



Exploring consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of Menstrual Hygiene Management brand: a comparison between *Palesa Pads* and *Lil-Lets*.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the research project submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another university or higher education institution for a degree.

Abstract

The study explores the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of the established menstrual hygiene management brand Lil-lets compared to the emerging brand Palesa Pads. Given the rise and development of the menstrual hygiene management market, understanding the key approach to take in terms of the positioning strategy when entering a market based can influence the trajectory of the brands' success. There was a gap in understanding consumer perception of how menstrual hygiene management brands position their brands, a research problem this study addressed. This study was conducted from a comparative perspective on how consumers perceive the positioning strategies between the emerging brand Palesa Pads and the established brand Lil-Lets.

A total of 10 menstruators participated in the study. The research approach adopted for this study was the Qualitative research approach. The current study finds that consumers hold very distinct views between the positioning strategy of an established brand compared to an emerging brand.

This study contributes to the developing menstrual hygiene market literature by demonstrating what perception consumers hold about the positioning strategies of an established brand compared to an emerging brand. This research sheds light on consumers' highest priorities related to perceived positioning. It captures consumers' awareness towards the recent shift in the depiction of menstrual hygiene management within media onset by feminism which demonstrates how established brands use brand associations that depict what they stand for. And, it depicts the use of product advantages as a positioning strategy, by an emerging brand, although the product attributes are more favourable to the consumer than those of the established brand.

In conclusion, by understanding consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands, brands can develop their brands by effectively implementing brand-building techniques such as positioning strategies that resonate with their consumers, communicate their competitive advantage, and ensures success within the market.

Keywords: Positioning strategy, emerging brand, established brand, consumer perceptions, menstrual hygiene management brands

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Introduction

Contextualisation

Menstrual justice and activism intersect with various issues such as gender justice, racial justice, environmental justice, and education access (Broster, 2020). In recent years, the increasing female population, rising disposable income of women, and women empowerment across the globe have accelerated the growth of the menstrual hygiene management products market. Olivio (2017) points out that this growth has resulted in a shift in the dialogue surrounding the portrayal of menstruation within the media furthermore, the language used to identify menstruation and changing the way in which menstrual hygiene management products appeal to their consumers Olivio (2017).

Looking at South Africa, there has been a notable mobilisation by the greater public around period poverty and ways to address sanitary dignity (Crankshaw, Strauss & Gumede, 2020). While there are many problems that come with period poverty in South Africa, the government as well as many organizations are using their platforms to increase access to menstrual hygiene management products through policy implementation, initiatives, campaigns, and product and brand development.

According to (MarketResearch.com, 2021) the “Sanitary Pads market in South Africa registered a positive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.06% during the period 2015 to 2020 with a sales value of ZAR 2,976.05 Million in 2020, an increase of 9.33% over 2019”. Furthermore, brands with sustainable approaches to menstrual hygiene management have emerged in response to period poverty eradication.

Brand building has been the key to success for various product and service offerings across various markets. Brands can help consumers distinguish products that are designed to satisfy the same need (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2012). Thereby playing a crucial role in creating a sustained competitive advantage. Although, in order for a brand to exist to its consumers, it must be positioned within the minds of its consumers. Unfortunately, there is minimal research that is focused on

brand-building strategies of the menstrual hygiene management market let alone how menstrual hygiene management brands are positioning themselves within the market for success. The limited information on consumer behavior regarding menstrual hygiene management is not shocking as the topic has been regarded as a taboo topic nearly all around the world for decades with emphasis on secrecy and discreetness.

Rationale

Brand positioning is an instrumental part of developing and communicating a competitive advantage within a fragmented market. Seeing as positioning is based on consumer perceptions and only partially resides under marketers' control, it is able to help consumers categorise brands offering thereby, simplifying the purchasing process (Bodin & Odby, 2008). Existing literature on brand positioning lacks an understanding of the specific characteristics and strategies of building brands in FMCG, specifically in the personal care sector. The present study attempts to fill this gap by exploring the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands. The research is relevant and necessary as it will contribute to the understanding of consumer perceptions and decision-making when purchasing menstrual hygiene management products and specific brands.

