



The Role that Aesthetics Plays In Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Cars in South Africa

By

Snethemba Londiwe Nzuza

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Supervisor: Ivan Mkhomazi

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, 67.02% of the population is made up of people over the age of 18. These are people that find themselves in need of a motor vehicle to perform their daily tasks. In the process of deciding to buy a specific car, they are influenced by many factors, these factors include the aesthetics of the car. In more recent years, the aesthetics of a car has played more and more an important role in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers. This research study aims to understand the significance that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour through a study of cars in South Africa. Specifically, it looks at understanding the importance that the colour and shape has in influencing their behaviour, and how it affects their perceptions and ultimately their desire to purchase the car.

This is a research study that adds on to previous studies that have already been done in and will be a positive contribution to the automobile industry as it will allow them to understand their audiences better, allowing them to create better products as well as market themselves more efficiently.

To try and understand the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer-buying behaviour, two focus groups were hosted by the researcher. The first focus group consisted of individuals that already own cars and the second focus group consisted of individuals that are currently in the market for a car. Each focus group had its own set of questions that would aid in starting up a conversation and getting relevant data for the study. The results showed that aesthetics in cars does play a big role in the decision-making process of a consumer. Moreover, the study found that the aesthetics of a car affects a consumers personal brand image and the perceptions that society has about them, ultimately affecting and influencing their purchasing decision.

The insights gained from this study can further guide the automotive industry and marketers when developing new products and when they are marketing them to their target audience.

Key words: aesthetics; consumer buying-behaviour; automotive industry; perceptions; purchase intent

DECLARATION

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



November 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this paper was to better understand the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer buying behaviour, more specifically concerning the automotive industry and the design of cars. Aesthetics have become a huge part of human culture, and the study aimed to understand how it affects the buying behaviours of consumers when it comes to deciding on buying a car. An interpretivist research approach has been used to better understand this role. An understanding of the issue has been given as well as an understanding of the factors contributing towards aesthetics being a factor that influences consumer buying behaviour.

Contextualisation

The differentiation between brands has become increasingly dependent on the aesthetic aspects of said brands product offerings (Toufani, 2015: 4-6). This too is something that has affected car brands and manufacturers. These brands have become aware of the fact that the visual perceptions that consumers have about a product offering are integral in their decision-making process. This is why, in recent years, marketing teams have put more effort into showing the appearance of products rather than their functions as they know what their consumers want to see. In the past, the purchase of cars was mainly based on function and necessity, but in recent times the aesthetics of car has become a main factor in the decision-making process of purchasing one. The visual impact is an important aspect when consumers are looking at their preferences for a car (Liu, Li, Chen & Balachander, 2017).

According to Ditou, Stancioiu & Teodorescu (2012) and Norman (2004), when a consumer experiences a product for the first time, they get a holistic experience through colour, shape, sound and texture, elements that incorporate the five senses, and although there have been a couple of studies that focus on car purchase intentions (Kowang, Samsudin, Yew, Hee, Fei & Long, 2018), they have mostly focused on the general market. Studies that focus on understanding the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour when it comes to the purchasing decisions of cars is very limited, especially for the South African market.

The car industry is the largest manufacturing sector in South Africa's economy and has accounted for 33% of South Africa's manufacturing output in the year 2016 (Mahomed, 2017). It is therefore important to understand the different factors that contribute to this industry, and thus the purpose of this paper, to understand a small role that affects this industry that contributes to it as a whole. We aim to understand how the aesthetics of a car influences a consumer's purchasing decision.

Rationale

This study was proposed by the researcher and it is relevant as it directly contributes to how the manufacturing and designing of cars will be influenced and affected in the future, especially in the South African economy. It will furthermore be a guide to marketers when they are developing marketing strategies, to ensure they will be effective and appeal to their consumer base.

The public is moving away from just wanting a car that takes them from A to B but wants cars that speak to them aesthetically as well. As mentioned, in recent years, aesthetics has become one of the sole functions that consumers base their purchasing decisions on (Bhaduria, 2016: 5). Instead of just focusing on the functionality or practicality of a product, consumers have begun to opt for something that is more visually pleasing and stimulating to the eyes (Toufani, 2017: 4-6). As a result, brands and companies alike have had to change their designs to accommodate the new consumer perceptions and ideals as well as how they market their products (Tart, Plaais & Martinez, 2020).

Car companies and manufacturers have become more and more aware of the fact that how a consumer sees the aesthetic of a car is important to their decision of making a purchase or not (Kwang et al., 2018: 80-88). By recognising this problem, brands can make decisions regarding their designs to ensure that they meet the needs and wants of their consumers. Therefore, this discussion aims to further understand the role that aesthetics of cars plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour and to see how brands can better their efforts towards meeting these standards.

The researcher conducted secondary research as well as primary research to better understand this. They looked at past research studies that have been conducted to direct their research and find relevant theories that aided in supporting it. Moreover, they analysed their data and drew conclusions from it.

Problem Statement

The problem that has been identified is that there is a shift in the ways consumers make decisions when it comes to purchasing cars (Kowang, Samsudin, Yew, Hee, Fei & Long, 2018: 80 - 88). Consumer buying habits and purchasing decisions are constantly changing and affected by different factors. These factors vary immensely and include how the aesthetics of products and services affect the decisions consumers make (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015). There is little known about how these factors affect the ways consumers make their purchasing decisions. A study to understand the role this factor plays is necessary to be conducted to better understand the reasoning's behind consumer buying behaviour.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research study was to get a better understanding of the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour as well as the different factors of aesthetics that attain to this.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study was:

What role does aesthetics play in influencing the consumer buying behaviour of consumers when it comes to cars?

Based on the main research question, the following secondary research questions were derived:

RQ1: How do aesthetics influence consumer buying behaviour?

RQ2: What aesthetic factors influence consumer-buying behaviour?

RQ3: Why are these the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer-buying behaviour?

Research Objectives

1. To gain a better understanding on how aesthetics affects the consumer-buying behavior of consumers when it comes to cars.
2. To understand the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer-buying behavior

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualisation

This section aims to give a good understanding of key terms and key concepts that have been identified as important to this study and what it has to offer. They are further justified by the literature review that is to come. This study has a variety of concepts and terms that are attached to it and they are each described to give an overview of them. They are aesthetics, consumer buying behaviour, automobile industry, colour and shape, perception and purchase intention.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is how a person uses their different body senses, namely the five senses to put a value on a product based on them to understand whether it appealing to them aesthetically (Tan, Lim & Long, 2018: 83). Through this, a consumer will begin making purchasing decisions. Should it be a good impression, consumers would feel more inclined to learn more about the product. According to Toufani (2015) the first impression that an individual has of a product impacts how they perceive it on a large scale. Aesthetics are described as the attractiveness that an individual has towards a product, relying heavily on the way it looks physically and the overall characteristics of the visual aspects of the product which ultimately creates the aesthetic it (Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2011: 168).

Consumer buying behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour is a concept that brands and marketers have been interested in for a long time (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015: 75). This is simply because by knowing and understanding the behaviour of consumers, you can better market a brand as well as the products and services it has to offer based on your understating of the consumer (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015: 75). Consumer buying behaviour refers to individuals selecting, purchasing and consuming goods and services to satisfy their needs and their wants (Ramya & Ali, 2016). The decision to do this is dependent on many factors, and often directly related to the aesthetic of a

product or service (Toufani, 2015). Furthermore, it can be influenced by aspects such as social, cultural, economic and personal factors (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015: 76). This takes us back to the model where the consumers desire to purchase the product has been influenced by prior factors, in the case of this study we are only looking at the physical aesthetics and perceptions.

Automobile Industry

The automobile industry is the industry that creates and manufactures cars for the individuals of the world. Over the years, the industry has gained more and more popularity with the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution(4IR) and the need for consumers to have their own cars (Onyilo & Arsta, 2020: 865). With the increase in competition, consumers have begun to look more specifically at the aesthetic of a car to make their decision of purchasing or not (Tarta et al., 2020: 33).

Colour and Shape

The colour and shape of a car are important factors when it comes to the aesthetics of the car as it makes out the physical appearance of the car (Bloch, Arnold & Brunel, 2003). Colour plays an important role in affecting the way an individual reacts to a product as different colours mean different things to different people and many believe that certain colours should only be used for specific products (Tarta, Plaais & Martinez, 2015). Furthermore, car brands have taken to making the shape of a car more aesthetically pleasing to the consumer, especially regarding the different uses they could be for (Tarta et al., 2015). This allows for variety and catering to many different types of people to meet their needs and wants.

Perception

Perception of quality is about how a consumer perceives the quality of the product they are buying concerning how it looks and its aesthetics (Wang, Cruthirds, Axinn & Guo, 2013). Perception is also found through the use of the human sense, it is subjective as it is your individual feeling and belief and judgement on a product (Tarta et al., 2015). In the case of cars, it is about what the consumer sees and whether they

are sold on the product offered to them.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a term that refers to a consumers conscious decision of buying a service or a good (Kowang et al., 2018). Consumers are constantly, on the daily, faced with purchasing n decisions (Mutsikiwa, 2013: 67). Overall, the intentions of a consumer are influenced by many factors as well, such as those affecting the perception.

