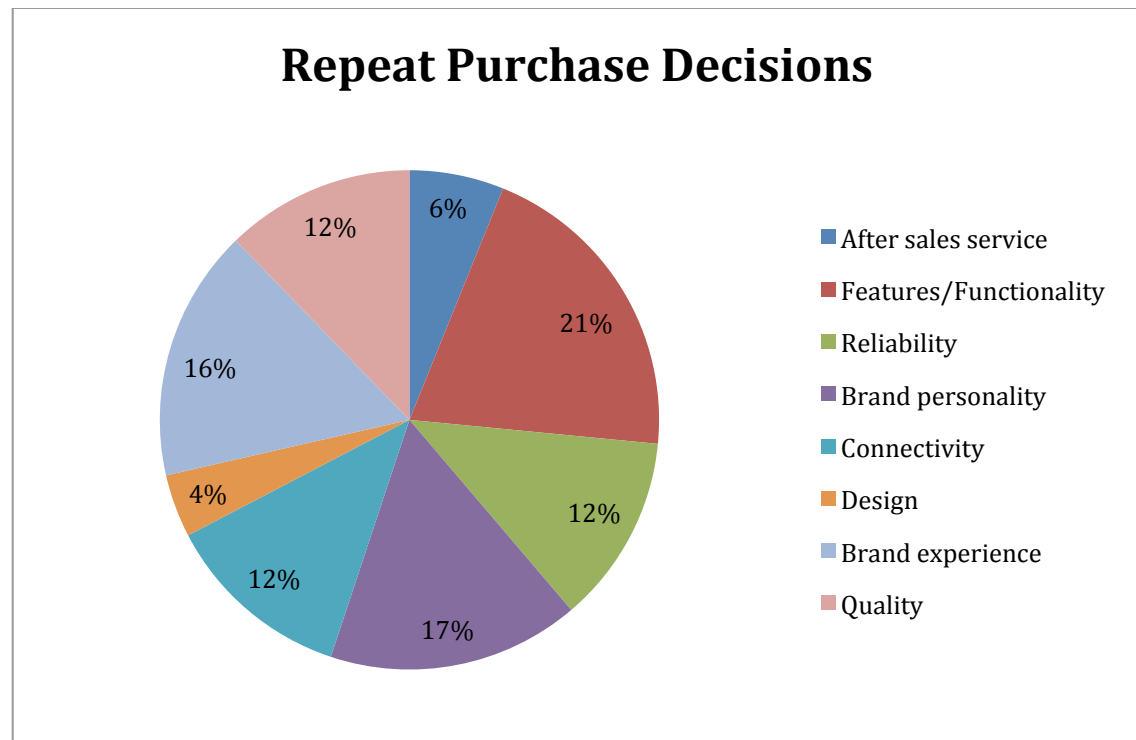


Figure 4.6 Thematic Analysis Repeat Purchase Decisions

Based on the results of the thematic analysis conducted above it is clear that the Apple brand has become synonymous with terms such as features, connectivity, quality and reliability. It is also evident that Apple users are conscious of concepts such as brand experience and brand personality with related terms being expressed with answers received from Apple users 16% and 17% of the total responses respectively.

Question 14: How many friends/family members around you own an Apple iPhone or Apple product?

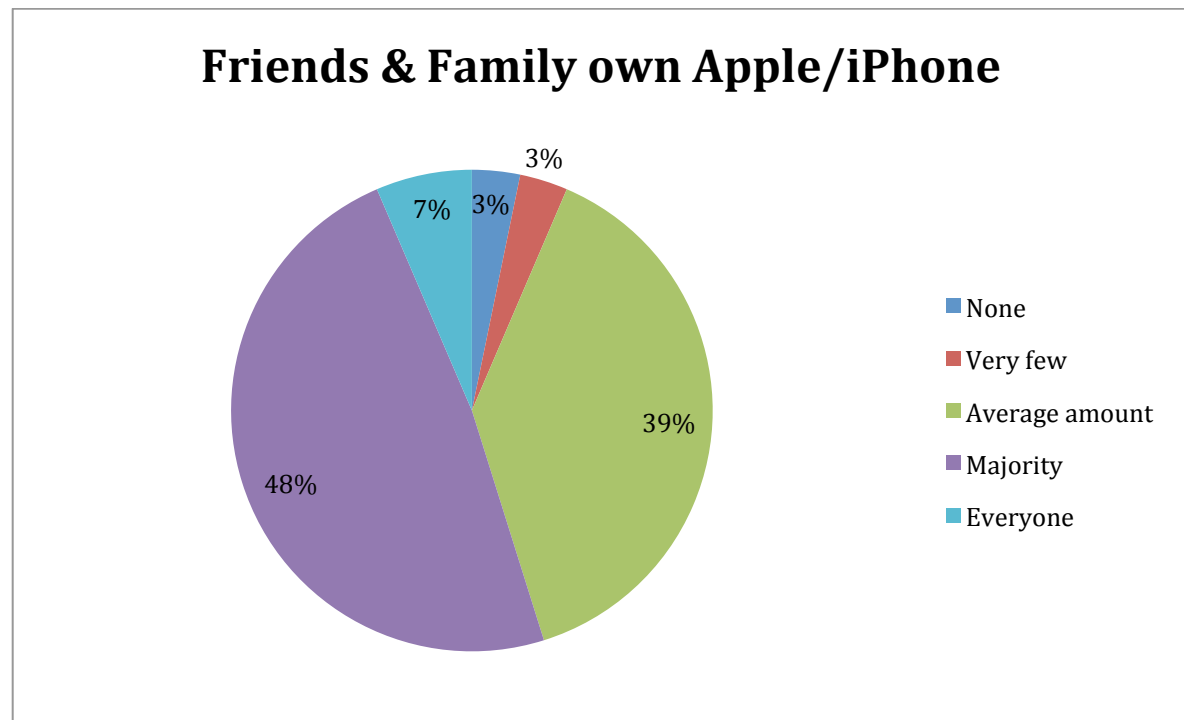


Figure 4.7 iPhone/Apple Owners

As seen in *Figure 4.7* above, 48% of respondents were identified to have a majority of friends and family members who own an Apple iPhone or Apple product. This was followed by 39% who stated they were surrounded by a fair amount of Apple users. Overall it is significant to note the influence that friends and family have on the purchase decision as well as the likelihood of consumers with shared brand interests being connected by a brand. It is interesting to note that friends and family who use Apple products exclusively surround 7% of the respondents. These consumers in particular experience a high level of exposure to the Apple brand.

### 4.2.3 Objective 2

To determine the measure of success, loyalty and competitive advantage for the iPhone brand.

The research that follows has been structured to ascertain findings that are relative to the second research objective stated above.

Question 16: What do you associate with the Apple brand?

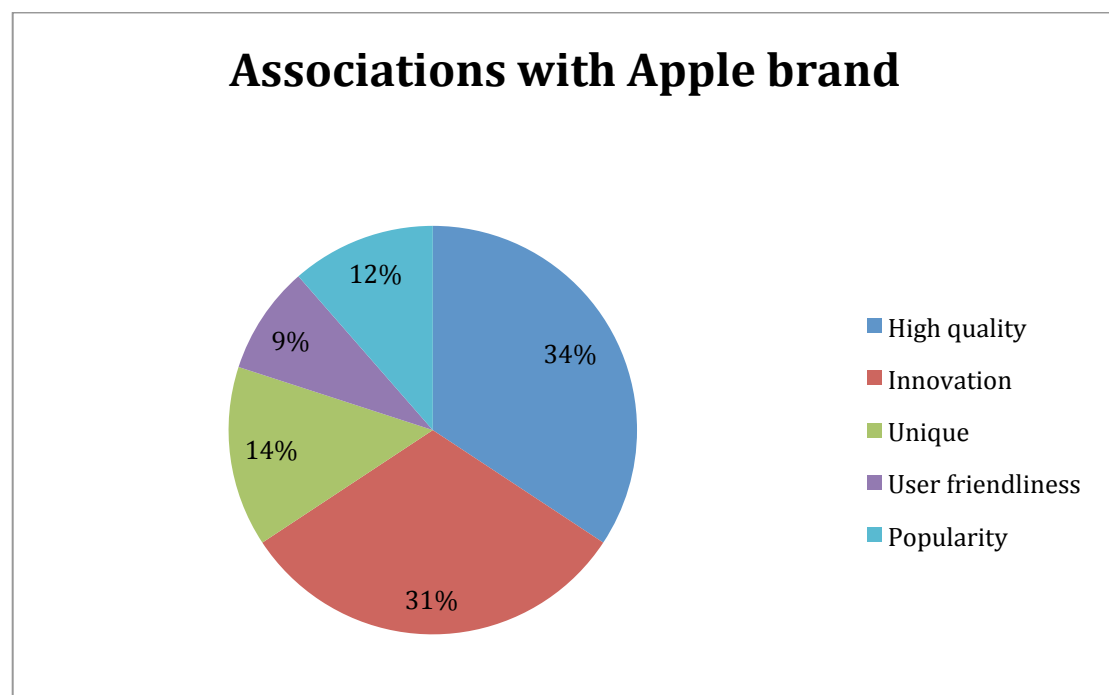


Figure 4.8 Associations with Apple

As seen in the figure above the majority 34% of respondents associate the Apple brand with high quality while an additional 31% feel that the most powerful association with the brand is innovation. This question was able to determine a description of the space that the Apple brand occupies in the mind of the consumer, which should be distinct, relevant and appealing.