Additionally, consumer perceptions play a significant role in influencing consumer decision-making, loyalty, and how and why consumers recommend brands or products to others (Madichie, 2012). Considering that there is very limited research conducted on the topic, especially in the South African context, the research study will try to fill this gap by conducting research that is able to identify how and why consumers perceive the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands. This will be informative for established and emerging brands within the market as it will outline what consumers think about their product offerings and brands.

Problem statement

The research problem to be investigated is identified as follows:

There is limited research conducted on the positioning strategies used by menstrual management brands, the consumer perceptions of these positioning strategies, and how they have allowed for the growth of the menstrual hygiene management industry within South Africa. The research study aims to explore and compare the consumer perceptions of the positioning of the established brand *Lil-Lets*, and the emerging brand *Palesa Pads* in the market by comparing the positioning strategies used by each brand.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare consumer perceptions of the positioning strategy of an emerging and established menstrual management brand. This will allow for an in-depth understanding to be gained of the different strategic brand positioning strategies used by an established menstrual management brand, *Lil-Lets*, and a newer emerging South African menstrual hygiene management brand, *Palesa Pads*.

Research Question

What are the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands *Palesa Pads* compared to *Lil-lets*?

Objectives

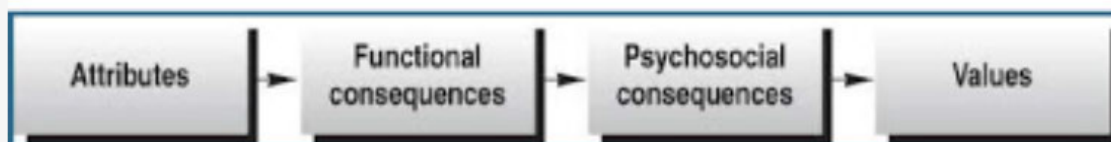
- To compare the brand positioning strategies of emerging brand *Palesa Pads* and established brand *Lil-Lets*
- To explore consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of the emerging brand

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework that will inform the study is the Means-End Theory. According to Borgart (2020), the theory is a comprehensive explanation of how consumers use their personal values to guide their decision-making as they make their product and brand choices. (Adina, Gabriela & Roxana-Denisa, 2015). The theory has been critical in marketing research because of its focus on consumer behaviour and the motivations behind product use and consumer preference (Jiang, Scott & Ding, 2014). According to Gutman (1982) “the means-end chain offers marketing managers a way to position products”. Meaning that the theory is widely used for the development of advertising strategies, a tool that is used by marketers to communicate the positioning strategy of a brand. This means that the theory is relevant to the research study as it correlates to the objectives of the study by outlining factors that influence consumer perceptions.

According to (Zinas & Jusan, 2009) the significance of the product to its consumer goes far beyond its functional properties, it involves the experience of using the product or service. The Means-End Theory provides information about consumer attitudes on three levels namely; attributes, consequences, and values where attributes refer to aspects of the product or service, consequences refer to the result of consuming the product or service and values are often subjective and refer to individuals “criteria that guide action and develops and sustains attitudes towards objects and situations” (Leão & Mello, 2007).



Source: Business.Management.Blog

Figure 1 above shows the Attributes, Consequences, and Values model to demonstrate the link between a brand's attributes, consequences, and values.

Menstruation Hygiene Management

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM here on forth) refers to the adequate and appropriate hygiene practices that are specific to the menstrual cycle. This includes, although is not limited to pads, tampons, menstrual cups, and period underwear. The common referral of menstrual products as “feminine hygiene”, “sanitary products” and “feminine products” coupled with strong cultural messaging that reiterates the concealing of menstruation (Casabone, 2021) perpetuates the stigma surrounding menstruation. Hygiene is an individual pursuit and MHM practices are imperative to menstruators’ reproductive health, sexual life, and general well-being (Dunder & Ozsy, 2020). Social norms, cost, and availability can limit women's menstrual management options in developing countries (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). Additionally, the absence of sanitation infrastructure, resources, and support undermined by poverty, myths, and misconceptions has resulted in MHM becoming a public health priority (Moon, Kim, Kim, Choe, Jeon, Cho, Hong & Lee, 2020). This rise in menstrual health justice and the development of modern menstrual technologies has catapulted changes in legislatures and the MHM market. In South Africa, a “sanitary pad project was launched by the Department of Education in Kwa-Zulu Natal in 2016 to provide sanitary towels to indigent girl pupils to reduce the dropout rate and improve academic performance” (Singh, 2020) and a 0% tax rate on sanitary products in 2019. Furthermore, accessible alternatives in the form of NGOs and local brands have emerged aiming to address access to quality sanitary pads at an affordable price as opposed to acclaimed brands.