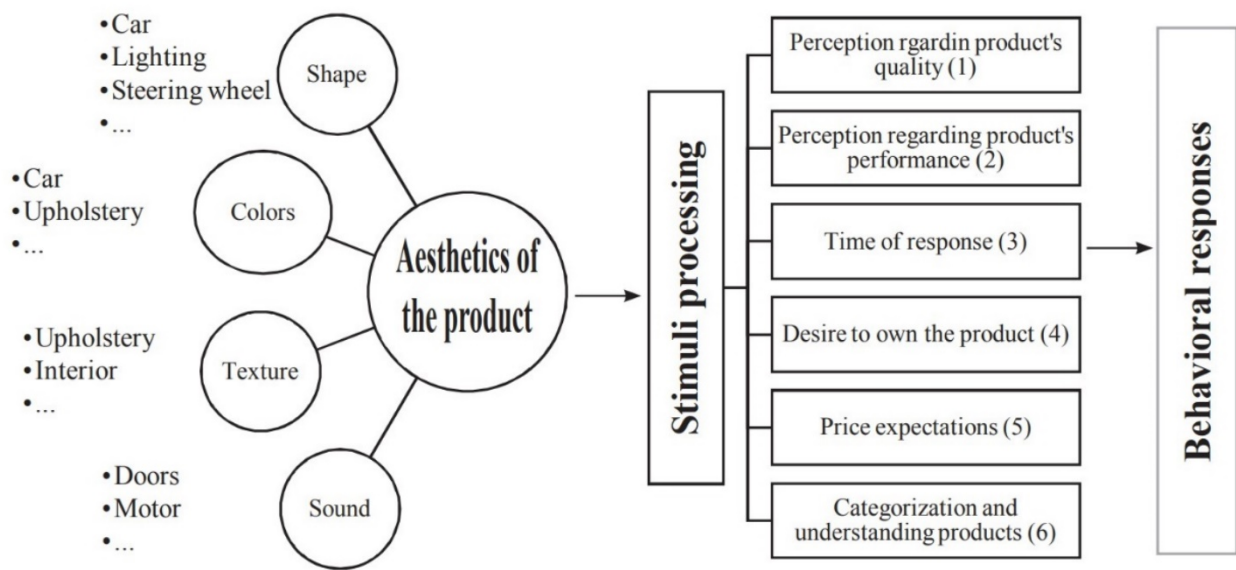
Theoretical Foundation

Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry (AMAI)

The influence that aesthetics has on influencing the buying behaviour of consumers has been researched and studied for a while now (Hoyer & Stokburger, 2012; Bloch, Arnold, & Brunel, F., 2003; Veryzer & Hutchinson, 1998; Landwehr & Wentzel, 2013; Toufani, 2015; Mutsikiwa, 2013; Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015). Furthermore, studies have been done that try to understand the consumer's decisions and emphasise the need to better understand the purchasing process as a whole (Ridgway & Bloch, 1990; Kreuzbauer & Malter, 2005). Through all of these studies, theories and models have been designed to better conceptualise and frame out a better way to understand how aesthetics influence the buying behaviour of consumers.

For this study, the researcher made use of a theoretical model created by Tarta, Plaias, & Martinez (2015). It is called the Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry (AMAI) (Tarta et al., 2015: 35) and was designed based on the conceptualisation of three previously designed models. The first model it incorporates is called "A Model of Consumer Responses to Product Form" (Bloch et al., 2003), this model focuses on how the overall shape of a designed product can have an impact and influence on the way a consumer reacts through it both behaviourally and psychologically. The second

model it looks at is called the “Aesthetic Evaluation Model” by Ward (2010). This model used a model created by Bloch et al., (2003) and mainly looked at what consumers considerations when they are making a judgement of the aesthetics of a product as well as how these judgements are initially thought of. Thirdly, a model called “The Effects of Aesthetic Stimuli” designed by Wang et al., (2013) was created based on the S-O-R model, which looks at Stimulus, Organism and Response, ultimately meaning that any communication that is given to a consumer should meet the needs of the person it is being delivered to, whether it is material or non-material (Sanny, 2019). Having incorporated these three different models, the Tarta et al. (2015) model looks at the different factors of aesthetics that could influence the consumer buying behaviour of a car, these factors being shape, colour, texture and sound. It goes further into looking at how these factors then influence the perception a consumer has of a car, the perception of the car's performance, whether it affects the response time, their desire for the product and finally the expectations that they have of the price of the car; all these factors contributing to the final decision that a consumer makes in purchasing the car (Tarta et al., 2015). This model looks at evaluating and understanding aesthetics when it comes to aesthetics in cars and the automotive industry, to see how consumers make their decisions and how aesthetics influences their purchasing decisions (Tarta et al., 2020). This model then aims to look at a holistic understanding of consumer buying behaviour that is affected by aesthetics and the different factors of aesthetics that influence consumer buying behaviour.



For the basis of this study, and the limitations that come with the time constraints, the researcher focused on the shape of a car as well as the colour, leading up to the perceptions regarding- the quality of the product as well as the desire to own the product which leads to the behavioural response which is the understanding of how aesthetics has influenced the buying behaviour of the consumer.

Figure 1.1. Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry (Tarta et al., 2015: 35)

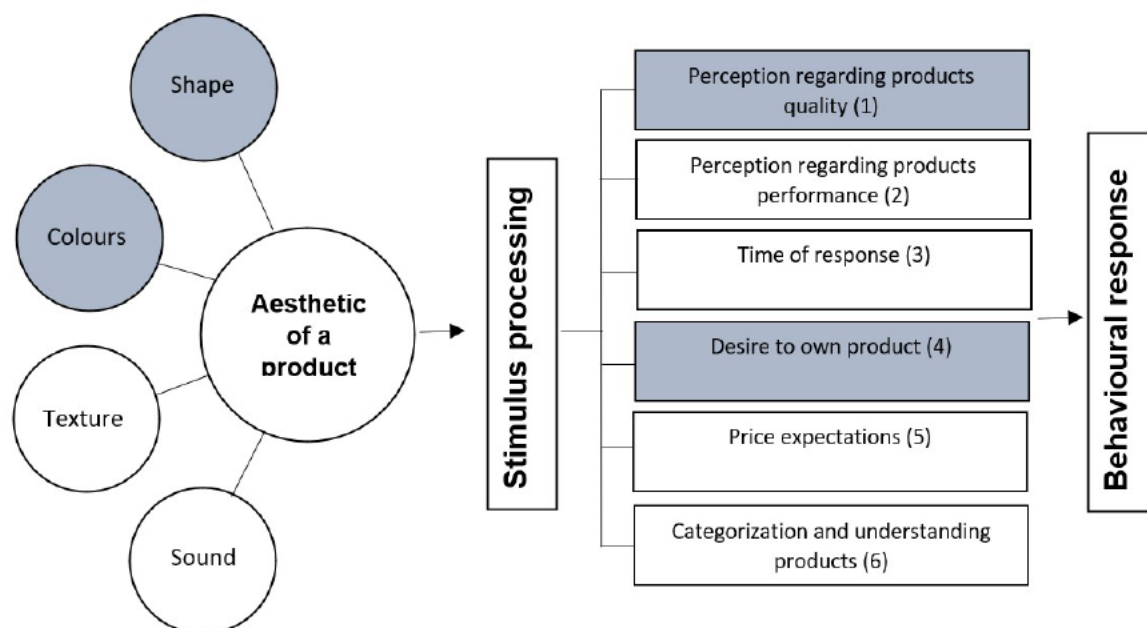


Figure 1.2. Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry for Study (Tarta et al., 2015: 35)

For this study, the researcher looked at how the shape of a car and the shape of its specific features influence its aesthetics in the eyes of the consumer. Furthermore, the researcher aimed to understand how the colours of a car influence the aesthetics from the exterior, to the interior. The starting point of this model is looking at the colour and shape which was incorporated in the model designed by Bloch et al., (2003), but because this model simply focuses on the form aspect of a product, it does not give a holistic and overall understanding of the influence that aesthetic has on a product (Tarta et al., 2015). This is then why Ward's (2010) model is introduced, to account for what consumers consider to be an aesthetic for a car, to better see why they think that as well. Finally, by understanding the perceptions that consumers have on the quality of a product and their desire to own it, based on its aesthetics, the researcher can get a holistic understanding of how aesthetics have influenced the overall buying behaviour of the consumer when it comes to cars. Through the integration of previous models, a multidimensional understanding of the role of aesthetics in consumer-buying behaviour can be determined.

This model is holistic and can be used to test for future theories in understanding the influence of aesthetics on consumer buying behaviour for cars, a limitation it has is that it requires both a qualitative and a quantitative study to fully understand it (Tarta et al., 2015: 36). Due to the time constraints that are a part of this study, the researcher focused on a qualitative study. This theory model is effective in getting an understanding of how aesthetics influences the purchasing decisions of consumers, and it further helps to answer the secondary questions of this research, with an emphasis on the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer buying behaviour.

Literature Review

The purpose of this part of the study aims to provide the reader with a better understanding and overview of already existing works and knowledge relating to this topic. As mentioned previously, the topic is “The Role That Aesthetics Plays In Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Cars in South Africa”. This literature review considers the three main key concepts that have previously been discussed, they are aesthetics, consumer buying behaviour as well as purchase intention. Naturally, like all things, there are different ways of doing a literature review (Jansen, 2019). The different types of literature reviews range from being narrative which is the type of review that critiques already existing literature and summarizes it for the researcher and the reader, to theoretical literature reviews which are the kind where a host of theories pertaining to a particular problem is analysed and used to establish already existing theories as well as create new hypotheses that need to be tested (Dudovskiy, 2017). For this study, the researcher made use of a theoretical review to better understand the existing theory and better develop an understanding of the topic for future uses.

Aesthetics

This part of the literature review aims to better understand the concept of aesthetics and how it has been previously used and understood. Aesthetics in past was only

concerned with fine arts, but over time has broadened its aspects and brought itself forth into a modern world and terms, being able to describe anything and everything (Toufani, 2015). Over time, many discussions have occurred that look at the different aspects of aesthetics, not all necessarily relating to cars, but relating to products and the influence it has on consumers buying behaviour. For instance, Reimann et al. (2010) looked at how the aesthetic of a packaging design can make the decision-making process of a consumer happen faster. In contrast to looking at the aesthetics of a product, Hoegg and Alba (2011) looked at how consumers perceived the quality as well as the performance of a product or service based on its aesthetics, furthermore, Mutsikiwa (2013) investigated how the aesthetics of dairy products packaging in Zimbabwe had an influence on consumer buying behaviour. Bloch et al., (2003) investigated and showed that the more aesthetic a product is, the more likely an individual is to purchase the product. These are all a couple of examples to show the importance of aesthetics in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Through looking at these examples, a better understanding of aesthetics is found, allowing for further theories and models based on them to be developed, such as the model by Tarta et al., (2015) that the researcher used.