Question 11: Which options most accurately describe the relationship you have with the Apple

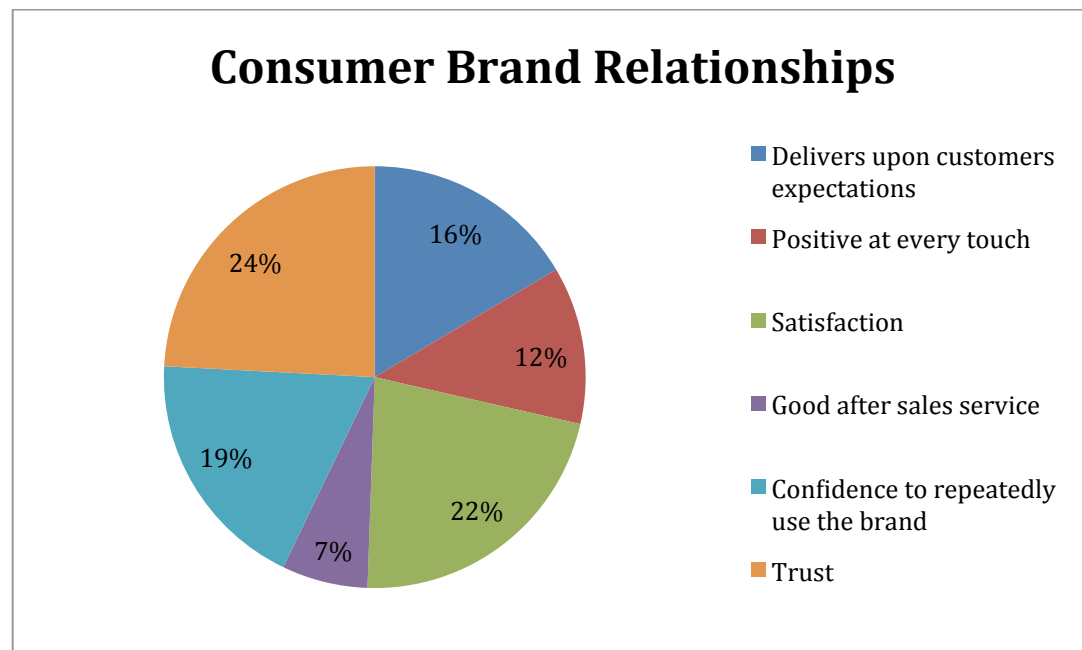


Figure 4.9 Consumer Brand Relationships

This question was designed utilising the Consumer Brand Relationship model discussed in Chapter 2 in order to measure the level at which the brand has developed a positive consumer brand relationship. 24% of respondents expressed that their relationship with the Apple brand is one built on trust. This fulfills the ultimate criteria for a positive brand relationship, which has been formed with the Apple brand based on the other 5 criteria. Other positive indicators of the Apple consumer brand relationship consisted of 22% experienced high levels of consumer satisfaction, 19% had the confidence to repeatedly use the brand and 16% felt that the brand was able to meet their expectations. The Apple brand has been utilised in this question in order to observe the elements that positively influence the consumer brand relationship in a successful brand with a communal following.

Question 9: How strong is your loyalty to Apple?

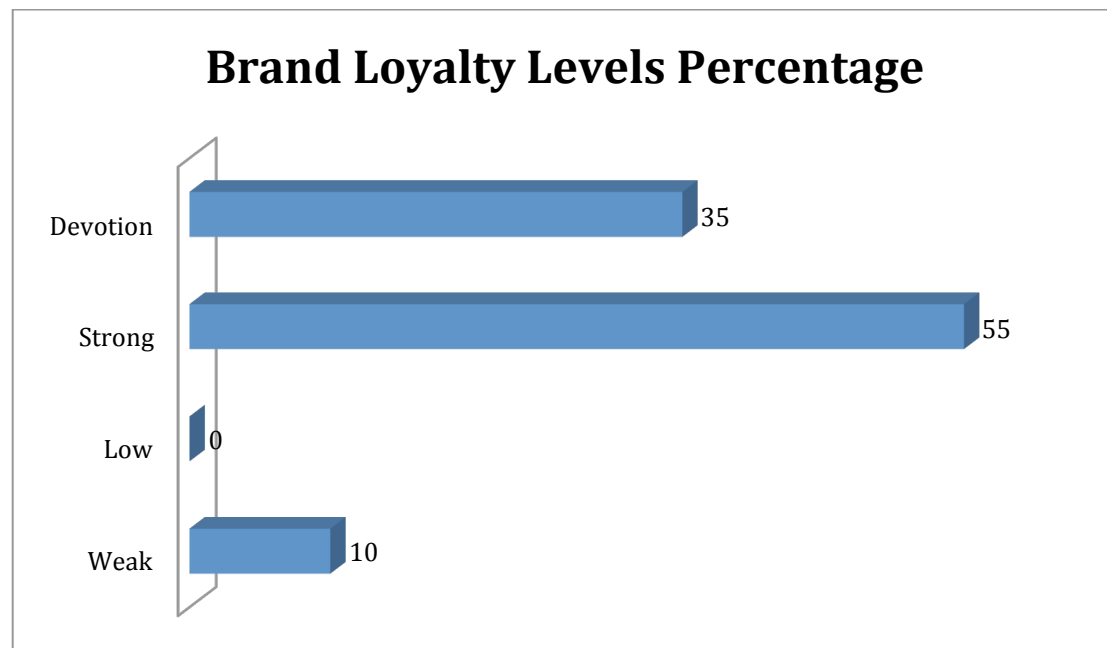


Figure 4.10 Brand Loyalty Levels

This question was built on the foundation of Aaker's brand loyalty pyramid discussed in Chapter 2. The respondents were posed with various indicators of the strength of their loyalty towards the Apple brand with the scale of weak, low, strong and devoted. A large majority of 55% of respondents indicated that they have a strong level of loyalty towards the brand based on their sheer liking of the Apple brand. A further 35% of respondents expressed a devotion to the brand as committed buyers of the Apple brand. Interestingly enough 0% of iPhone users had low loyalty levels towards the Apple brand and only 10% expressed weak devotion.

Question 6: What makes Apple iPhone different from its competitors?

This question was posed as open ended and qualitative in order to gain honest and sincere consumer opinions of the factors that give the Apple iPhone a competitive advantage over other smart phone brands. A few of the respondent's answers have been highlighted in table 4.2 in order to provide an objective understanding of the responses.

Table 4.2 Competitive Advantage

| Competitive Advantage                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Its unique operating system and ability to deflect viruses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| iCloud, Ability to sync work devices, Reliability, Back up support centres, iTunes, IStore                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The operating system. Trademarked functions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Design orientated and latest technology. Modern devices.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| It's a product that I deem to be a lot "cooler" than most of the other products and competitors                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Its offering and its brand experience, there's something one of a kind about apple, something you won't find with any other brand, it's not only a status product, its services and software are one of a kind and their range of "i" services are unique only to the apple brand! (e.g.: iTunes, iStore, iCloud) |
| I had a blackberry and I hated it. It had so many problems. I also found Samsungs not very user friendly. The iPhone and apple products are very easy to use                                                                                                                                                      |
| All my devices sync so effortlessly, They all match - they are all elegant and beautiful, They have a great user experience, They are responsive and have no delay time.                                                                                                                                          |
| It's brand name and associations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| I feel apple considers what I want in a phone instead of bombarding me with features that I don't need. They provide me with a good phone with long battery life and reliability.                                                                                                                                 |
| Apple is tailored specifically for creatives, and have a far sleeker and edgier identity than its competitors.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| the design, the brand personality, user experience,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Seamless minimalist design, high spec equipment and function that people will actually make use of that is both easy to find and operate.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Their designs are unique they are always pleasing their target markets with new innovative designs and they never seem to disappoint                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Simple design, easy usage and awesome display                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Camera quality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| It works at all times. If something goes wrong, it's fixed. Great support from community and suppliers.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| High quality and a sense of a premium brand.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Features and user friendly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| The quality. As well as the find my iPhone app. No viruses.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Its GUI and its charger are smarter. The fact that their charge fits both ways is great                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| It is user-friendly and has excellent camera capabilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| It's sexy, trendy, easier to use than a Samsung and looks better too. I also think that owning an Apple says something about a person's personality as sophisticated, innovative and almost snooty/posh.                                                                                                          |

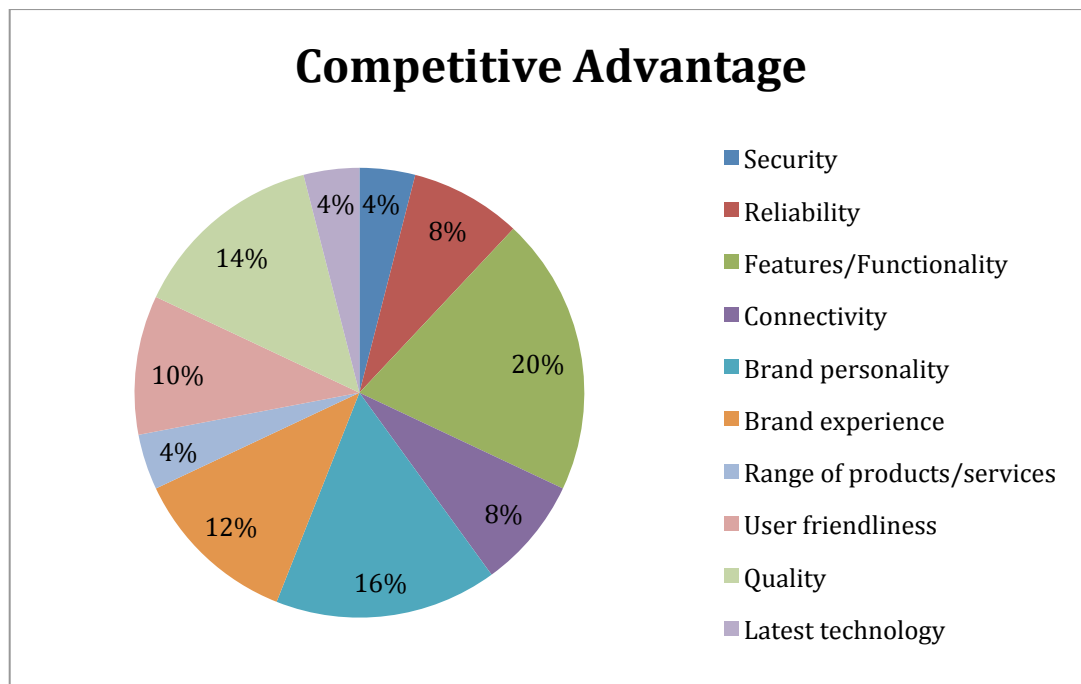


Figure 4.11 Thematic Analysis Competitive Advantage

Upon conducting a thematic analysis of the responses relating to competitive advantage, many of the defining characteristics of Apple are observed on a regular basis. The Apple products derive competitive advantage from features and functionality. The concept of brand personality was also observed from the responses on numerous occasions indicating that this factor has a significant impact on the consumer's choice of product. Quality, user friendliness and brand experience also have significant influence over the consumer's product choice, as they are factors that Apple has gained international renown for.