Menstrual Hygiene Management Perceptions

Advertisements' use of shared signs and symbols helps create a shared cultural experience and meaning for their consumers. The media has been at the forefront of constructing perceptions through which women and girls should view themselves in terms of ideal standards of beauty and femininity. Furthermore, television, magazines, and the internet have been identified as important sources of information

for menstruators regarding menstrual products and knowledge regarding menstruation (Srinivasan, Agrawal, Attokaran, Fathima and Johnson, 2019).

Advertisements and the media are one of the biggest contributors to the shame and stigma surrounding menstruation because of how they communicate MHM. According to Singh (2020) stigma plays a significant role in consumer decision-making and behaviours. Since the 1940s, menstruation has been communicated as a taboo topic that should be kept secret. Terms such as “virtually discreet”, “freshness” and “discreet protection”, imagery that does not accurately depict menstruation such as blue liquid, and stereotypes that perpetuate the shame and stigma such as “hormonal” “emotionally unstable” and “irrational” women have been very prominent in the media to further entrench the shame. The language portrays menstruation as unclean (despite the fact that the vagina is self-cleaning), reinforcing the negative light in which menstruating bodies are seen. The realities of menstruation are never discussed.

Although quite recently, due to the mobilisation of the public, there has been a shift in the way in which menstruation is communicated in the media. The messaging around menstruation has co-opted the style of feminist activism and art whereby the focus is now centered around educating not only women but men as well as, creating awareness about health issues that affect menstruators and the environment. This reflects the shift in cultural attitudes towards menstruation. Where greater knowledge facilitates less prejudicial perception. Although feminism has been important in shifting the messaging around menstruation whereby the message that “you can do anything during your period” (Bell, 2017) can be empowering, it can also be an affront to those who experience severe pain or tiredness during menstruation.

Emerging Brand Dynamics

The positioning and the scope of the market form key strategic dimensions that need to be considered when entering a market (Rodriguez-Pinto, Rodriguez-Escudero & Gutierrez-Cillan, 2006) and they are usually informed by the attributes offered by the

brand. Furthermore, these functional attributes inform consumer perceptions about the brand's quality (Lam et al. 2013). Late entry into a competitive market presents a strategic challenge (Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1990) because of the role consumers perceive quality and self-brand congruence in the introductory phase of emerging brands. When evaluating emerging brands within a competitive market Lam, Ahearne, Mullins, Hayati & Schillewaert (2013) state that consumers' behaviour such as repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth is based on three drivers namely; perceived quality, self-brand congruity, and consumer innate innovativeness (Lam et al. 2013). Although Paharia, Avery & Keinan (2014) state that evaluation should not be based solely on consumer behaviour, it should also include the competitive relationship among the brands within the market.

New brands in established and competitive markets are able to influence consumers through their brand identities because consumers resonate with brand attributes that they feel define them. Similarly, consumers willing to buy a product can be attractive to brands; this is referred to as the target market (Fandridou, 2020). Brands can use these new product identities to alter the competitive landscape and sustain market growth although consumers are usually already familiar with an established brand's attributes and positioning (Carpenter & Nakamoto, 1990) and will develop favourable attitudes toward them. This means that if there is an attribute or positioning similarity between an emerging brand and an established brand, the established brand's consumer knowledge will result in perceptual distinctiveness in the category meaning.

Brand Positioning Effectiveness

Brand positioning is an instrumental part of developing and communicating a competitive advantage within a fragmented market (Fayvinshenko, 2018). Additionally, the positioning strategy is able to help consumers categorise brand offerings, simplifying the purchasing process for consumers (Bodin & Odby, 2008). Brand positioning differs from strategic positioning as it focuses on the perceptions consumers hold in terms of the product and service offering. The positioning aids in creating positive associations, values, and a distinct image of the brand in the minds

of consumers so as to spotlight it amongst its competitors (Viggers, 2018). The positioning strategy is able to influence consumer buying intentions, brand preference, and brand perception (Blankson, 2004) thereby maximising the potential benefit to the brand (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2012) and creating powerful brands.