According to Toufani (2015), having an aesthetic experience is how you react emotionally to the aesthetic features of a product that you see, it entices a feeling inside you that makes you overall, happy. By understanding this, we see why Ward's (2010) model is important because it aims to understand what an individual sees as aesthetic and how it impacts them and influences them. In the context of cars and their aesthetics as well as the overall automobile industry, the features of the aesthetics should enhance the image of the car, it should make it more relevant to the consumer (Tan et al., 2018).

Moreover, aesthetics is often divided into different categories and factors that attain to it. Different factors account for what aesthetics are and how consumers view them to be. Tarta et al. (2015) looked at factors such as colour, shape and texture to define what aesthetics is and what it incorporates, stating that all these factors provide important insight into how aesthetics influence consumer buying behaviour. However, not everyone views aesthetics in the same manner, therefore the researcher needed

to try and understand what drives the idea of different types of aesthetics in consumers, we need to understand their subjective views.

The use of the AMAI model developed by Tarta et al. (2015) is a model that works well to better understand the concept of aesthetics and how it relates to consumer buying behaviour as well as purchase intent which are concepts that are further discussed and analysed in the literature review.

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer buying behaviour has been an interesting topic for years. As discussed, it is considered a pinnacle point of understanding for brands and marketers alike to better be able to know how their consumers will react to certain products and offerings that they put out into the world (Madhavan and Chandrasekar, 2015). Anderson and Golden (1984) talked about how consumer behaviour is not just what you do, but a psychological process that they go through in order to understand themselves and recognise their own needs and wants. On the other hand, Ramya and Ali (2016) look at the factors that affect consumer buying behaviour and recognise that it is beyond just what they need and want but affected by external influences such as societal influences or even cultural influences. Through seeing these two perspectives of consumer buying behaviour, it is understood that they are mutually inclusive and play a role with one another. The influences that a consumer receives from surroundings directly cause a psychological process that influences the decisions being made when it comes to the purchasing decision.

Purchase Intent

Purchase intent has been defined by many authors in the past (Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton & Russell, 1998; Ostrom, 1969; Bagozzi, Tybout, Craig & Sternthal; Toufani, 2015; Yacoob and Barato, 2019) Purchase intent can be described as an individual's probability of making a purchase of a product or a service (Toufani, 2015). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined purchase intent or as they called it, behavioural intent, as an indication of an individual's readiness to act a certain way in terms of behaviour and

intent. Whereas seminal authors defined purchase intent as a consumer's personal tendencies and actions towards a brand (Bagozzi et al., 1979; Ostrom, 1969). Furthermore, Gibbons et al. (1998) argue that purchase intent cannot be separated from the willingness of the consumer to purchase, regardless of whether they find it aesthetically sound or not. On the same scale, Warshaw and Davis (1985) agree with Gibbons et al. (1998) but add that you have to look at their expectations as well because it needs to be a holistic intent. Yacoob and Barato (2019) state that purchase intent is better aroused and more likely to lead to a purchase when an individual has the opportunity to explore the content they are considering. Moreover, Chen, Hsu and Lin. (2010) found that consumers purchase intent is stronger amongst individuals who browse the internet and have access to online shopping. Through seeing these different views on purchase intent, we see that there are many factors that contribute to the purchase intent of a consumer. Chen et al. (2010) brings up a valid point with the concept of online shopping as it is the most used form of shopping in this day and age but still allows for the notions of Warshaw and Davis (1985) as well as Gibbons (1998) to come through because it is a holistic operation. They all support each other. However, there is still a gap when it comes to understanding purchase intent in consumers as many brands get their marketing wrong, assuming consumers want one thing but they actually want something else. Therefore, further research still needs to be done to further understand the topic.

Through the incorporation of these definitions, it can be deduced that the higher a consumer intent to purchase, the more likely they are to actually purchase the product or service they are thinking of (Mutsikiwa, 2013: 67). After having gone through analysing the aesthetic of a product and having a perception towards it, the desire of the consumer will either grow or lessen, directly affecting the purchase intention. This goes to show that nothing in the proposed model is exclusive, they are all mutually inclusive and influence the next step (Tarta et al., 2015).

For the purpose of this study, incorporation of Bagozzi et al., (1979) definition of intent as well as Toufani's (2015) definition was adopted as it allows for a holistic understanding of purchase intent. Purchase intent is that it is consumers want to purchase a product or service based on personal evaluations and understandings of

what the product or service has to offer.

The AMAI model developed by Tarta et al. (2015) is holistic enough to give a good understanding of what drives a consumers purchasing decision when it comes to aesthetics. It allows us to look at the different factors of aesthetics that influence consumer behaviour, following through to the final moment of the purchasing decision.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this part of the research process, the researcher looked at the paradigms that were incorporated into the study, followed by the research approach and design that were used to investigate the problem. Finally, the researcher described the population and sampling, as well as the data collection and analysis.

In recent years, aesthetics has begun to play a huge role in the differentiation of brands and their products (Toufani, 2015: 4-6). This has been very evident in the manufacturing and marketing of cars and motor vehicles. Brands have become more and more aware of the fact that consumers visual perceptions of their products are essential in their decision-making process. When looking at past car purchases, they were mainly based on the necessity and function of the car, but now the aesthetics of the car is the main factor, the visual impact of a product is an important part of when consumers are looking at their preferences for a car (Liu, 2017).

According to Norman (2004) and Ditou, Stancioiu & Teodorescu (2012), the first experience that a consumer has with a product gives them a holistic experience that incorporates their feels regarding the colour, shape, sound and texture, elements that incorporate the five senses of the human body. Studies that previously looked at this mostly focused on the general market (Kowang et al., 2018). However, when it comes to studies about understanding the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour, it is limited, especially for the South African market. Because this industry is such a large part of the South African market, it is important to understand it and how it will be significantly influenced by the change in consumer buying behaviour (Mahomed, 2017). It is therefore important to understand the different contributors and factors that influence this industry, and thus why there was a need for this paper and study. It aimed to try and understand a small role that affects this industry that contributes to it as a whole. It aimed to understand how the aesthetics of a car influences a consumers purchasing decision.

Research Paradigm

For this study, the researcher made use of the interpretivist paradigm. Paradigm is a term that has been understood differently by various people. For instance, Atieno (2009) simply describes paradigm as meaning that there is a research approach or design, whereas Rehman and Alharti (2016) define it as ontology, epistemology and needing a research methodology. These overlap and make us understand that it is all-inclusive, they are not exclusive to one another.

An interpretivist approach was taken to better understand the nature of this study, furthermore, the researcher has discussed the ontology, epistemology and metatheoretical positions of interpretivism. To begin, let us discuss what interpretivism is. Interpretivism believes that human nature and activities cannot be seen from external reality, it believes that humans and life can only be understood by understanding the subjective experiences of people as individuals (Rehman & Alharti, 2016). Interpretivism is more concerned with the qualitative aspects of research as it aims to understand human nature by gaining subjective insights from humans (du Plooy-Cilliers, Corne & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 30-31).

Maree (2020) states that interpretivism is highly influenced by the concepts of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology is the concept of seeing and understanding the way that individual beings understand and view the world that they are a part of (du Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014), while hermeneutics looks at understanding the method and the theory of the interpretation of human action.

Interpretivism is relevant to this study as it looks at the different interpretations and subjective views of individuals when it comes to their realities and the decisions that they make. It would therefore consider the views and subjective feelings of consumers when it comes to aesthetics and what they deem pleasing to them when it comes to the decision of purchasing a car.

Ontology

Interpretivism says that reality is a social construct and is very much dependant on the meaning and beliefs that people give to their interactions and experiences with others (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 34). Essentially, it is stating that reality is fluid and changes with people's perceptions and changes in the meaning they give to reality. In this regard, the interpretivist approach aided the researcher in understanding and identifying how people put value onto cars based on aesthetics and what they perceive to be a good aesthetic to have and purchase. This made the researcher see what meaning consumers put into their reality and how the aesthetic of a car fits into it.

Epistemology

In the epistemological position, interpretivism says that common sense is what guides and drive people in their daily lives, but even then it is dependent on what they view as common sense (Rehman & Alharti, 2016: 55). It is subjective, facts are seen as fluid and everchanging, depending on how people interpret information and their worldviews (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 28-29). The researcher gained an understanding of how consumers general worldviews and interactions with others affect their idea of aesthetics and aesthetic cars suitable enough for them to purchase.

Metatheoretical

The metatheoretical position of interpretivism is said to believe in the telling of a story (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 30). It interprets the lives of people and their actions based on the particular context of how they conduct their daily lives. In this, the research aims to reveal the meanings that people put into reality and their values which help in understanding people that are involved in a particular phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 30). In this regard, information first has to be gathered by the researcher, then further analysed before and conclusions and theories can be formulated (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 30). This aided in understanding what differences in individuals make them believe differently about aesthetics.