Question 13: How do you respond when you are asked which is better Apple or a rival competitor such as Samsung?

Respondents expressed a defiant loyalty towards the Apple brand with a persistence to convince others that the Apple brand is superior to all other smart phone brands. Essentially the consumers exhibited broad brand knowledge and extensive experience with the brand with a distinct positive opinion of the brand, which they wished to share with others. Below a few in depth responses have been outlined in order to depict the conversation surrounding the consumer reactions.

*Table 4.3 Rivalry Reactions*

| Rivalry Reactions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I defend Apple because i feel its the best brand                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| I say to them, look at what apple offers and from software side in terms of iCloudetc .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Apple all the way. Was a Samsung user but after getting the Apple I am in my happy place.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| apple products serves my needs more accurately than samsung does as a designer (again the seamless connectivity between my phone and laptop)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Apple, every time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| I am always loyal to my apple products and when asked to compared I always stick by my apple brand                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Apple, hands down. Ive owned other brands and nothing comes close.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| I say Apple is better and my own experiences are testament to that                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| I don't think Samsung has anything on Apple.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Apple is better                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| I believe other brands such as Samsung may of the same or similar quality products, but Apple is better suited to my style and personality - as Samsung may be to someone else.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| I don't respond! in my opinion there is no comparison - every time my best friend upgrades her Samsung or whatever other brand she sits for days trying to figure out how to navigate it - I don't have to!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Usually with a logical argument, I try not to get emotional over trivial things.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Apple is always better                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| I insist on Apple being the better brand                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| My response is that I prefer Apple because it suits what I personally need from a computer.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| I say iPhone is great. Samsung is more user friendly                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| I stand up for apple ! Don't have anything bad to say about it ! There shouldn't even be comparison !!!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| i understand iPhones may be impractical or above certain people's pay grade. Although the innovation and trend setting iPhone clearly out ways it's competitors in almost every way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| I say they both have pros and cons                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| I respond with "I prefer apple"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| I say Apple is better, 1. i am not really good at keeping phones intact and with it not having a smashed screen so when I take my phone out I can proudly say , yes i have dropped my phone but its not smashed. 2. The usability is much easier everything seems to link so easily, also some apps in the store on android you have to purchase and on the apple store it is free so added benefit there :) Also I have used my mum's Samsung s3 and when you are too long on Whatsapp or on a call the phone kept heating up and there is no such thing with the iphone... Also the fact that the iphone 5 charger is unique no one in the house can steal it lol |
| I become defensive of Apple.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Apple every time. Prettier, easier to use, and overall cooler than competitors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

#### 4.2.4 Objective 3

To develop a strategic model that leads to the formation of brand tribes.

The research that follows has been structured to ascertain findings that are relative to the third research objective stated above.

Question 12: Do you feel that you are part of the Apple brand tribe by owning an iPhone?

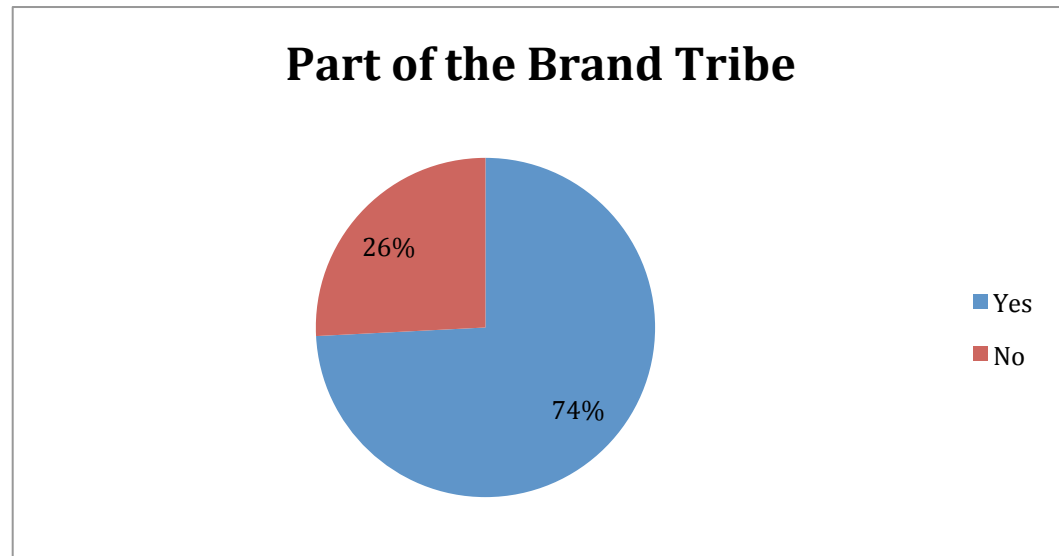


Figure 4.12 Part of the Brand Tribe

This question aims to prove whether Apple has successfully built a strong brand tribe who consider themselves connected to other users through the Apple brand and shared interests. The above *figure 4.12* shows that 74% of respondents felt as though they are part of the Apple brand tribe whereas 26% did not. This indicates that Apple has successfully utilised brand strategies in order to make their consumers feel a part of the greater Apple community or tribe.

#### Please Elaborate Why?

The respondents were furthermore asked why they felt or didn't feel a part of the brand tribe. A summary of the positive and negative responses can be seen in the table 4.4. This further depicts the consumer's understanding of their role or value in the brand tribe as well as the opinions of those who do not feel a part of the brand tribe and need to be converted.

*Table 4.4 Part of the brand tribe*

| Positive Responses                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Negative Response                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I feel a shared connection with other iPhone users, using facetime and through the instagram platform with the hashtag #iphoneOnly                                                                                                     | I could easily swop and go back to Samsung. I like iPhone but think Samsung is more user friendly.            |
| Apple focuses on software design and not hardware , which differentiates themselves from competitors! They not worried about over elaborate designs , hence long term they will b more successful .                                    | I use Apple products for myself. I don't care who else uses it. I have no desire to be part of a brand tribe. |
| All Apple users are family.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Didn't know it existed.                                                                                       |
| Owning a apple product gives you a sense of community and that you belong to a "club" of people who enjoy the same type of innovation                                                                                                  |                                                                                                               |
| I feel a sense of protection and loyalty towards the apple brand, no one can say anything to change my mind. We all have our own preferences and opinions but i feel apple is the best and it delivers its promise time and time again |                                                                                                               |
| iPhones give us something in common and for that reason we feel connected                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                               |
| Apple promotes a unique exclusivity with their brand - i feel like i am part of a creative community in owning apple products.                                                                                                         |                                                                                                               |
| the Apple brand personality fits my personality - it reflects creativity, innovation and is aspirational and also logical.                                                                                                             |                                                                                                               |
| It holds an exclusivity                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                               |
| I suppose I'm part of the brand tribe because like other people I am loyal to this brand, and I like it.                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                               |
| The apple brand is unique and one could associate its branding and name to a group sense.                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                               |
| I'm tech savvy so I understand Apple products well and most of my friends and family have Apple products so I'm part of the tribe.                                                                                                     |                                                                                                               |
| I always connect with other apple users and share tips on the usability and such and often I find android users complaining about their phones and I honestly don't have that.                                                         |                                                                                                               |
| I feel an immediate sense of kinship when somebody agrees with my views on Apple as they are basically backing up my opinions and choices.                                                                                             |                                                                                                               |

There is an overwhelmingly positive response to the notion of belonging to a brand tribe. It is a testament to how effectively Apple is able to utilise its brand tribe resources.

Question 10: What emotion do you experience when using your Apple iPhone?

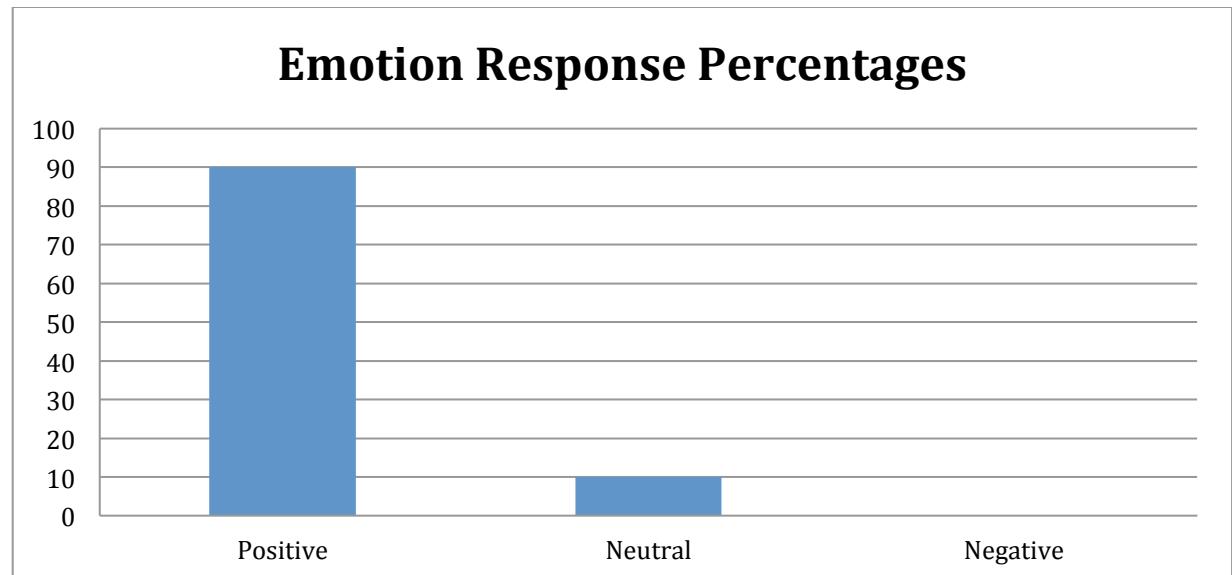


Figure 4.13 Emotions Felt by Users

This question was asked to Apple iPhone users who felt as though they are a part of the Apple brand tribe to determine whether the emotions a brand elicits in a consumer is a contributing factor towards building a brand tribe. A tremendous 90% of respondents indicated positive emotions towards the Apple brand while 0% experienced negative emotions.