Brand positioning sets the path or direction for the brand marketing activities and programmes (Ries & Trout, 2000). It is usually defined through the information communicated to consumers by means of marketing tools such as advertising and word-of-mouth (Fuchs and Diamontopoulos, 2009). Although the same positioning is communicated through these tools, consumers' interpretation may vary due to individual differences and hermeneutics such as inherent biases, prejudices shaped by personal differences, and cultural attitudes informed by socioeconomic demographics (Pantelo, 2017).

Keller, Aperia, and Georgson (2012) state that the positioning strategy of an emerging brand differs greatly from that of an established brand. When a new brand is launched, the positioning strategy focuses on establishing a frame of reference in the minds of consumers, convincing the consumers of the brand's advantages and mitigating any disadvantages. In contrast, an established brands' positioning strategy is determined by competitive forces (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2012). As well as the core brand associations that encapsulate what the brand stands for as it evolves over time.

Conceptualisation

Menstrual hygiene management

Menstrual Hygiene Management is defined by UNICEF (2019) as access to menstrual hygiene products used to absorb or collect the flow of blood during menstruation, privacy to change the materials, and access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. It can also include the "broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender equality, education, equity, empowerment, and rights". For the purpose of this research study, Menstrual Hygiene Management refers to the management of hygiene associated with the menstrual process. The concept is conceptualised throughout the research and is

relevant as the researcher is looking to explore consumers' perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands.

Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is defined by (Keller, 2008) as the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinct place in the mind of the target market. The concept will be operationalised throughout the research study. For the purpose of this research, the concept will refer to the process of ensuring that consumers perceive a brand in the desired way, furthermore, it ensures the consumer knows what the brand is, how the brand is different and that the consumer understands the value and benefits of the brand. The concept is relevant to the research as the research is looking to explore how consumers perceive the positioning strategies of the MHM brands *Palesa Pads* and *Lil-Lets*.

Brand Positioning Effectiveness

Brand positioning effectiveness is based on "emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make a brand different from its competitors, and such characteristics are appealing to the consumer" (Kapferer, 2004). This concept will be operationalised for the purpose of this research study. The concept will refer to how well a brand has been able to create a distinct positioning in comparison to its competitors. The concept is relevant to the research study as the researcher is looking to compare whether Palesa Pads has a distinct positioning strategy in comparison to Lil-Lets by exploring consumer perceptions of the menstrual hygiene management brands.

Consumer Perception

Consumer perception is defined by (Agyekum, 2015) as a process by which consumers sense a marketing stimulus, and organise, interpret, and provide meaning to it. The marketing stimuli may be anything related to the product and/or brand and any of the elements of the marketing mix. The concept will be conceptualised throughout the research study and will refer to the way in which a consumer interprets, organises, and consciously experiences information about whether a brand will be beneficial to them and will be influenced by the consumer's past experiences. This concept is relevant to the research as the researcher is

looking to explore how consumers perceive the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands.

Established Brand

An established brand is defined by (CollinsDictionary, 2017) as a brand that has been around for a long time. Its product or service offering is easily recognisable by its consumers and competitors because of its quality, reliability, and reputation thereby sustaining a competitive advantage and a large share of the consumer market. The concept will be operationalised throughout the research study. For the purpose of the research, an established brand will refer to a brand that is easily recognisable by consumers within the market. This concept is relevant to the research as the researcher is looking to compare consumers' perceptions of the positioning strategies of an established menstrual hygiene management brand to an emerging brand. An example of an established brand is Lil-lets.

Emerging brand

According to (Zorraquino, 2018) an emerging brand refers to a brand that is new to a market. In the context of the research study, the concept will be operationalised and will refer to a brand that is relatively small, new to the market, and caters to the growing consumer needs and demands by driving category growth within the market. The concept is relevant to the research study as the researcher is looking to compare consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of an emerging menstrual hygiene management brand to an established brand. An example of an emerging brand is Palesa Pads.

Research Methodology

Paradigm

The research paradigm refers to the way in which a researcher investigates a chosen phenomena. It acts as a guide line with regards to what should be researched/studied as well as how to conduct the research study. This includes the research design which, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) is the methodology. For the interpretivist, the research methodology will be qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews or focus groups because interpretivism aims to gain an in-depth understanding whereby the researcher is the primary research instrument who is sensitive to the context of the study. The objective of this research study is to explore consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of Menstrual Hygiene Management brands Palesa Pads and Lil-lets meaning that the object of observation is people.