Design Approach

For this study, the researcher made use of a qualitative approach to research to gain knowledge on the subject. This is because we are focusing less on the statistics of the influence but more on how and why these specific decisions are made when it comes to cars and the influence aesthetics has on consumers (Aspers & Corte, 2019: 139). Qualitative research aids in gaining in-depth subjective views and understandings of the phenomenon at hand (du Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014). This qualitative research further helped to explain the exploratory nature of the study as it aims to better understand the role aesthetics has in influencing consumer buying behaviour, it aims to better understand that relationship to make coherent conclusions (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

The use of a qualitative research approach is further motivated through the position of epistemology is interpretivism. It states that knowledge is mainly subjective, it is fluid ever-changing and depending on how people interpret information in their lives (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). As qualitative is a subjective form of research, it makes sense for it to be the research approach that is used. Furthermore, as the ontological position of epistemology states that reality is a social construct, and is dependent on the meaning and beliefs people give their interactions and experiences with others, a qualitative research approach would greatly aid in understanding these different realities and the influence aesthetics has on consumer purchase decisions.

An inductive research approach was used as this allows for observations and flexibility which do not initially require a theory but are used to create a theory of its own (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 49). This ultimately means that the researcher was able to make use of examples from reality, thus having subjective views and understandings. Moreover, an inductive approach to this research allowed, for the context of the data collected, to be the focus to develop new understandings and theories based on the outcomes of the analysis of the data.

Furthermore, this research study made use of the phenomenological research approach. Phenomenology as previously defined is a concept of seeing and understanding the way that individual beings understand and view the world that they are a part of (du Plooy Cilliers et al., 2014). Phenomenology is an approach that

focuses on documenting the individual experiences of people (Maree, 2020: 84). Phenomenology's purpose is essentially narrow the experiences of individuals in regards to a specific phenomenon. To further support this study, the use of focus groups was used to get the subjective experiences consumers have when presented with purchasing decisions affected by the aesthetics of a car. This method further supports the notion of an inductive qualitative research approach being used as it allows for the in-depth understanding of subjective views.

Lastly, this study was exploratory. Exploratory research is a method of research that aims to study a problem than in past has not been clearly or effectively understood and defined (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill & Bristow, 2012). It further looks to pinpoint key issues that are part of a study and the results that come of it from the research problem identified (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The purpose of this study is to understand the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour, therefore trying to understand their relationship which ultimately requires the use of exploratory research.

The research has been conducted in Pretoria, South Africa with participants that are 18 and older. The use of focus was used to gather the data with the use of thematic data analysis to understand and dissect the data.

Population

A population is defined as 'the total group of people or entities from whom information is required (Shenk & Westerhaus, 1991). It is the whole group of people that a researcher needs to get the information that they need for a study (du Plooy-Cilliers, Corne & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 132-133). Therefore, to determine your population, a look at the research question and research problem was required to ensure that the right population was identified by the researcher (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 132).

The general South African person often finds the need to have a car by the time they leave high school whether it is because they suddenly need their mode of transport to varsity or to work regularly (Van der Post, 2017). This then makes them the population

for this study which consists of about 22 million people (Statista, 2020). As the researcher was unable to use the whole population available in South Africa in the research, only those in close proximity and availability were used. This group of individuals is known as the accessible population (Shenk & Westerhaus, 1991). For this study, people that are 18 and older have been used and they all reside in South Africa as that is the population the study is being conducted for. Furthermore, it used participants that already own cars as well as participants that are currently in the market to purchase a car as this is what the study is about and that is the relevance of them. These participants were diverse in their thinking, their ethnicity and they all had the knowledge to contribute to this research.

From this accessible population, a sample size was determined and used. A sample size is defined as a group of participants that are chosen from a given population to represent the population (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 135-136). Therefore, the accessible population for this study were identified as people that reside in Pretoria, South Africa that is 18 and older. These were individuals that were easily accessible to the researcher as they too reside in Pretoria and would therefore serve the purpose of the study, allowing for smooth research and data collection processes.

Sampling

As already mentioned, a sample size is defined as a group of participants that are chosen from a given population to represent the population (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 135-136). For this study, the sample size was chosen from the accessible population as this was the population that could be used by the researcher.

A non-probability sampling method has been used to conduct this study. Non-probability sampling is known as a sampling method where there is not a way to have access to the whole population that has been identified and therefore only a portion of it is identified by the researcher to be used in the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 137). Because of this, there was the necessity to select a sample size from the accessible population identified.

The method of sampling in the parameters of non-probability sampling that were used for this study is a combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling.

In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on specific characteristics that they have, these are determined by looking at the research problem, the research question as well as the parameters of the population (du Plooy- Cilliers et al., 2014: 142-143). These are characteristics that are unique to the study and further enabled the collection of data and aid in the study (Etikan, 2016). The participants for this study had to be 18 years and older in age. Secondly, all the participants were residents of South Africa. Thirdly, as this study aims to understand the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer-buying behaviour when it comes to cars, the sample included people that already own cars as well as people that are currently in the market to purchase a car to get a holistic understanding of the study.

Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where the participants included in the study are those that are conveniently accessible to the researcher (Etikan, 2016). This could be a result of factors such as the geographical proximity of the participants or the availability of the participants at that given time (Etikan, 2016). As there were time constraints for this study, as well as travelling constraints, convenience sampling was an adequate sampling method to be used for this research. The participants that were available for this study were family and friends of the researcher. Furthermore, due to the time constraints of the study, the number of participants was limited.

To find those who would be both be convenient and purposive to the study, the researcher advertised that they would be conducting this research through the use of social media, mentioning the specific characteristics they would need to have to qualify to be a part of the study. Furthermore, the researcher directly contacted individuals that they felt would be suitable for this study. Those that were able to participate said so, and from there the researcher chose the sample that would form a part of their study.

In purposive sampling, participants are selected based on specific characteristics that they have, these are determined by looking at the research problem, the research question as well as the parameters of the population (du Plooy- Cilliers et al., 2014: 142-143). These are characteristics that are unique to the study and further enabled the collection of data and aid in the study (Etikan, 2016). The participants for this study had to be 18 years and older in age. Secondly, all the participants were residents of South Africa. Thirdly, as this study aims to understand the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer-buying behaviour when it comes to cars, the sample included people that already own cars as well as people that are currently in the market to purchase a car.

The sample size for the study was 8 participants. This allowed for an adequate number of participants to be a part of the study to get enough varying views while not being too much to complete the analysis in the specified amount of time given for the research. The knowledge gained from these participants should be adequate to get an understanding of the role that aesthetics plays in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers in South Africa, however, with more data and the ability to use participants from all over the country and more time, a better understanding would be received and more knowledge would be accessible to the public as well as to car companies and manufacturers to better appeal to their target audiences.

Data Collection

Qualitative data research can be conducted through a variety of means, from the use of in-depth interviews to simply the coalition of images and analysing them and their information (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 174).

For this study, in line with the research paradigm of interpretivism and the research design, focus groups were used as the form of qualitative research to collect the data needed. As previously mentioned, this study is phenomenological, meaning it is all about understanding the different and subjective views of the participants to understand how aesthetics influences their purchasing decisions. Focus groups are a form of qualitative data collection that can be described as being a 'group interview'

(du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 183-184). The point of the focus groups was to gain insights from multiple parties at the same time, with these participants expressing their subjective opinions and views (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This came into play when trying to understand how the buying decisions of the participants were affected when purchasing their cars as well as when understanding how it is currently affecting those in the market for a car.

To ensure that the data collected would be sufficient and relevant, the researcher was guided by key theories, especially focusing on the AMAI model. This allowed them to construct questions that would be relevant to the study and achieve what it had set out to do. Incorporating the theory as well as the insights gained from the literature review was important because they needed to be relevant to one another and relevant to the study that is being conducted.

The 8 participants of the focus groups were divided into two. 4 participants formed part of Focus Group A (FGA). These were the participants that already owned cars and had been through the process of decision-making when it came to purchasing their cars. The other 4 participants formed part of Focus Group B (FGB), which was the group of participants that are currently in the market to buy a car and still going through the process of deciding which car to purchase.

Before beginning the data collection process, the researcher had to plan their time efficiently and wisely so that they had enough of it to complete the data collection process as well as the data analysis process once ethical clearance was given to them by the institution that they are studying under. This allowed for them to prepare themselves as well as the participants to ensure a smooth flow of research from start to finish.

To ensure that the focus group would be successful in their approach and properly conducted, prior preparation by the researcher was done (Maree, 2020). The focus group questions were drafted and a pre-test was conducted to see how effective the questions would be in ensuring that the necessary insight could be gained from the structure of the interviews (ANNEXURE C & D). Pre-testing is a system that has been

used by researchers for a very long time to ensure that they go into their work earnestly and effectively without wasting time on a system that might not even work (Beatty & Willis, 2007: 287-311). Having completed the pre-testing phase, the researcher identified a few issues in the interview questions and structure and so accordingly edited and fixed the issues to ensure effective focus groups would take place. According to Maree (2020), focus groups are beneficial in that they allow the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the participants enabling the researcher to understand their beliefs as well as personal attitudes towards the subject matter that is being studied, allowing or deep insights to be given and understood. After the pre-testing phase of the research, the two focus groups took place via scheduled Zoom meetings. The initial plan was to have the meetings face-to-face but the schedules of the participants varied too drastically to host successful face-to-face focus groups.

The focus groups were conducted via Zoom meeting by the researcher, Snethemba Nzuza. The participants were sent consent forms before the Zoom meeting focus groups. These consent forms (ANNEXURE A) contained explanatory information regarding the research being conducted as well as information regarding their identity and what it would mean for them to be a part of this study. Furthermore, a second consent form asking them to give permission for the session to be recorded was sent. Once all the participants had agreed and their consent was given, the meetings were scheduled and participants informed in due time so that they would have enough time to prepare themselves.

The focus groups were conducted through a set of questions that were prepared by the researcher before the sessions, these questions were asked in their logical and planned order to ensure the most effective and insightful information would be given to the researcher by the participants.