Question 7: Which options most accurately describe the relationship you have with the Apple?

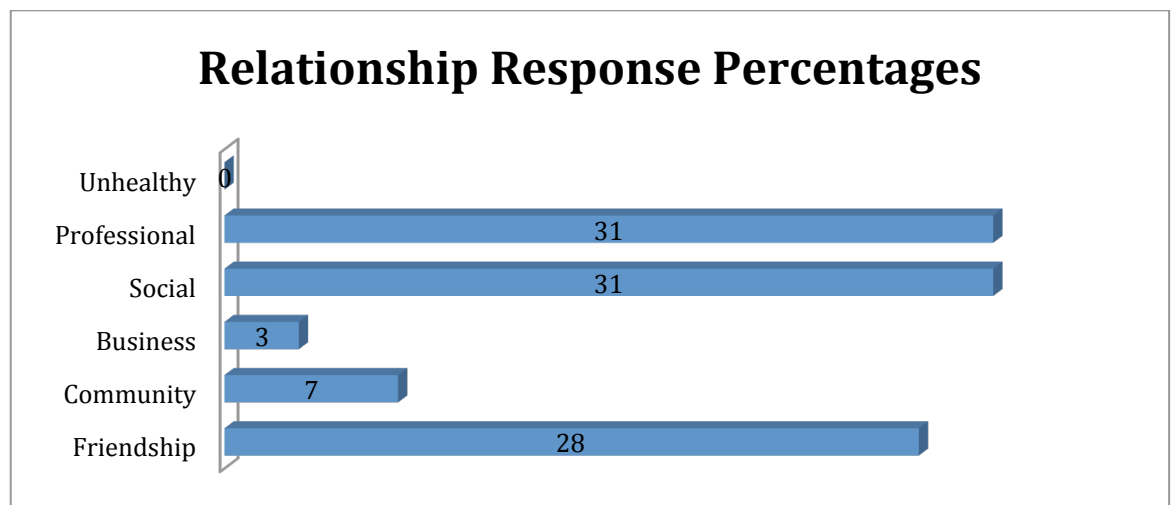


Figure 4.14 Relationship with Apple

The above figure depicts the description of the relationship that consumers feel they have with the Apple brand. 31% of respondents described a social relationship while a further 31% stated that they had a professional relationship with the brand. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings was that 28% of respondents would describe their relationship with Apple as a friendship while none felt that the relationship was unhealthy.

Question 15: Describe what makes being part of the Apple iPhone experience so worth it?

The responses were positive overall. Apple iPhone users seem to thoroughly enjoy the experience of owning and using an iPhone. Due to the large degree of subjectivity involved in the responses, a thematic analysis was not conducted. A summary of the most significant responses has been provided in the table that follows.

*Table 4.5 Brand Experiences*

| Brand Experiences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I enjoy the status it brings as well as the endless opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Functional needs are what matters most to me and the ability for me to use it as part of my work                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Functions are great and camera is awesome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| I work from my laptop as a designer and my phone being seamlessly compatible helps my work and looks professional.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| The quality of products, the innovative updates and the after sales service.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| The benefits of using a apple iPhone is that all the products are so interlinked and it is also a product that just allows you to feel as though you are part of a "elite" community                                                                                                   |
| emotions benefits and its functional benefits, the apple brand has so much to offer, i feel like being apart of this brand makes me apart of the innovation and experience that comes with the brand                                                                                   |
| I love how user friendly it is and I love the apps. I can use my phone for more than calling and messaging. It makes my life easier                                                                                                                                                    |
| It's reliable, Effortless, Quality, Great to use, Beautiful to look at                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| It lives up to its promise.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| The iPhone helps me deal with my high stress life in a better way than any other phone has ever been able to. It doesn't drop calls, or switch off for no reason, or slow down. The iPhone always delivers                                                                             |
| Function, Design, Quality                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| I understand the design and interface better and find it smoother and more functional than other phones. I also find i can express myself better with it, and it suits my style.                                                                                                       |
| easy to use, nice to look at, works nicely with my other Apple devices, suits my personality and aspirations, it also has a spirit level which comes in handy                                                                                                                          |
| High Quality Hardware paired with a highly functional and intuitive os                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| That all Apple devices connect to each other                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| You can do so much, it is easy to use with simple design                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| It's just easy to use and compatible with other products I use daily.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The phone has never let me down. And has everything one needs                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| It is functional and efficient and easy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Ease of use , reliability , social stigma                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| I don't have words ... It's just incredible and so reliable and user friendly !                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| I'm confident in the product and believe the quality is second to none.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Long lasting products that do what I want                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| The phone is reliable and has a long lasting battery, I also like the apps                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| It allows you to connect all your devices which makes it a lot easier to do work across various platforms without any hassle. It also caters to the creatives and offers great user-friendly tools.                                                                                    |
| Include what is mentioned above. Buying into a brand that offers this much value, security, ease of use and prestige for owning it is worth my while. Owning an Apple product sends subliminal messages about who you are (stylish, successful), what you value (quality, innovation). |

Question 12: How does being part of a brand tribe/ a bigger community of shared interests make you feel?

This question elicited responses that were deep and insightful in terms of analysing the consumer's understanding and feelings surrounding the notion of the Apple iPhone brand tribe. The youthful respondents elicited a positive response to the concept of belonging to the Apple brand tribe whilst the older consumers were more skeptical of the concept. Below are a few examples of the positive and negative responses of the respondents in order to provide a sincere depiction of their feelings and attitudes.

*Table 4.6 Brand Tribe Feelings*

| Positive Response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Negative Response                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Special                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | I am not concerned with burning in part of a larger brand tribe :)                    |
| It makes me feel more confident and secure in my identity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | To be honest it doesn't make me feel as though I belong to any tribe.                 |
| Part of innovation and how the human race can progress                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | I own Apple products to own them and enjoy them, not to be part of a group of people. |
| Honestly; pretty weird. I like to think that I make decisions independently and apply logic rather than emotional responses. Id much rather be a part of a community based on shared ideological interests than what products I use. I'd find this to be fulfilling and enriching. |                                                                                       |
| Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                       |
| More confident in my choice of devices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                       |
| Not concerned with the community aspect of apple                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                       |
| We just use the same phone and we like it. My interests are too wide to narrow it down to a phone brand.                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Included                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                       |
| Great!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                       |
| Like I made the right decision <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                       |
| Warm and fuzzy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                       |
| Proud                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                       |
| It makes me feel apart of something... Sort of like a unique group like you feel included and not excluded                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |
| Like I am accepted and part of a group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                       |

Overall many iPhone users recognise what a brand tribe is and feel that sense of belonging that it is intended to convey. It is submitted that the use of brand tribes is an effective method to attract and retain consumers.

#### **4.2.5 Objective 4**

To ascertain from iPhone retailers whether brand tribes and brand tribe initiatives are beneficial to the success of the brand.

The research that follows has been structured to ascertain findings that are relative to the first research objective stated above.

Based on the responses received from the interviews with the Apple employees, the following key aspects have been found to stimulate the formation of Apple's brand tribe strategic success. The findings have been gathered through a narrative analysis of the interview results with 5 Apple iStore employees.

According to iStore employees the most influential branding techniques identified that create brand loyalty was customer service, after sales service and the positive experience resulting from the use of the product. The Apple employees offer a variety of value adding after sales services which keep consumers satisfied and returning to make repeat purchases of the brand. These include warranties, customer support and technical support. The customer support and technical support services stimulate the positive brand experience enjoyed by the consumers which the employees had indicated was already very high due to the user friendliness of Apple products and their ability to cater for a wide variety of user needs. The employees suggested that Apple also incorporates a large degree of synchronicity across all their products, which resonates highly with consumers and contributes to the building of the brand tribe.

Key characteristics identified from the employee interview that provide the iPhone with competitive advantage include the unique, useful, user friendly interfaces supplied with Apple products which offer superior functionality. This results in an ease of use that most users of advanced technology find appealing.

The iStore employees indicated a strong preference for iPhone over other brands of mobile phones due to the variety of unique features, reliability and quality of the phone, its compatibility with windows and its extensive variety of apps. These are the unique selling points the employees impart to potential customers whilst also allowing the customer to experience the iPhone and Apple brand for themselves. A vast proportion of the favoured features enhance the connectivity aspect of the phones, for example, application integration and the ability to track the phone.

The creation of the Apple brand tribe seems to stem from features offered by the phone itself, such as free calls from Apple to Apple, safe and secure app downloads and user friendliness. These features are conducive to building communities in a relatively simple manner. The great user experience and customer support also enhance the relationship Apple itself has with its customers.

Some of the challenges faced by Apple include the high cost of products, services and data usage. The perceived level of complexity in using the apple products also may intimidate potential customers.

Some initiatives undertaken by Apple to stimulate the formation of the brand tribes include iPhoneography, Facebook promotions, product launches, trade-ins and client training. These form platforms for the brand tribe to engage with one another and Apple itself. The employees indicated that the users appreciate Apple going beyond the sale to satisfy customers. This assists in creating a friendly relationship with the customer.

The consumer's loyalty to the Apple brand tribe can be demonstrated in the number of repeat purchases of Apple products. According to the sales representative most customers start with an iPhone or a tablet and then proceed to commit to future purchases and upgrades solidifying their brand tribe membership. This brand loyalty can also be demonstrated by the vast amount of time the users spend browsing and acquiring Apple apps.

From an employee perspective a high degree of commitment is exhibited which is important as the employee forms the link between the brand and the consumer. This passion can transfer itself from the employee to the customer. Theorists have stated that brand tribes need to be lead and the employee leads the customer in this regard.

### **4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

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The above presentation of findings has provided significant basis for the understanding of the Apple brand tribe and the factors that influence the success of the brand.

#### **4.3.1 Online Questionnaire**

It can be seen that iPhone consumers are more concerned with the quality and experience of the smart phone brand than factors such as price, affordability and advertising initiatives. This gives rise to the notion that traditional advertising methods have become ineffective and although the Apple iPhone is considered an expensive purchase, consumers are willing to pay more for products that are of a high quality and performance. The reason for this is inherently linked to the formation of Apple's brand tribes.