The questions for FGA (ANNEXURE B) were similar but slightly different to those for FGB (ANNEXURE C) as they already own cars, this is because the study also aimed to understand the decisions that participants took before making their purchase decision. Focus groups have many benefits and advantages that allow for an effective

means of insightful information being collected. Firstly, the conversations that come up during focus groups allow for deep insights and understanding from the different and varied perspectives of the participants (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 184). Moreover, the discussions allow for participants to learn from each other and ultimately help each other clarify concepts that come up during the sessions and may even give each other a different view on something they once thought of one-dimensionally (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 184). Focus studies are also beneficial and helpful to the researcher as participants can be asked specific questions that relate to the research being conducted and result in detailed and elaborated answers as the participants of the group would want to know more and learn more (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:184). This form of data collection was beneficial to the study as aesthetics is viewed subjectively by individuals and the different focus groups allowed the researcher to get a better understanding of the topic at hand.

Participants of both focus groups were asked to join the Zoom meetings 5 minutes before the allocated time so that administrative work could be conducted. The participants were made aware of the contents of the consent form just to ensure that they understood them. Furthermore, they were informed that should they wish to not continue with the focus group and study at any point, they were more than allowed to leave. They were then informed that the recording of the session would begin. The participants were asked to reiterate their ages as well as their places of residence to double-check that they do fall within the sample size identified by the researcher. The focus groups were both conducted on the same day, 3 hrs apart. This was specifically planned to ensure that all the data would be collected in an efficient amount of time, and allow for any deep insights the researcher recognises from both focus groups to be acquired in a timeframe that allows for the most effective insights. This also allowed for the researcher to have an adequate amount of time to analyse both of the focus groups before submitting it to the institution.

Throughout both focus groups, the researcher was taking notes down of the things they deemed most important to remember, such as facial cues before a participant gave a response or about the participants interacting with each other or changing each other's views on a specific point. Together with these notes and the recordings of

the sessions, the researcher was able to adequately analyse the data.

The separate focus groups were rather small as each of them consisted of 4 participants. They were made small because of the limited time frame that there is to analyse the data. Each focus group took about 45 minutes to an hour each to conclude, allowing for the researcher to get through all the questions as well as to gain deep insights from each participant. After having gone through the administrative work of the focus groups, the researcher began by introducing the topic at hand and ensuring that all the participants understood what the research is about as well as further explaining the different terms that would be used throughout the session to ensure that the responses given would be viable and relevant to the study. Following this, the programme varied a bit for the different focus groups.

For Focus Group A (FGA) the researcher began by showing the participants two different videos showing the extremities of a car that is considered very ugly in society and the other showcasing a car that is considered very attractive. While the participants watched these video's, the researcher wrote down notes about how the participants were reacting to the different car videos. Following this viewing, the participants were then asked the first 4 questions which were open-ended questions that allowed for information regarding the topic and the relation to their specific focus group to be given. This also allowed the participants to get to know each other and familiarise themselves with the discussions that were about to ensue as well as with the researcher and format for how the questions would be asked and how the focus group would be conducted. The questions asked addressed their current situations attending to their perceptions and the influences that have affected their decision-making process. The participants were then asked questions 5 to 12 to round up the focus group. These questions were more specific in nature and sought to find how the specific aspects of aesthetics being the colour and shape of the car influenced their perceptions of the cars that they purchased and ultimately influenced their purchase of the car that they currently have. These responses were given which allowed for the researcher to gain the knowledge that they needed in alignment with the research questions as well as concerning the key theory being used to assess and drive the research. The discussions that commenced allowed the researcher to gain a better

understanding of the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer-buying behaviour. Throughout the focus group meeting, the researcher wrote down notes, especially focusing on the non-verbal cues given by the participants such as hand gestures and facial expressions.

For Focus Group B (FBG) the researcher began by showing the participants two different videos showing the extremities of a car that is considered very ugly in society and the other showcasing a car that is considered very attractive. Just like they did for the first focus group, the researcher wrote down notes about how the participants were reacting to the different car videos. Following this, the researcher began by asking the first 4 questions to the participants. These questions were open-ended and allowed for the participants to give feedback on their opinions about the different videos as well as allowing the participants to become acquainted with the topic at hand, as well as getting comfortable with the other participants and how the meeting would be conducted. These questions addressed their current situations attaining their perceptions and the influences that are currently affecting their decision-making process (FGB)(Maree, 2020).

Following this, the participants were then asked questions 5 to 12 which were more specific questions that incorporated the aspects of aesthetics that the researcher aimed to gain more knowledge on in terms of what affects the participants purchasing decisions as well as incorporated the research question objectives and the key theory that is driving this study. The discussions that ensued allowed the participants to learn about each other's preferences and perceptions and ultimately they advised one another based on these aspects.

At the end of both focus groups, the participants were thanked for their participation by the researcher, the recording was stopped and the focus groups ended.

Data analysis

There are many different ways of conducting qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis can be described as the identification, then examining and interpreting of patterns, data and themes in data that is textual, further determining how they help

answer a research question and problem that has been identified (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). As previously stated, this study is phenomenological, and therefore, the analysis of the data has to be in line with its concepts. The analysis of this data is about understanding the different and subjective views of the participants to get an understanding of how aesthetics influences their purchasing decisions (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 183-184). The main form of data analysis that was used for this study is the thematic data analysis method. Thematic data analysis is about looking at patterns in the collected data and grouping data of similar themes and words together to make sense of the content (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Maree, 2020; du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Prior to analysing the data, the researcher used the notes they took down as well as the recordings that were taken to transcribe all the data. This was done in a word document on the researcher's laptop. It was a slow but thorough process to ensure that no amount of information was missed. To ensure this everything was transcribed, from the non-verbal cues such as frowning, smiling or hand gestures to all the verbal cues such as sighing and laughing and every word that was uttered by the participants. This is because they could all hold valuable information in understanding what was being said by the participants (Maree, 2020).

The most used and adopted method of thematic analysis is that which was lined out by Braun and Clark in 2006. This method of analysis follows a 6-step method of analysis.

Step 1: Familiarizing yourself with the data

The first step of the analysis is about becoming familiar with all of the data that has been transcribed. This is done through active and repeated reading of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). This means reading with the intent of finding meaning and patterns in the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

This is exactly what the researcher has begun with when it comes to analysing the data that has been collected. Furthermore, they were consistently taking down notes as they read to ensure that they were understanding the data thoroughly and adequately to get the best possible insights from it. By doing this over and over, the

researcher familiarised themselves with the data, and already had the advantage of being the one to have collected the data, so they already had a few conceptions and ideas about what the data would incorporate.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

The second step in the process is about generating codes from the data that the researcher has familiarized themselves with (Braun & Clark, 2006). Codes are about seeing the different points of interest in the data and making connections between them (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Codes allow the researcher to see interesting and relevant information regarding the study and as they identify these they should be grouped to form coherent understandings between them.

To ensure that coding happened correctly, the researcher used a hierarchical means of coding as well as colour coding to differentiate the codes and to group them in terms of 'importance' which was dependant on the relation towards the topic as well as on the number of times a single code came up. Each code was identified and notarized in a structural format to ensure the researcher stayed on par with it, allowing them to move forward with the research (Maree, 2020). Moreover, the literature was constantly consulted during the process, to ensure relevancy and adequacy.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

The third step in the analysis process is about looking and the data and codes that have been identified and recognising themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Themes are a broader aspect of analysing the data and need to be identified by the researcher with the different codes falling under the different relevant themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

To do this the researcher went over the data over and over again, looking at their notes and codes to create the themes. These themes were categorized in order of importance, using a hierarchical system identifying the main themes and creating sub-themes to allocate the different codes. By doing this the researcher rationalized the data (Maree, 2020).

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

The fourth step in the process is about going over the themes, again and again, to ensure that they are relevant and that the different codes have been properly allocated to the different themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). By doing this, the researcher would find refinements that can be made and themes that can be collated and made into one (Braun & Clark, 2006).

The researcher went over the themes over and over again trying to find any errors they might have made while compiling them. They recognised themes that could be put together and the misplacing of codes in the wrong themes. This allowed for a deeper analysis and a better understanding of the data.

Step 5: Defining and Naming the Themes

Step five of the process is about giving definitions and summaries to each theme to get a better understanding of them and to get a clearer picture of what their relevance is towards the study and the research questions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The researcher did this accordingly and systematically; giving the different themes their definitions and gaining insights into what they are about and gaining an in-depth understanding of them.

Step 6: Producing the Final Report

The sixth and final step in the thematic analysis process is to write up the final analysis of the data that has been collected and systematically organised. This part of the process is about drawing conclusions and ensuring that the readers would understand it and trust its validity and reliability (Braun & Clark, 2006). This section is about more than just writing descriptions of the data, it is about creating an argument to create conclusions about the research and its importance (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The researcher has done this by writing up the report and creating narratives from the data, making substantiations and conclusions from the data and overall analysis

(Maree, 2020). It has been interpreted for a readers understanding. The researcher still needs to refine this and ensure that is ready for future study uses.

In conclusion, the collection and analysing of data is a tedious but intricate and necessary process to ensure that the correct type of data is collected and that correct insights and understandings are gained from the collected data. The target population for this research included participants 18 years and older residing in Pretoria, South Africa. The final sample size for the data collection was 8 participants, 4 of whom already owned cars and 4 are currently in the market to purchase a car. The chosen method of data collection being focus groups was effective and resulted in enough data collection to get insights and start drawing primary conclusions. The thematic process of data analysis aided in this as it ensured nothing was missed or left out when it came to transcribing and analysing the data. It is an effective qualitative means of data analysis. This all was aligned with the paradigm of interpretivism which is the paradigm this research leans on. The research followed the 6-step guide outlined by Braun and Clark (2006) to ensure the effectiveness of the data analysis. The study ensured its validity and reliability by ensuring that everything aligns with each other, from the research question to the research design and the paradigm that is used (Maree, 2020). It further ensured dependability by the researcher recording and thoroughly transcribing the data. This is a study that will be able to be used in future studies beyond the scope of the current research.

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research requires a lot of data analysing and scrutinising to ensure that the conclusions made are relevant and valid. du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014) states that trustworthiness in a study requires an establishment of characteristics, these characteristics being dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability.

This researcher ensured that this study would be valid and reliable by ensuring that everything aligned with each other, from the research question that needed to be answered to the research design and the paradigm that was used (Maree, 2020). Furthermore, the theoretical framework applied aligns with the research questions as

well as the methodology that was used for this research study. To ensure that the data was correctly understood, the researcher asked participants for clarification on their responses to ensure that they were understanding the data that they were collecting, thus ensuring the credibility of the study (Maree, 2020). Furthermore, to ensure dependability, the data collected was recorded and transcribed so that no data would be missed or taken out of context. This also allows for those who will follow the study to be confident in it and the findings that come out of it (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Moreover, transferability is another aspect that ensures a study is valid and reliable as well as trustworthy. Transferability refers to a studies ability to be able to be applied to other studies beyond the scope of the current research (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This was done by giving readers a holistic description of the study with descriptive context about the research, the participants as well and the research design that has been used so that any decisions made by the readers are informed. To ensure confirmability, which is how well the research has been supported through findings and interpretation of data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014), the data collected was thoroughly analysed through a thematic data analysis process, showing that it has not been affected by any bias from the researcher and is only a result of the participant's answers and the data collected from the focus group sessions.

4 RESULTS/FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Understanding and interpreting the data you have collected over time is very important when it comes to its analysis and drawing conclusions from it (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). It is about identification, then the examining and interpreting of patterns, data and themes in data that is textual, further determining how they help answer a research question and problem that has been identified (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). To conduct this research, the researcher made use of two focus groups, which was determined to be the best means of conducting the research to gain good, valid and valuable knowledge and insights from the participants for the research. This research was done to understand the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour in South Africa. To further the research, cars and the automobile industry were used as an example to gain knowledge on the topic.

The use of focus groups allowed for participants to express their views and opinions as well as start discussions with each other to better understand the differences in their thoughts, allowing for more insights gained. Open-ended questions were the main focus of the study to allow for elaboration and discussions to ensue in a calm and welcoming environment. The form of data analysis that was used for this study is the thematic data analysis method. It is about looking at patterns in the collected data and grouping data of similar themes and words together to make sense of the content, creating codes and themes to understand the data and understand the different perspectives of the participants (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Maree, 2020).

The main research question that this study aimed to answer is:

What role does aesthetics play in influencing the consumer buying behaviour of consumers when it comes to cars?

The following secondary research questions are those that have been derived from the main research question:

RQ1: How do aesthetics influence consumer buying behaviour?

RQ2: What aesthetic factors influence consumer-buying behaviour?

RQ3: Why are these the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer-buying behaviour?

Focus Group Guides

The questions that were developed before the focus groups, were sectioned into open-ended questions which helped the participants to become acquainted with the topic being discussed and the types of questions that would follow. Then there were the more specified questions which focused on answering the main research questions as well as incorporating the theoretical foundation into getting insights to answer these

questions (ANNEXURE B & C).

FGA QUESTIONS

THE ROLE AESTHETICS PLAYS IN INFLUENCING CONSUMER-BUYING
BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF CARS IN SOUTH AFRICA

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Today's topic is about understanding the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer buying behaviour. What are your thoughts on that?
2. What are some of the reasons that made you buy a car?
3. What was the biggest factor that deterred you from buying a specific car?
4. Tell us about your car.

SPECIFIED QUESTIONS

5. When you are shopping, do you shop for necessity, pleasure or both?
6. Did you consider the colour when you were purchasing your car?
7. Did shape of your car play a role in your decision to buy the car?
8. Did your opinion on the shape and colour of cars get affected by other factors, such as the brand, cost or both?
9. How did the colour of a car affect the way in which you perceived it? i.e., sophisticated, tacky, professional etc.
10. How do you think the shape of a car affects the way in which you perceived it? i.e., sophisticated, tacky, professional etc.
11. Does the colour of a car change your perceptions on the quality of the car?
12. Does the shape of a car change your perceptions on the quality of the car?
13. Do any of the two factors make your desire to purchase more or less?
14. How big an impact would you say shape and colour played in your decision to buy your car?

Figure 2.1. Focus Group A Questions

FBA QUESTIONS

THE ROLE AESTHETICS PLAYS IN INFLUENCING CONSUMER-BUYING
BEAHIOUR: A STUDY OF CARS IN SOUTH AFRICA

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

1. Todays topic is about understanding the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer buying behaviour. What are your thoughts on that?
2. What are some of the reasons for you wanting to purchase a car?
3. What is the biggest factor that is influencing the cars that you are deciding on?

SPECIFIED QUESTIONS

4. When you are shopping, do you shop for necessity, pleasure or both?
5. Are you considering the color of the car while trying to make a decision one buying one?
6. Are you considering the shape of the car while trying to make a decision one buying one?
7. Is your opinion on the color and shape of the car being affected by other factors such as the brand, cost or both?
8. Do you feel that a car is more sophisticated or tacky depending and based on the color?
9. Do you feel that a car is more sophisticated or tacky depending and based on the shape?
10. Does the color of a car change your perception on its quality?
11. Does the shape of a car change your perception on its quality?
12. Do any of the factors affect your desire to purchase a car?

Figure 2.1. Focus Group B Questions

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

Key Questions and Participant responses

1. When participants were asked about whether they considered/are considering the shape and colour of the car when purchasing, these were the results:

FGA participants:

Participant 1 said that they did consider the colour of the car when they were purchasing their car, this is because the colour is important to them and they preferred to have a car that is a neutral colour above other colours. They stated that “neutral-coloured cars are more visually appealing” and they felt if it were to be a more vibrant colour, they would get bored of it quickly. When looking at the shape of the car, it was mainly influenced by what they needed, and because they are a student, they preferred a smaller car, however, they ensured that it was a car they found to be ‘pretty’ in shape. Participants 2 and 3 concurred with participant 1’s sentiments about both the colour and the shape, however, participant 3 said that they preferred a bigger car as they are already in the working environment. Participant 4 also considered the colour of the car; however, they were not particularly drawn to a neutral colour, they just wanted something that would look good. When it came to the shape of the car, they were adamant that they do not like hunchback cars, as to them hunchback cars do not look good, so it was a big factor for them.

FGB participants:

All the participants said that colour is something that they are considering when it comes to the cars they are looking at purchasing. Participant 2 emphasised how their mother always told them to rather go for lighter coloured cars over darker colours because any damage or scratches would show less on a lighter coloured car such as white. Moreover, they said that neutral colours lose market value slower than cars with more boisterous colours. Participant 1 said they too prefer lighter colours simply

based on the knowledge that they have gained during the process of looking for a car. The other participants said that the colour is a big factor for them as well because they would want a car in a colour that they would still love months down the line. When it came to the shape of the car, three of the participants said that they prefer sleeker modelled cars and that it did not bother them whether it was a hunchback or a sedan. Participant 4 said that they need a car with more space due to work and therefore prefers a car with a bigger boot space and sitting space.

From these findings, we see that the shape and colour of a car are important factors for people when it comes to purchasing a car and ultimately influences their purchasing decision. Furthermore, we see that the shape of a car is highly dependent on the size of the car as well as the conversation often veered to the size when talking about the shape of the car. The 'Model of Consumer Responses to Product Form' by Bloch et al. (2003), which is the first model that forms part of the 'AMAI' model by Tarta et al. (2015) is seen in these findings as it states that the overall shape of a designed product can and often will influence a consumers reaction to them, and thus influencing the like towards in and their intentions to purchase it.

Moreover, with participant 2 saying that cars with more boisterous colours lose market value quicker than cars with neutral colours, and this being a factor that is influencing their buying behaviour, it directly relates to the theoretical foundation by Tarta et al. (2015) that further looks at the perceptions that consumers have about the perceptions of the quality of a car as well as possible future implications of the quality of the car, and the influence it has over their purchasing decision.

2. The participants were asked whether their opinions of the shape and colours of the cars were affected by factors such as the brand, the cost or even both. The following is what the researcher found:

FGA participants:

Most of the participants said that the shape and colour of cars were not affected by either the brand or the cost of the car. However, they did say that these factors were

also a part of things that affected their decision-making process, separate from the aesthetics of a car. Whether the car was a specific brand or a specific price, their sentiments on colour and shape remained the same. Participant 1, however, has the opinion that as much as these did not change or affect their purchasing decision personally, that certain car brands, especially luxury brands, should not come in certain colours unless it is a customisation. They gave the example that seeing multiple “Lamborghini’s” in a vibrant colour such as green would make them view them as less of a luxury brand and more as a ‘tacky’ everyday car.

FGB participants:

Participants 1 and 2 agreed that if a car is more expensive they expect it to be more aesthetically pleasing, including factors such as the colour, the shape, the interior, wheels and all. However, when it came to the factor of cost, they generally held the same sentiments they held about colour, regardless of the brand. Participant 4 said that the brand does affect their opinion on the shape of a car because specific brands are known for having a signature shape style for specific car models and ranges, but that the colour is not impacted as much. They further gave the example that since they are looking for a bigger car, they were looking at brands such as Range Rover as they are known for making good big cars.

These findings suggest that the shape and colour are not directly affected by factors such as the brand or the cost of the car, but that these are entirely other factors that consumers consider about cars during their purchasing purchase, factors unrelated directly to the aesthetic of a car. We further see that there are brand associations and expectations that might be put upon certain brands, especially luxury ones as there is a standard that has been put upon them.