The sheer amount of respondents (97%) who were indicative of repeat purchase intention depicts high levels of brand satisfaction and trust. Reasons for this favourable consumer behaviour include great after sale service, reliability, usability, seamless design, device connectivity, synchronicity and sheer love for the Apple brand. It was found that these factors influence the strength of the Apple brand tribe. A majority of the research also outlined the trend that consumers who purchase Apple products are surrounded by a large amount of fellow Apple users. This indicates that members of the Apple brand tribe tend surround themselves with other Apple users, which essentially impacts their purchase decision. 7% of respondents stated that everyone surrounding them, who were considered friends and family, owned one or more Apple products. This indicates the most concentrated manifestation of

the Apple brand tribe in the form of exclusive Apple users who experience a high frequency of brand exposure.

Furthermore the Apple brand has managed to create the distinct associations of high quality and innovation in the mind of the consumer as a shared feeling amongst the brand tribe. In terms of consumer brand relationships, respondents indicated that trust and the brands ability to deliver upon its brand promise are what evoked satisfaction and confidence in the Apple consumer brand relationship. Furthermore the youth respondents described the relationship with the Apple brand as social, professional and that of a friendship. This indicates that the Apple brand has managed to build strong relationships with consumers which is indicative of a successful brand and a strong communal following,

The research study also indicated exceptionally high levels of brand loyalty with the target market as a result of respondents liking the brand and being committed to purchasing Apple products. In terms of competitive advantage it can be understood that the brand's ability to provide a tailored one of a kind brand experience is what sets it apart from its competitors. Consumers enjoy the exclusivity and synchronicity of the brand's offering as well as the status it brings. Majority of respondents would even go as far as to defend the brand in the light of its competitors and promote the advantages of being an Apple user to others. Overall the above-mentioned factors of loyalty, experience, competitive advantage and connectivity are the building blocks for a growing brand tribe.

In terms of understanding the Apple brand tribe, a majority of respondents strongly felt as though they were a part of the tribe, "I feel a shared connection with other iPhone users". However, 26% did not feel a part of the tribe and this is the market that Apple still needs to convince and convert to brand believers. Overall it can be said that the Apple brand tribe elicits strong relationships, positive emotional connections and distinct brand experiences essentially contributing to the consumer's social identity. Some quotes that

sum up the Apple brand tribe include “It makes me feel more confident and secure in my identity”; “Part of innovation and how the human race can progress” ; “More confident in my choice of devices”; “Like I am accepted and part of a group.”

#### **4.3.2 Apple Employee Interview**

Upon analysis of the responses received from the employee interviews it can be deduced that the consumers primary concern is with the features of the Apple products. The users are generally of the opinion that the features offered by Apple are superior in terms of their functionality, performance, variety, user friendliness and quality. The varieties of apps are attractive to consumers as well as the functions they perform thus strengthening the brand tribe. They allow the user to perform a variety of different tasks and offer connectivity to the brand, to other consumers and to their other devices, facilitating the formation of brand tribes..

The features are the major selling point for the Apple brand but it is what these features perform that is important to the Apple brand tribe. The features promote the ability for an apple user to connect with another or with other devices using device synchronisation and compatibility with other electronic devices such as computers running on windows. These features also make it easy to support initiatives by Apple to reach its customer base through events like competitions. It was also found that members of the Apple brand tribe are facilitated through exclusive Apple software, events, apps and communication initiatives in order to create a sense of belonging, community and tribalism.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

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This research study has confirmed that the assumptions at the beginning of this dissertation were in essence correct. It can be said that the Apple brand in South Africa has a strong communal following of youth that exhibit high levels of brand loyalty. The iPhone brand in particular exhibits competitive advantage within the mobile phone industry. Furthermore the theories of brand loyalty, consumer relationships and brand tribes are intrinsically linked.

# CHAPTER 5

## 5. Conclusions & Recommendations

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The following chapter outlines a summary of the most important findings for the research study in terms the formation of brand tribes. These findings are stated in relation to each objective, which has been set in Chapter 1 in order to draw meaningful conclusions from this research study. Furthermore this chapter proposes recommendations for the study and suggestions for further research.

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION TO CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The South African mobile phone landscape is cluttered with many strong brands employing highly competitive strategies to win over the consumer's loyalty. Mobile brands struggle to find new strategies to break through the advertising clutter to communicate competitive advantage and retain loyal customers. At the outset of this study, a number of research objectives were laid out with the aim of analysing the impact that brand tribes on the success of a brand using Apple iPhone as a case study. The purpose of this was to gain further understanding into the notions of brand tribes and deduce a model that can be utilised to build brand tribes, creating loyal consumers amongst other brand benefits.

Through the fieldwork conducted and extensive secondary research, it can be stated that the formation of brand tribes has a positive effect on the evolution, communication and creation of the brand. Brands who have successfully built a communal following, such as the brand under analysis in this paper, thrive through their ability to connect with consumers emotionally and experientially, creating loyalty, adding value and becoming an integrated part of the consumer's identity.

The following discussion is structured in a way that outlines a summary of the analysed research findings and secondary research findings relevant to each objective, which has been set. This includes the interpretation of the results, stating the significant conclusions that have been drawn and can be applied to a greater branding context. Lastly, in depth insights from the study have been discussed in relation to the significance and implications of the research findings. Further recommendations that resulted from this study are introduced and put forward to add value to the South African branding landscape.

## **5.2 OBJECTIVE 1: CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS**

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The first objective of this research study was to gain insight into consumer purchase behaviour within the mobile phone industry in South Africa. In order to provide substantial insight into the matter, relevant literature and field work findings are discussed below.

### **5.2.1 Literature Findings**

As stated in the literature review, the element of trust is an important factor in influencing consumer purchase decisions and consumer brand relationships. The Consumer Buying Decision Process as outlined by Engel, Blackwell and Kollat (1968) in Chapter 2 infers that when the youth consumer is at the purchase decision phase they are influenced by a number of factors including mass media, family, peers, social class and maturation (Moschis and Moore, 1979). A significant finding is the understanding that because the mobile phone industry is inundated with competing brands, consumers suffer from option paralysis when it comes to choosing their brand of choice. Literature also implied that the Apple iPhone brand imbues a high perception of quality that consumers are willing to pay for, however a factor particularly influencing the consumers purchase decision of the Apple iPhone is the anticipation of declining prices over time (Sriram and Chintagunta, 2010).

### **5.2.2 Research Findings**

In terms of field research with Apple iPhone users it was found that the highest influence of the purchase decision for consumers was quality and performance, closely followed by brand experience and personality. The purchase decision is also influenced by word of mouth, the more iPhone users the consumer is surrounded by - the more likely the consumer is to purchase the product. A vast majority of the respondents also stated that what made the Apple experience so enjoyable is the reliability, quality and interconnectedness of the products.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion**

The most valuable insight gleamed from this aspect of the research study is that the consumer purchase decision process in the mobile phone market has become more personal, influenced by social connectivity, performance and personality. The Apple iPhone brand is able to convince consumers to not only buy into the offering but also buy into the brand's personality through adding value to the consumer's life. Essentially the iPhone's ability to appeal to the consumer on a physical, emotional and social level is what sways consumers to trust and ultimately purchase the brand.

## **5.3 OBJECTIVE 2: BRAND LOYALTY, COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE & STRATEGIC SUCCESS.**

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The next objective was to determine the measure of success, loyalty and competitive advantage for the iPhone brand. This was based on the assumption that the iPhone brand has a strong communal following and the aim was to understand and analyse the factors that lead to the success of the brand.

### **5.3.1 Literature Findings**

The South African smart phone market is growing exponentially making it harder for brands to sustain competitive advantage. Consumers are becoming less susceptible to traditional advertising methods and more receptive to brand experiences and personalities. Theorists argue that competitive advantage can no longer be sustained through product features and perceived values. Through the literature review it was found that brands with strong consumer brand relationships and communal followings (Taute, *et al.*, 2010) are more likely to be successful.

### **5.3.2 Research Findings**

55% of the youth responded as having a strong sense of brand loyalty and 35% show unyielding devotion to the iPhone brand. This confirms that Apple's strategies in obtaining and retaining committed consumers has been

successful thus far. A significant finding from the consumer research study depicted high levels of belief in the brand with consumers going as far as to defend the brand and share personal experiences on how the brand adds value to their lives. This unique consumer behaviour is a result of the formation of the Apple brand tribe and can be beneficial to a brand's existence. Overall the Apple iPhone brand has successfully created a community of technology that connects a community of passionate users.

### **5.3.3 Conclusion**

The formation of brand tribes has a positive ripple effect on the brand in the form of repeat purchase intention, brand evangelists and brand believers. This strategy depicts the ability of a strong brand tribe to contribute to the overall success of a brand. The level of devotion, evangelism and commitment to the brand as a result of the brand tribe is unprecedented and is a powerful strategic tool to build relationships with the consumer.

## **5.4 OBJECTIVE 3: THE FORMATION OF BRAND TRIBES**

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The next objective aimed for the outcome of a strategic model that leads to the formation of brand tribes. This involves understanding the factors that influence brand tribes and developing strategies in order to effectively build and measure the success of them.

### **5.4.1 Literature Findings**

It was found by theorist, Seth Godin that brand tribes need to be lead through a public figure, communications and experiences. He made the insightful discovery that one of the greatest assets to brands is the ability to deliver powerful, personal and relevant messages to people who want to receive them. "The market for something to believe in is infinite" (Godin, 2008). Instead of utilising strategies to compete with other brands for the consumer's attention, marketers are now encouraged to make people a part of their brand through forming and leading a branded community.

### 5.4.2 Research Findings

The majority of respondents reacted positively to being a part of the iPhone brand tribe, acknowledging their place in the Apple brand community. Respondents also indicated that they are engaging in a connected relationship not only with the brand but also with other users through shared interests. Strong consumer relationships, high brand loyalty and positive emotional brand connections have influenced the formation of the iPhone brand tribe amongst consumers in Durban. It can be emphasised that a large percentage of respondents defined their relationship with the Apple brand as a social friendship, which indicates a new tribal type of consumer brand relationship.

### 5.4.3 Conclusions

Factors that influence the formation of a brand tribe include strong consumer relationships, high brand loyalty and positive emotional brand connections.