Participant 1 from FGA’s opinion was spoken in a ‘matter of fact’ manner, and when asked to elaborate, the participant hesitantly motivated that their opinion is affected by societal standards as they do not like being the centre of attention or being judged, therefore they would not want to a luxury car with a boisterous colour as it would draw too much attention towards them. This shows that the perceptions that would come

with this aesthetic would be a big contributing factor for the participant when purchasing their car. Therefore, even if they were to find the car aesthetically pleasing, this factor would lower their purchase intentions. Gibbons et al. (1998) from the literature review, speak about how to purchase intent cannot be separated from an individual's willingness to purchase a product, regardless of whether they find it aesthetically pleasing or not. These are all factors that are mutually inclusive and cannot be thought of separately. A consumer needs to find it aesthetically pleasing and be willing to purchase the product and make the buying decision.

3. When participants were asked whether a certain shape or colour of a car makes them think it is more sophisticated or even less sophisticated (i.e., tacky) this is what they had to say:

FGA participants:

All the participants said yes, the colour and shape of the car does influence whether they think of it as less or more sophisticated. Upon further explanation, participant 2 further explained that this is mainly due to how they would be perceived by society and by their peers. Participant 3, said that certain cars and their shapes and colours are associated with certain groups, demographics and stigmas in society. They gave the example that as an Indian person, they would never buy a Tazz, and even more, never a red Tazz. This is due to the bad connotations and stigmas that have been attached to the many Indian people that own these cars. They further said that, even if they find it to be an aesthetically pleasing car, and had it not been for the associations attached to it, it would be a car that they would have considered.

FGB participants:

Participant 3 said that yes it does make a difference. They made the example of how elegant they think a Volvo is, whether it be a small car or big car, but mainly the Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV's!). The other participants agreed with this sentiment and said that certain car shapes just make a car seem bad and broken down, citing the car in the first video shown during the focus group as an example. They all agreed that the

colour does not make as big an impact in this department, however, they agreed that cars with more metallic and poignant colours such as silver, gold, shiny blacks etc. make a car feel more sophisticated and elegant.

Through these findings, we come to the understanding that the shape and colour of a car do change the perceptions that consumers have about them when it comes to viewing it as less or more sophisticated. Furthermore, these factors are also influenced by how they feel they will be perceived as a person by society. Anderson and Golden (1984) say that consumer behaviour is a psychological process that people go through to understand themselves as well as their needs and wants, which is what these participants have done when deciding on the cars they bought and are still looking at to buy. Furthermore, Ramya and Ali (2016) look at factors that influence consumer-buying behaviour and they acknowledge that it is beyond just the needs and wants of the consumers, but that it is affected by cultural and societal factors. Participant 3 in FGA is one such consumer that was heavily influenced by this as they did not want to buy a car that has bad connotations attached to them simply because of the associations society has put on Indian people that own Tazz's.

4. The participants were at the end asked whether and of these factors made their desire to purchase less or more. These were their responses:

FGA participants:

Most of the participants said that in the end, all the aforementioned factors did play a huge role in the decisions for the cars that they bought. They wanted to ensure that the cars they bought would be a car they still loved months and years down the line. Participant 2 mentioned that they bought a car that they felt would be good aesthetically in the long run especially considering the profession that they would be going into and how it relies a lot on how personal presentation and how you would represent the company that they would be working for.

FGB participants:

The participants said that these factors are influencing them quite a bit while they are looking for a car to purchase. Furthermore, the participants agreed that being able to look at so many different options are overwhelming, but that it allows them to have a greater variety to choose from and make informed decisions. Participants 2 and 4 also said that the focus group and the discussions that ensued have given them a different perspective on cars and how the different aspects of it affect the decisions that they have been making thus far.

This question was asked to reinforce the participant's previous answers. Analysing it helped see that the factors of the colour and shape of the car do play a key role in the decision-making process as well as the different perceptions that can be alluded through these factors. Furthermore, it reinforced the notion that purchase intent is more likely to occur when individuals have the chance to consider different options of products that they are looking into (Yacoob & Barato, 2019).

Themes and Codes

	THEMES	CODES
01	Perceptions on car aesthetic specifications	1. Loud vs calm vs neutral colours 2. Hunchback cars vs SUV's 3. Upgrading a car
02	Perceptions on consumers and society	1. Elegance 2. Convenience 3. Professionalism
03	Perceptions on the performance of a product	1. Longevity of car (Lifespan) 2. Functionality of car 3. Needs and necessity.

Table 1. Table of themes and codes derived from focus groups.

Theme 1: Participants views on car specifications

Through understanding the participant's responses and understanding what they have said, it is easy to understand that colour and shape do play an important role when it comes to the car a consumer decides to purchase. The participants identified that colours can range from loud colours such as red and green to more neutral and common colours such as silver, gold, black, white and more. The consensus is that neutral colours are preferred because they are more appealing to them, and they are easier to maintain.

Furthermore, participants argued that even if there are other factors about a car that you do not like, such as the rims, you could always upgrade them to match the aesthetic that you are going for without ruining the quality of the car. This goes to show that the different specifications of a car are important to the buying behaviour of a consumer and ultimately becomes the deciding factor. This also shows that these are the top aspects of aesthetics that influence consumer buying behaviour because participants felt they are the first things that they see when they think about their cars.

Tarta et al. (2015) emphasise that colour and shape are part of the top aspects of aesthetics that consumers look at when making a purchasing decision of a car, which this study has shown, it has further allowed the researcher to see that it plays a big role in influencing consumers and increases an individual's likeliness to purchase the product (Toufani, 2015).

Theme 2: Perceptions of consumers and society

Through the focus group discussions, participants talked about how the cars they choose and the different aspects of aesthetics that they choose are influenced by how they will perceive themselves with that car as well as how society will perceive them. Participant 3 from FGA talked about how the car you drive sends a message in the work environment that you are in. They exemplified this by saying if you work to incorporate, you need a car that looks good and does not have loud colours as this would be considered unprofessional and could make you seem not serious. This

further supports the idea that the colour and shape of a car are important aspects because they are the first things people and society see when they see a person's car, adding to the perceptions derived (Ramya & Ali, 2016).

Theme 3: Perceptions on the performance of the product

Participant 2 in FGB was adamant that as much as aesthetics are important in deciding on a car to purchase, that the functionality of the car and the purpose it would serve is important. This sentiment was agreed upon by the other participants saying that they want to get a car that would last a good length of time and would serve the purposes for which they need a car, i.e., transportation and being able to carry the necessary loads, which is where the shape of the car comes into play as well, but not necessarily for the aesthetics.

This is a sentiment that was shared by the participants of FGA as they knew what they needed the cars for and so ensured that they would serve the purpose that they needed it for. Participant 4 in FGA works at a mine and made sure that they bought an SUV that could handle the sandy areas and mountain terrains. Furthermore, they bought a white car as it is easier to maintain and clean. This further emphasises how the functionality of the car came together with the aesthetics of it to serve the consumers purpose. This shows that the quality and performance of a car is something that is considered and important when consumers are making a purchasing decision which is a notion that Hoeg and Alba (2011) touch on and emphasise in the literature.

Participant Emotions and Reactions

The emotions and reactions that consumers displayed throughout the focus groups were an important aspect of understanding the data and ultimately getting the findings that the researcher has identified.

Participant Emotions and Reactions

In order to better understand the participant's responses, a look at their non-verbal cues and common phrases needed to be recognised, and analysed

Intrigue

Participants were intrigued by the topic and wanted to learn more about it. This was further emphasised by their attentiveness and constant asking of questions.

Body language would be engaging with lots of hand gestures.



Open minded

Most participants were open to hearing the opinions of others and even going as far as to agree with them and change what they initially thought.

Body language: Nodding along and pointing fingers (positively)

Phrases such as: "Yes, I agree" "OMG, YES"



Hesitancy

Some participants were hesitant when it came to responding first, evidenced by slow response times as well as stuttering.



Doubt

Certain participants would retract their statements often or say 'I don't know though' after a response, showing that they were doubting their own answers.

Doubt was further emphasised with a lack of eye contact and turning of body away from the researcher.



Straight-forward

Once participants were talking, they were pretty honest about their views and opinions on the topic at hand.

Phrases such as "Did you know?" "I believe" "Fact is..."



Motivation

Some participants were more open than others when it came to responding and would even coax the more hesitant ones to speak up and tell us their opinions.

They were willing to share theirs and learn more about cars.



Boisterous

Some participants were loud and very opinionated which would make others nervous, but confident enough to speak up as well about their own opinions.

Body Language: Waving of hands, multiple hand gestures, standing up...



Figure 3.1. Participants Emotions and Reactions

5 CONCLUSION

Research Questions and Objectives Addressed

Through this research study, the researcher was able to make use of the Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry (Tarta et al., 2015: 35) to derive insights and knowledge about the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour in South Africa, a study that made use of cars as a subject matter to better understand this topic. It helped the researcher evaluate and understand aesthetics when it comes to the aesthetics of cars and the automotive industry, to see how consumers make their decisions. The researcher was able to understand the way that aesthetics plays a role in consumer buying behaviour as well as how the different perceptions of society also play a role in influencing this.

The researcher saw that colour and shape are the forefront aspects of aesthetics that influence the buying behaviour of consumers towards cars. The research answered the three fundamental research questions which aimed to understand how aesthetics influence consumer buying behaviour, which factors of aesthetics influence consumer -buying behaviour and lastly why these the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer-buying behaviour.

The researcher gained a better understanding of how aesthetics affects consumer-buying behaviour, an objective that was set out at the beginning of this research, however, it is important to ensure that understanding the role of aesthetics cannot be put down just to these two factors, many other factors influenced the consumer's decision when it came to buying a car, influences that altered their views on aesthetics. The concept of personal branding and creating positive perceptions about one's self-image was an unexpected insight that came out of this research but proved

to be a big factor in influencing a consumer's views when it came to the colour and shape of the car as well as their perceptions on the quality and ultimately affecting their desire to purchase a car.