The strongest brand tribes are those built on a foundation of friendship. Overall it can be said that the Apple brand tribe elicits strong relationships, positive emotional connections, and distinct brand experiences and essentially contribute to the consumer's social identity. The outcome for this objective resulted in a model that leads to the formation of brand tribes and can measure the success of them. The fundamental concept behind the model is that brands need to mirror the behaviour of friendship in order to build a strong brand tribe. This model is based on the findings and insights gained from this study and will be discussed later in this chapter.



Figure 5.1 Tribal Brand Friendship Model

## **5.5 OBJECTIVE 4 IPHONE RETAILER STRATEGIES**

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The last objective was to ascertain from iPhone retailers whether brand tribes and brand tribe initiatives are beneficial to the success of the Apple brand. This research objective aimed to support and confirm any theories deduced from the above findings and conclusions.

### **5.5.1 Literature Findings**

It has been suggested that the reason for smartphone leader, Apple's, competitive advantage lies in the hands of the fierce brand loyalty of their consumers (Ezeh and Azzawi, 2012). Thus it is relevant to explore Apple's marketing and communication strategies for instilling brand loyalty among South African consumers, in order to determine an integrated marketing solution to penetrating the highly competitive smart phone market. In the case of Apple, there are a multitude of online platforms facilitating the discussions of the various members of the brand's e-tribes. A prevalent example of this is the "Cult of Mac" phenomenon. Today "Cult of Mac" has grown exponentially through the online medium with websites, blogs, social media accounts and articles by millions of global Apple users sharing opinions, feelings and news about their common love for the Apple brand (Kahney, 2004). According to the study discussed earlier in the brand loyalty segment of research (Dormehl, 2014), 25% of the respondents stated that their loyalty to Apple was due to the fact that their friends and family had iPhones and they wished to retain Apple-specific features such as Facetime. Thus the creation of iPhone-specific applications, features and functions provides yet another medium through which Apple's e-tribe is facilitated and strengthened.

### **5.5.2 Research Findings**

A significant finding was that the Apple iStore employees described their relationship with their customers as friendly and informative. This is a logical association to make, as the design of the interface of the product itself is orientated around the concept of user friendliness. This results in intuitive interactions with the product much like one human would have with another. These features, complimented by quality customer service, technical support

and after sales support from passionate staff cultivate a friendly atmosphere, which contributes to the growth of the brand tribe and community. This community grows by connecting with each other through the range of unique, exclusive products and services offered by Apple and repeat purchases are common due to the high quality and reliability of their products despite the high cost. The fact that customers are willing to pay a premium for these features indicate it is indeed a value adding service. The employees themselves admittedly act as leaders of the brand tribe, living, breathing and evangelising the Apple brand.

### **5.5.3 Conclusion**

Apple has implemented a wide variety of techniques enabling them to attract and retain an impressively large and dedicated brand tribe. By providing quality and reliability the brand ensures that their products never disappoint customers and if there are problems, Apple staff respond in an effective manner. From a retail perspective, significant effort and strategy has been implemented in order to facilitate the interaction of the brand tribe with like-minded individuals through various platforms. Unique and exclusive mediums such as Facetime, iPhoneography, iTunes, Apple Events, two way communication strategies and online e-tribe platforms provide the brand tribe with the opportunity to share their brand experiences and gain a strong sense of belonging in a innovative, trendy and reliable environment. By having the functionality necessary to enable users to connect with the brand and each other, a powerful brand tribe is formed. Each Apple employee plays a crucial role in the leadership of the Apple brand tribe, guiding consumers beliefs, attitudes and actions towards the brand. This provides Apple with a unique method of obtaining a competitive advantage, which has yet to be effectively replicated by any of its competitors in the form of a tribal brand building strategy.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS, SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS**

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As significant result of this research study is the Tribal Brand Friendships model. The metaphor of tribal brand “friendships” is a way of describing the

theory deduced from the research study. If a brand can describe its relationship with their consumers as a “friendship”, it is on its way to forming the foundation of a strong brand tribe.

The theory is that that in order to build a strong brand tribe, a brand should gain the loyalty and trust of the consumer through creating strong emotional connections and memorable brand experiences. Brands simply should mirror the relationship of a friendship. Just as a friend is loyal, trustworthy and emotionally connects with you, so a brand can personify these characteristics.

### **5.6.1 How to Build A Brand Tribe?**

The key to building a strong brand tribe lies in creating a real shareable, emotional connection. As a result of the research findings, the Tribal Brand Friendship model was deduced below. This model is a new strategy that aims to aid new brand leaders in building or measuring the success of strong brand tribes. The model challenges the way the branding industry communicates with consumers and encourages a specific objective for the communication strategy at each level of the pyramid.



## **I. Brand Value**

The first step is to build a strong foundation, a platform to build the brand tribe upon and a reason to bring people together. Ensure that what the brand offers the consumer evokes passion for the subject matter and gives them something to talk about and something to share. Take note that it is not the facts and benefits you are selling but rather the brand's values and promise.

**Objective 1:** The objective here would be to create a communication platform that revolves around consumers engaging in a connected relationship not only with the brand but also with other users through shared interests.

## **II. Brand Trust**

Once the right people talking, it's time to humanise the brand by building trust with the target audience. This involves creating a sincere but powerful connection with consumers through an in depth insight into their lives. This places relevance on the consumer as oppose to the offering.

**Objective 2:** Communicate sincerely in order to create lasting connections that will slowly build a consumer's trust in your brand.

## **III. Brand Loyalty**

Brands of the modern generation have to work harder to earn the loyalty of consumers. This is where a brand should start to mimic the behaviour of a good friend; listening and responding with action, delivering upon the brand promise and always remaining true to the consumer.

**Objective 3:** Ensure consumers are committed to the brand as a result of the brand always delivering upon the brand promise.

## **IV. Brand Emotion**

You can have the most amazing service, the most brilliant product, the most groundbreaking idea, but if there isn't a way that engages with people on an emotional level it all starts to crumble. Today people want to hear the story;

they want to understand the message and example. Thus if you can get the emotions right, success will follow.

**Objective 4:** Start by defining an emotional strategy, choosing the emotions you want evoke in your consumer carefully. The challenge is then to own this emotion and make sure it emanates through all brand contact points.

## **V. Social Identity**

Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership. Evolving the relationship brands have with people from "consumer" to "friendship" does not happen overnight, it's a long-term investment. Brands who have found success at this level have contributed to consumer's identities by changing the way they think, do and imagine and giving them the opportunity to share these profound experiences with others. This level of tribal brand friendship requires a thorough understanding of the consumer and a sincere ability to connect with people on a real level, a friendship level.

**Objective 5:** Evoke a sense of pride, belonging and self-esteem in the consumer through becoming a part of their social identity.

Overall it is recommended that the Tribal Brand Friendship model be utilised by brand strategists, consumer insights specialists and future branding leaders as a holistic strategy to build strong consumer relationships and powerful brand tribes. As discussed earlier in the chapter the implications of this model are highly beneficial for the brand in the form of repeat purchase intention, brand evangelists and brand believers. It is appropriate to note that although the theory replicates the notion of friendships with brands, it in no way implies that brands are to replace real human relationships but simply mirror the behaviour of friendship. However an interesting implication to note is the notion that consumers are seeking emotional connections with brands that fill a void of human connection.

In terms of the Apple brand, it was found that not all users of the brand consider themselves a part of the brand tribe or community. It is a recommendation that Apple targets these specific consumers in order to make them feel as though they are a part of the brand tribe, thus increasing the brands market share.

## **5.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

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The following topics are related to the notion of brand tribes and the impact it can have on the success of a brand. In order to improve upon the study it is suggested that a larger scale study is conducted on a national or international level to gain a broader understanding of the topic and draw conclusions that can be applied globally. It is also suggested that the following research topics be further inspected upon in order to confirm and ascertain further insights into the factors that are affected by or affect the brand tribe concept.

- The formation of brand tribes outside of the mobile phone industry;
- The effectiveness of the Tribal Brand Friendship Model;
- The relationship between Brand Equity & Brand Tribes;
- The Leadership of Brand Tribes;
- Comparative research to understand brand tribes and their strengths concerning brands such as Samsung.

In order to ensure that the study is sound, it would also be appropriate to utilise a comparative case study in order to empirically measure the success of a brand with a strong communal following against one that does not have a communal following. In order to further this research it is suggested interviewing a psychologist in order to gain scientific insights into the consumer purchase behaviour with regard to brand tribes and brand relationships. This could also result in the psychoanalysis of consumers who are a part of the brand tribe in order to further understand their behaviour. Had more time been given toward this study, a more extensive set of findings and conclusions would have resulted.

## 5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

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I have successfully completed the research study entitled: “Examining The Impact Of Brand Tribes Relative To Brand Loyalty And Consumer Relationships Concerning The iPhone“. I was effectively able to explore the notion of brand tribalism and consumer brand relationships, which are areas of brand strategy that have interested me throughout my Honours Degree at Vega School of Brand Leadership. I feel that the findings of this study will assist me in my career as a brand strategist with a distinct passion for understanding the minds of consumers and the hearts of brands. Throughout this research study I was able to prove the validity of my assumptions and build a sound strategy from real consumer truths. It became apparent through the Apple case study, that brand tribes are built on the foundation of friendship through sincere, shared emotional connection between consumers and brands.

I feel that this powerful insight, coupled with the use of the proposed Tribal Brand Friendships model (deduced from the research findings) form a highly effective and impactful tool leading to the formation of brand tribes. Through this study I have come to believe that there is significant value in nurturing consumer brand relationships, brand trust and brand communities. I have successfully managed to answer all of the research questions by developing a branding model that effectively builds and measures the success of brand tribes. The study showed that the tribal strategies that resulted resonated strongly with the youth market in Durban. As a future branding leader, it is highly relevant to understand the driving force behind youth consumer behaviour in order to better engage with them.

Essentially the findings of this study are valuable to future brand strategists, brand leaders and brand educators. In conclusion I have successfully provided a new strategic tool that holistically builds brand connections and tribes by sincerely adding value to the lives of consumers and resulting in powerfully positive outcomes for the brand.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Consumer Questionnaire

| Research on relationships of brand loyalty, competitive advantage and consumer relationships relative to the iPhone brand tribe. |                 |                  |             |              |                     |                     |                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Age                                                                                                                              | 18-24           |                  | 25-30       |              | 31-35               |                     |                      |
| Gender                                                                                                                           | Male            |                  |             |              | Female              |                     |                      |
| Race                                                                                                                             | African         | Asian            | Caucasian   | Coloured     | Indian              | Other               |                      |
| 1. Which brand of mobile phone do you currently own?                                                                             | Apple           | Samsung          | Huawei      | Sony         | Nokia               | Blackberry          | Other (Specify)      |
| 2. What influenced the purchase decision of your current phone?                                                                  | Parents/Friends | Brand Experience | Advertising | Social Media | Price/Affordability | Quality/Performance | Loyalty to the brand |
| Other (Please Elaborate)                                                                                                         |                 |                  |             |              |                     |                     |                      |
| 3. Which brand of mobile phone would you prefer to own?                                                                          | Apple           | Samsung          | Huawei      | Sony         | Nokia               | Blackberry          | Other (Specify)      |
| 4. Why would you prefer this brand of phone? (Please Elaborate?)                                                                 |                 |                  |             |              |                     |                     |                      |
| If you own an Apple iPhone, please continue.                                                                                     |                 |                  |             |              |                     |                     |                      |
| 5. How many Apple products do you own?                                                                                           | 1-2             | 3-4              | 5-6         | 7-8          | 9-10                | More than 10        |                      |
| 6. What makes Apple iPhone different from its competitors?                                                                       |                 |                  |             |              |                     |                     |                      |
| 7. Are you a loyal member of the Apple community? If yes, then why do you believe so?                                            | Yes             | No               | Why?        |              |                     |                     |                      |
| 8. What electronic tribes are you a part of thanks to your iPhone?                                                               | Facebook        | Twitter          | Instagram   | LinkedIn     | Snap Chat           | Other (Elaborate)   |                      |

|                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                  |      |                                                          |           |                                                                                          |           |                                                                                                                      |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 9. How strong is your loyalty to Apple?                                                                                                                            | 1. I would switch brands easily.                                 |      | 2. I buy this brand out of habit, no reason to switch.   |           | 3. I buy it because I like the brand & have a good relationship.                         |           | 4. I am a committed Apple buyer, highly loyal.                                                                       |      |
| 10. What emotion do you experience when using your Apple phone?                                                                                                    | Love                                                             | Like | Infatuation                                              | Happiness | Apathetic                                                                                | Uncertain | Dislike                                                                                                              | Hate |
| 11. Choose the options that best describe your relationship with the Apple brand.                                                                                  | I have faith in Apple to deliver upon my expectations.           |      | My brand experience is positive at every touch.          |           | I am satisfied in what Apple has delivered.                                              |           | I have received good after sales service.                                                                            |      |
| 12. Do you feel that you are part of the Apple brand tribe* by owning/using an iPhone.                                                                             | Yes                                                              | No   | Please elaborate why?                                    |           |                                                                                          |           |                                                                                                                      |      |
| 13. How do you respond when you are asked which is better Apple or a rival competitor such as Samsung?                                                             | I consider the pros and cons of both brands and make a decision. |      | I remain neutral in my response not favouring any sides. |           | I instantly choose Apple, listing a myriad of great personal experiences with the brand. |           | I support the Apple brand with conviction and devotion! I am exceptionally loyal, nothing can convince me otherwise. |      |
| 14. How many friends/family members around you own an Apple iPhone or Apple product?                                                                               | Very Few                                                         |      | An average amount                                        |           | The majority of friends/family                                                           |           | Almost all of my friends/family.                                                                                     |      |
| 15. Describe what makes being part of the Apple iPhone experience so worth it?<br><i>You can include the functional, emotional &amp; self expressive benefits:</i> |                                                                  |      |                                                          |           |                                                                                          |           |                                                                                                                      |      |

\*Brand Tribe: "Formal or informal groups of consumers whom share the same awareness, passion and loyalty for a brand or portfolio of brands" (Gallagher, 2013).

Please note that you are not obliged to answer questions you may perceive as sensitive Thank you for your time!

## Appendix 2: Employee Interview Schedule

| Investigating the branding techniques used by the Apple iPhone brand to create brand loyalty, competitive advantage and gain a strong consumer following. |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Please note that you are not obliged to answer questions you may perceive as sensitive                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1. What branding techniques does Apple iPhone, South Africa engage in to create brand loyalty?                                                            | 6. What initiatives, events or other branding efforts has Apple made in order to bring consumers together to interact as a community/tribe?                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2. What is the current competitive advantage the iPhone brand has over other mobile phone brands in South Africa?                                         | 7. How successful have these initiatives been?                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3. Why should a youth consumer buy an iPhone over any other mobile phone brand?                                                                           | 8. How would you describe the relationship Apple has with its consumers?                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4. How did Apple iPhone manage to establish their brand community or brand tribe?                                                                         | 9. To what extent have consumers shown loyalty to the Apple brand? (Give Examples)                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 5. What are the key-challenges faced by Apple in a competitive South African mobile phone industry?                                                       | Do you consider yourself a part of the Apple brand tribe? If so, what has compelled you to become a part of the tribe?                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                           | <small>*Brand Tribe: "Formal or informal groups of consumers whom share the same awareness, passion and loyalty for a brand or portfolio of brands" (Gallagher, 2013).</small> |

Thank you for your time!

## Appendix 3: Pilot Study

*\*This appendix consists of three sheets describing the results, reliability and validity of the pilot study for both quantitative and qualitative research instruments as received from South African Statistician Nicholas Skelton.*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Subject 1            | Subject 2                  | Subject 3                                | Subject 4       | Subject 5         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Age                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 18 to 24             | 18 to 24                   | 18 to 24                                 | 25-30           | 18 to 24          |
| Gender                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | male                 | male                       | male                                     | male            | Female            |
| Race                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | white                | other                      | white                                    | white           | White             |
| <b>1. Which brand of mobile phone do you currently own?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Apple                | Apple                      | Apple                                    | Apple           | Samsung           |
| All subjects interviewed own Apple mobile phones indicating a strong preference for the apple brand of mobile phones.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>2. What influenced the purchase decision of your current phone?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Friends/parents      | Loyalty                    | Quality/performance                      | Social media    | Friends/parents   |
| The subjects obtained awareness of the brand from a variety of sources indicating a strong brand presence and popularity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>3. Which brand of mobile phone would you prefer to own?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Apple                | Sony                       | Apple                                    | Apple           | Apple             |
| There is a strong preference for apple as a prospective phone for reasons indicated under question 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>4. Why would you prefer this brand of phone? (Please Elaborate?)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | popularity, features | Features                   | Quality                                  |                 | Features, Quality |
| For the purposes of this analysis the responses obtained by the subjects were classified based on the characteristics of the apple mobile phones that the subjects indicated they preferred. Based on the results of the interviews, the features of apple mobile phones are the primary cause of preference as represented in graph 1.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>5. How many Apple products do you own?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1 Or 2               | 1 or 2                     | 3 Or 4                                   | 1 or 2          | 1 or 2            |
| The subjects held a small number of Apple products each. This may be due to the high degree of functionality of the apple devices.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>6. What makes Apple iPhone different from its competitors?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | user requirements    | entertainment              | Quality                                  |                 | Design            |
| For the purposes of this analysis key characteristics were identified from the subjects opinions of what they felt gives apple a competitive edge. The apple iPhone is revered for a wide range of characteristics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>7. Are you a loyal member of the Apple community? If yes, then why do you believe so?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | no                   | yes                        | yes                                      | No              | No                |
| The subjects indicated whether they were loyal to the apple community and their reasons for being so. The reasons have been disregarded for this part of the analysis due to the high level of subjectivity of consumer reasoning. Their reasons are analysed in 9.1. There is no indication of ther being a high degree of brand loyalty based on the interviews and it is therefore submitted it is too much of a risky assumption to make with any degree of certainty that a customer will remain loyal to the brand. The risk analysis is conducted below. |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>8. What electronic tribes are you a part of thanks to your iPhone?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | FB, Insta            | All                        | FB                                       | FB, Twit, Insta | FB, Insta         |
| There is a strong preference amongst the subjects for the Facebook tribe however other tribes do feature. The relative size of each tribe is indicated in graph 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>9. How strong is your loyalty to Apple?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 1                    | 2                          | 3                                        | 1               | 1                 |
| Loyalty of the Apple brand is assessed as weak. It is a reasonably certain assumption to make as indicated by the risk analysis below.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>10. What emotion do you experience when using your Apple phone?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 4                    | 3                          | 5                                        | 4               | 7                 |
| On average the subjects expressed an apathetic attitude towards the use of the iPhone. This indicates that the novelty appeal of the product wears off after it has been acquired. This assumption can be made with reasonable certainty as indicated by the risk analysis below.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>11. Choose the options that best describe your relationship with the Apple brand.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | satisfaction         | satisfaction               | Satisfaction, trust, positive experience | Satisfaction    | Trust             |
| For the purposes of this analysis the responses obtained by the subjects were classified based on the key appraisal factors of the iPhone. A high level of satisfaction has been enjoyed by the subjects as indicated in graph 3.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>12. Do you feel that you are part of the Apple brand tribe* by owning/using an iPhone.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | yes                  | yes                        | Yes                                      | yes             | No                |
| All subjects felt part of the apple brand. It is interesting to note that while the subjects felt like they were part of the brand, brand loyalty is comparatively low.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>13. How do you respond when you are asked which is better Apple or a rival competitor such as Samsung?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | consideration        | consideration              | support apple due to personal experience | Consideration   | Consideration     |
| When a subject is asked to make a comparison between Apple and a rival competitor, the majority of the subjects consider the pro's and cons of each product. This is unsurprising as the subjects appear to be price conscious as indicated by the low brand loyalty but as they perceive apple to be the provider of a superior product, the only con for apple is likely to be the cost. The subjects however appear to be willing to pay for the quality offered by Apple. The responses are illustrated graphically in graph 4.                             |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>14. How many friends/family members around you own an Apple iPhone or Apple product?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | average              | average                    | Average                                  | Majority        | Average           |
| Subjects indicate an average number of family and friends have iPhone products.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                      |                            |                                          |                 |                   |
| <b>15. Describe what makes being part of the Apple iPhone experience so worth it?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Social               | Social, fun, user friendly | Quality, social, user friendly, fun      |                 | Social            |

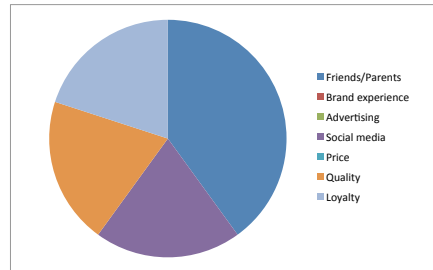
For the purposes of this analysis, key characteristics were identified based on the subjects responses and the characteristics most enjoyed relative to each other are illustrated graphically in graph 5.