More research needs to be done; however, it is a stepping stone in understanding it, giving knowledge to brands and how they can improve themselves and their products.

Ethical Considerations, Limitations and Heuristic Value

Anticipated contributions

The primary anticipated contribution is that there have been insights that have been gained on understanding the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour. These allow for a better in-depth understanding of the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer buying behaviour. In gaining a better understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and consumer-buying behaviour, manufacturers may be able to use these insights to better their products and provide what consumers would like. Furthermore, it would allow for better marketing strategies to be developed by companies, focusing more on the preferences of the consumers. Moreover, this might notably contribute to the literature, allowing for future researchers on the topic or similar topics to gain good insights and understanding, further adding to the body of work of understanding aesthetics as well as consumer-buying behaviour.

Ethical Considerations

It was important for this study to be ethically conducted from beginning to end. This study can affect the participants, the researcher as well as the institution and therefore had to be ethically carried out to ensure that it does not impact anyone in a negative or unethical manner (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 291). The researcher ensured that the study was truthful and did not have any biased opinions from them affecting the study.

The first step to ensuring an ethical study was to acquire consent from all the participants that were a part of the study. A consent document was given to all participants that are a part of the study (ANNEXURE A). This document first introduced the researcher and then explained what the study was about, it then

followed with a section for participants to sign once they agreed to be a part of the study. Furthermore, as this study made use of focus groups, the researcher took recordings of the sessions. The participants were further given consent forms to sign to agree to be recorded by the researcher (ANNEXURE B). Moreover, the participants were made fully aware of the confidentiality of their participation, that their identities would remain anonymous and that should they wish to withdraw at any point of the study, they could.

Furthermore, ethical considerations that attain to the researcher were that any biased feelings could not pour-over and affect the study or the participants' answers and opinions. The data collected during this study would also only be used for this research and nothing further. Lastly, in regards to ethical considerations for the institution, as this is a study that is being conducted by a researcher under The IIE academic institution (Vega School), the research only began being conducted once ethical clearance was given to the researcher by The IIE, thus protecting the reputation of the institution and the integrity of the researcher.

Limitations

Limitations are the constraints in a research study or limits that are generally out of the control of the researcher (du-Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 275-276). These limitations can be and are not limited to factors such as finances, time and access to information (du-Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 275-276).

This study had five main limitations that affected it. The first limitation of this study was the limited timeframe in which it needs to be conducted. This research study was to be completed in the year 2021, with the actual data collection and analysis period being from August 2021 to September 2021. This was a time limitation that ultimately affected the amount of data that could be collected for the study and it gave a limited understanding of the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour. The second limitation of this study was a shift in conditions that are currently affecting the world and this is Covid-19. Covid-19 has affected how people interact, and the Covid-19 protocols inhibit a large group of people from interacting or being close to one another. This directly affected the data collection process as only a

small number of participants could be used for the focus group, and most participants opted to have the focus groups through online platforms rather than in person. The third limitation of this study was the small sample size (8 participants) as a result of the first and second limitations. This resulted in limited data collection. The fourth limitation was the word limitation placed on the research document. This means that only a certain amount of data can be recorded to support the study, which has resulted in a limited study with information being squeezed in or left out when deemed not as important for the study. The last limitation came with the sampling methods of the study. As this study would make use of purposive and convenient sampling methods, bias from the researcher possibly came through and affected the study when choosing the participants of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Example of Participant Consent Forms



CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Snethemba Londiwe Nzuza and I am a student at Vega School Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi the role that aesthetics plays in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the purchasing decisions that consumers make when it comes to purchasing cars, and the factors of aesthetics that influence them. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you are in the market to buy a car or have already gone through the process of buying a car. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to host a focus group with you and three other participants to gain your views and your insights. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your influences to car purchasing with us. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;

- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

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

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Snethemba Londiwe Nzuza

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkhomazi

Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by
[INSERT YOUR FULL NAMES AND SURNAME] about [INSERT AIM OF RESEARCH/BRIEF SUMMARY OF
EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE RESEARCHING] .

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

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

Signature	Date

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Snethemba Londiwe Nzuza to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the role that aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Annexure B: Focus Group A (FGA) Schedule

(Those with cars already)

- Begin session by introducing the topic and myself as the researcher to the participants.
- Remind them of their consent and what it means.

Demographics:

	Group Member 1.	Group Member 2.	Group Member 3.	Group Member 4.
Age				
Gender				
Residing Country				
Occupation				

A. Show two videos of cars (The extreme opposites of each other).

Open ended questions

1. Today's topic is about understanding the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer buying behaviour. What are your thoughts on that?
2. What are some of the reasons that made you buy a car?
3. What was the biggest factor that deterred you from buying a specific car?
4. Tell us about your car.

Specified Questions

5. When you are shopping, do you shop for necessity, pleasure or both?
6. Did you consider the colour when you were purchasing your car?
7. Did shape of your car play a role in your decision to buy the car?

8. Did your opinion on the shape and colour of cars get affected by other factors, such as the brand, cost or both?
9. How did the colour of a car affect the way in which you perceived it? i.e., sophisticated, tacky, professional etc.
10. How do you think the shape of a car affects the way in which you perceived it? i.e., sophisticated, tacky, professional etc.
11. Does the colour of the car change your views on the quality of the car?
12. Does the colour of a car change your perceptions on the quality of the car?
13. Does the shape of a car change your perceptions on the quality of the car?
14. Do any of the two factors make your desire to purchase more or less?
15. How big an impact would you say shape and colour played in your decision to buy your car?

Note: There is that a discussion will be implemented after each question to further get a better understanding of the answers that are being given, which will result in more in-depth answers and understanding.

Annexure C - Focus Group B (FGB) Schedule

(Those in the market for a car)

- Begin session by introducing the topic and myself as the researcher to the participants.
- Remind them of their consent and what it means.

Demographics:

	Group Member 1.	Group Member 2.	Group Member 3.	Group Member 4.
Age				
Gender				
Residing Country				
Occupation				

A. Show two videos of cars (The extreme opposites of each other).

Open ended questions

1. Today's topic is about understanding the role that aesthetics play in influencing consumer buying behavior. What are your thoughts on that?
2. What are some of the reasons for you wanting to purchase a car?
3. What is the biggest factor that is influencing the cars that you are deciding on?

Specified Questions

4. When you are shopping, do you shop for necessity, pleasure or both?
5. Are you considering the colour of the car while trying to make a decision one buying one?
6. Are you considering the shape of the car while trying to make a decision one buying one?

7. Is your opinion on the colour and shape of the car being affected by other factors such as the brand, cost or both?
8. Do you feel that a car is more sophisticated or tacky depending and based on the colour?
9. Do you feel that a car is more sophisticated or tacky depending and based on the shape?
10. Does the colour of a car change your perception on its quality?
11. Does the shape of a car change your perception on its quality?
12. Do any of the factors affect your desire to purchase a car?

Note: There is that a discussion will be implemented after each question to further get a better understanding of the answers that are being given, which will result in more in-depth answers and understanding.

Annexure D: Ethical Clearance Letter



Date: 11 August 2021

Student name: Nzuza Snethemba
Student number: [REDACTED]
Campus: IIE Vega Pretoria Campus

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

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

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

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

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

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

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

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

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

Supervisor name: Ivan Mkhomazi



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Dr SC Engelbrecht



Signature:

Annexure E: Final Research Report Summary Document Template

TITLE: *The Role that Aesthetics Plays in Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Cars in South Africa*

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review - Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
<i>To gain a better understanding on how aesthetics affects consumer buying behaviour when it comes to cars</i>	<i>What role does aesthetics play in influencing the consumer buying behaviour of consumers when it comes to cars?</i>	<i>It is necessary to understand the role aesthetics plays in influencing consumer buying behaviour so that manufacturers and marketers can better their designs and strategies.</i>	<i>Anderson, W.T. & Golden, L.L. 1984.</i> <i>Fishbein, M & Ajzen, I. 1975.</i> <i>Ostrom, T.M. 1969</i> <i>Warshaw, P & Davis, F. 1985.</i>			Qualitative Population Population Parameters <i>Individuals 18 and older. People that own cars and those in the market to buy a car</i>	<i>2 Focus Groups</i> <i>4 participants in each focus group.</i>	<i>Consent forms</i> <i>Vega school ethics adhered to</i> <i>Confidentiality</i>	<i>An understanding of the different factors of aesthetics that influence consumer buying behaviour</i>	
Research Problem	Secondary Questions / Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	

There is a shift in the ways consumers make decisions when it comes to purchasing cars. It is no longer just about the function, but the aesthetics as well.	To gain a better understanding on how aesthetics affects consumer-buying behaviour of consumers when it comes to cars. To understand the factors of aesthetics that influence consumer-buying behaviour.	Aesthetics Consumer-buying behaviour Purchase Intention	Aesthetics Model for Automotive Industry (AMAI)	Theme 1: Aesthetics Theme 2: Consumer buying behaviour Theme 3: Purchase Intention Theme 4: Consumer Purchase Intention towards cars	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology An understanding of how consumers general worldviews and interactions with others affect their idea of aesthetics and aesthetic cars suitable enough for them to purchase. Ontology An understanding and identifying how people put value onto cars based on aesthetics and what they perceive to be good aesthetic. Axiology The aim of the study is to find the truth about the effects of aesthetics and their influence.	Non-probability sampling Sampling method Purposive sampling and convenient sampling 8 participants	Unit of Analysis Individuals Data Analysis Method(s) Thematic Analysis	Time constraint Shift in conditions. i.e., Covid 19 Sample size limitation	Manufacturers will better their product offerings. Marketers will better their strategies towards consumers.	Companies should think about the different types of consumers they have for the country and markets they are catering for. Brands should consider what they want their consumers to feel when they are using their products.
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