#### Qualitative analysis

Thematic analysis has been conducted to assess the validity of the following questions in the survey.

Qualitative analysis has been applied to the following questions:

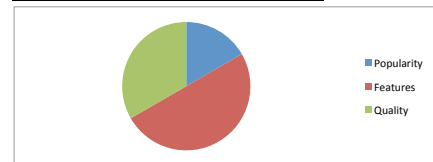
#### 2. What influenced the purchase decision of your current phone



|                  | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Friends/Parents  | 2     | 1         |           |           |           | 1         |
| Brand experience |       |           |           |           |           |           |
| Advertising      |       |           |           |           |           |           |
| Social media     | 1     |           |           |           | 1         |           |
| Price            |       |           |           |           |           |           |
| Quality          | 1     |           |           | 1         |           |           |
| Loyalty          | 1     |           | 1         |           |           |           |

The responses to this question indicate which marketing factor is most likely to influence the decision of a customer to purchase an Apple product. The responses may be useful for determining which factor to focus on when marketing the product. For instance, on the basis of the pilot survey it would indicate that advice from friends and parents is the primary factor and therefore development of the brand should be the focus of the marketing campaign but should also take cognisance of the fact that apple appear to have a wide variety of marketing angles to advance their campaign from.

#### 4. Why would you prefer this brand of phone?

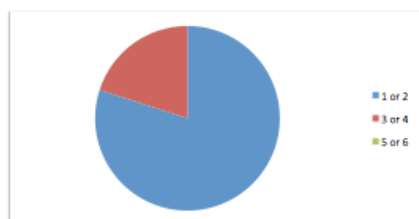


|            | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Popularity | 1     | 1         |           |           |           |           |
| Features   | 3     | 1         | 1         |           |           | 1         |
| Quality    | 2     |           |           | 1         |           | 1         |

For the purposes of this analysis, the responses obtained have been categorised according to the characteristics of an iPhone and the responses have been graphically illustrated to identify the key areas of focus of potential customers. The results of this survey currently indicate a preference for features and quality of Apple products. It should be noted that while brand loyalty is strong, the phones popularity does not seem to be the driving force when deciding on a new phone. It appears that the brand loyalty is created by the quality and features of the product rather than just being part of the brand. This may indicate an element of inconsistency between the responses obtained from potential customers regarding their preferences.

#### 5. How many apple products do you own?

|  | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|



|        | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 or 2 | 4     | 1         | 1         |           | 1         | 1         |
| 3 or 4 | 1     |           |           | 1         |           |           |
| 5 or 6 |       |           |           |           |           |           |

This question attempts to determine the various types of Apple products that could be successfully marketed and sold to a customer. If one assumes 100% customer loyalty, the responses to this question could provide an indication of how many products could be sold per person. The results are reasonably similar. A qualitative analysis was applied to this question due to the lack of solid figures.

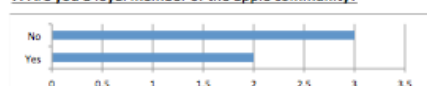
#### 6. What makes Apple iPhone different from its competitors?



|                   | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| User requirements | 1     | 1         |           |           |           |           |
| Entertainment     | 1     |           | 1         |           |           |           |
| Quality           | 1     |           |           | 1         |           |           |
| Design            | 1     |           |           |           |           | 1         |

This question attempts to obtain a customers perspective of what sets Apple iPhones apart from its competitors so that more focus can be placed on a particular competitive aspect. The responses obtained have been broadly categorised based on characteristics or features. However, even when broadly characterised, there is a large degree of disparity between the responses indicating that the responses to this question would not provide a clear indication of what competitive aspects Apple should be focusing on.

#### 7. Are you a loyal member of the apple community?



|     | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|-----|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 3     | 1         | 1         | 1         |           |           |
| No  | 1     |           |           |           | 1         | 1         |

This question attempts to gauge the loyalty of Apple customers. The pilot study indicates the brand loyalty is not particularly high. This is likely due to the customers' focus on quality and features. If apple compromised their quality and features for increased brand management, it is likely their market share would decline as a result.

#### 8. What electronic tribes are you part of thanks to your iPhone?

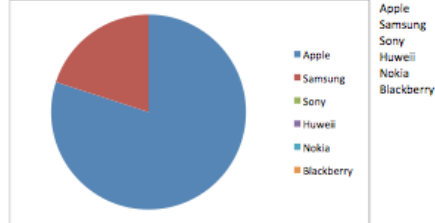
|          | Total | Subject 1 | Subject 2 | Subject 3 | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|----------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Facebook | 5     | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 1         |

#### Quantitative Analysis

Variance and statistical analysis has been conducted in order to assess the validity of the survey. This will indicate whether the results of the survey would be likely to replicate themselves should they be conducted over a larger population.

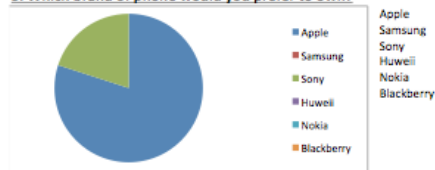
The following questions have been analysed using quantitative analysis:

#### 1. Which brand of mobile phone do you currently own?



This question analyses the proportion of the market that Apple holds relative to its competitors. The results from this question can be used as a simple yet effective method to project future sales and approximate its market share.

#### 3. Which brand of phone would you prefer to own?



The responses from this question are useful for the same purposes as question 1. However it is submitted that it would probably be more beneficial to focus on the outcome of this question instead of question 1 as this question specifically addresses the possible future growth of market share. The results from this question are overall the same as question 1 but when the results of question 1 and the are compared, one can gauge the degree of brand loyalty by observing how many iPhone users are considering moving to an alternative brand.

#### 9. How strong is your loyalty to the Apple brand?

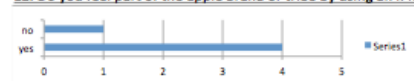
| Subject 1 | Subject 2    | Subject 3   | Subject 4 | Subject 5 |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Weak(1/4) | average(2/4) | strong(3/4) | weak(1/4) | weak(1/4) |

For this question, a value is assigned to the response obtained from the survey depending on the strength of the response. The strength of the response can range as follows:



This question attempts to determine where the brand should focus its activities in a virtual environment. The above graph presents the relative strength of each tribe compared to each other.

#### 12. Do you feel part of the apple brand or tribe by using an iPhone?



This question attempts to establish whether there is a link between using an iPhone to associating oneself with the apple brand. This is useful in determining what impact the products offered by apple have on their brand image. The results of the surveys so far indicate a strong link between the two and therefore it would be of strategic importance to maintain the quality of products in order to maintain the strong brand presence.

#### 13. How do you respond when asked to advise on choosing between an apple or a competitors product?

The results of this question again indicate a strong link between the features and quality of the product to a customers preferred product.

#### 14. How many of your friends or family own an apple product?

Subjects indicate an average number of family and friends have iPhone products.

#### 15. What makes owning an apple product worth it?



For the purposes of this analysis, key characteristics were identified based on the subjects responses and the characteristics most enjoyed relative to each other are illustrated graphically. This can be useful for determining what features the customers prize the most and what the company should focus on.

## Appendix 4:Pilot Study Accompanying Letter

70 Armstrong Ave

La Lucia

Durban

4051

### Pilot Study for Honours Dissertation

June 2015

To whom it may concern,

My name is Charne' Munien. I am a B.A. Honours student at the Vega, the School of Brand Leadership in Durban. For my dissertation I am conducting a study on: ***“Examining the impact of brand tribes relative to brand loyalty and consumer relationships concerning the iPhone.”*** As such I shall be exploring the branding techniques that influence brand loyalty, competitive advantage and the role these elements play in the facilitation of brand tribes. Furthermore I will be exploring the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the youth market in the LSM categories 7-10 within South Africa. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand. The aim for the outcome of this study is to gather a strategic model that facilitates the formation of brand tribes.

Before conducting the actual study a pilot study needs to be administered to test the research instrument. It would be greatly appreciated if you could take the time to answer the attached survey for me and critically assess the questions to determine whether they are easy to understand, to the point and whether the answer options are relevant. Please feel free to add any suggestions, questions or comments that could improve the survey. Your help is much appreciated.

Study supervisor: Alec Bozas (0823344477)

Thank you,

Charne' Munien

## Appendix 5: Letter Of Informed Consent

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70 Armstrong Ave

La Lucia

Durban

4051

June 2015

### Letter of informed consent for research

To whom it may concern,

My name is Charne' Munien. I am a B.A. Honours student at the Vega, the School of Brand Leadership in Durban. For my dissertation I am conducting a study on: ***“Examining the impact of brand tribes relative to brand loyalty and consumer relationships concerning the iPhone.”***

As such I shall be exploring the branding techniques that influence brand loyalty, competitive advantage and the role these elements play in the facilitation of brand tribes. Furthermore I will be exploring the role this plays in driving purchase decisions among the youth market in the LSM categories 7-10 within South Africa. The study further aimed to ascertain the extent to which the iPhone brand has a communal following and whether this contributes to the success of the brand. The aim for the outcome of this study is to gather a strategic model that facilitates the formation of brand tribes.

Study supervisor: Alec Bozas

I hereby seek your consent to use your responses to inform my research and help achieve my research objectives. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Charne' Munien

Copywriter & Brand Strategist

Mobile number: 08444 65707

Email address: [muniencharne@gmail.com](mailto:muniencharne@gmail.com)

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## CONSENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and I consent to participating in this study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any point in time should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date