According to Ahmed (2008) ontology is defined by Crotty (2003) as “the study of being” meaning that it is concerned with the nature of reality, in context of interpretivism where the nature of reality is one where knowledge is subjective meaning there is no single reality. The perceptions of people is different and based on their experiences. Furthermore, states that within interpretivism, interpretations of any kind vary based amongst individuals because of the individuals inherent biases and prejudices. The interpretivist paradigm considers behavioural aspects that rely on participants' lived experiences which means that it seeks the “perceptions of a particular social context” (Pham, 2018). This ties in perfectly with the objective of the research project which is to explore the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands.

The paradigm is of the belief that reality and knowledge are socially constructed by humans and at the core, the paradigm is interested in understanding human behaviour. Furthermore, it acknowledges that multiple realities exist, and these realities influence the meaning humans have because of their interaction with culture, their circumstances, and social reality Pantelo (2017).

Seeing as consumers construct and associate their own meaning to brands, and positioning involves placing a brand in the mind of consumers, interpretivism aligns perfectly with the research study as it aims to understand the unique realities of the consumers which, Killam (2013) states as the axiological interpretivism and how they interpret the positioning strategies of emerging brand *Palesa Pads* and established brand *Lil-Lets* based on their internally experienced reality. The paradigm is relevant to the research as it will allow for an in-depth understanding of consumers and their decision-making process with regard to menstrual hygiene management brands.

Research design

The research was conducted using the qualitative approach. According to Boulderston and Palmer (2006) qualitative research aims to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviours of individuals, and their individual perspectives, and perspectives. This approach is appropriate for the specific research study as the purpose of the research is to explore consumers' perceptions of the positioning strategies of the Menstrual Hygiene Management brand *Palesa Pads* compared to *Lil-Lets*. The qualitative approach ensured that the data collected is subjective information from the participants, allowing the researcher to stay within the realms of the interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, the approach revealed consumers' views and perspectives of the concepts (Roininen, Arvola & Lahteenmaki, 2005).

The research design was in the form of interviews whereby open-ended questions were asked. The interview process was in line with the Gutman (1982) Means-End Chain model which utilises the laddering technique for interviews. The laddering technique, as described by Corbridge, Rugg, Major, Shadbit, and Burton (1994) is a questioning technique that allows for a comprehensive investigation whereby knowledge is elicited.

Population

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) defines population as, “the total group of people or entities from whom information is required”. The population refers to all the units with attributes or characteristics that fall within the population parameters in which the

research study is interested (Davis, 2014). The target population for the exploration of the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management will therefore be all consumers who menstruate and most likely have some buying power. The age group of consumers between 18 and 48 is more likely to make independent choices about the menstrual hygiene management products they use and therefore are the targetted population.

However, the accessible population, which (Pascoe, 2014) defines as the participants that can be included in the study, will be consumers who have access to the internet as the interviews will be conducted online and are above the age of 18 because of ethical reasons. The accessible population included individuals who had finished Grade 12 and are either studying towards a university qualification, have graduated, or are employed. This allowed the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews and ask questions related to the perceptions of menstrual hygiene management brands.

In the context of this research study, the population parameters were as follows:

- Consumers who menstruate
- Consumers between the ages of 18 and 48 because they have buying power
- Consumers who have access to smart phones, computers, and internet connectivity such as Wi-Fi or data.

Sample

The research study made use of a non-probability, purposive sampling method. This sample of respondents was selected for this study based on accessibility to the researcher and the respondents' willingness to participate (Rutterford, 2012).

Purposive sampling was utilised, in line with the qualitative nature of this research to use the research question to determine which characteristics were most important to this study. This method ensured that each element identified within the target population is included in the research study. The characteristics of this study,

therefore fit the profile of menstruators within Johannesburg and the sample consisted of menstruators between 19 and 48, and these respondents were obtained using a voluntary willingness to participate. The experiment was carried out in Johannesburg South Africa, and the selection criteria included, access to zoom. Johannesburg was identified as the area of interest as there are a variety of consumers with different menstrual hygiene management preferences. Considering that the research is aimed at exploring the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brand *Palesa Pads* compared to *Lil-lets*, a random selection of participants will not provide the necessary findings.

The intended sample size was 10, although the final sample size was 8 participants as that was the number of individuals who were able to participate in the interview sessions. All participants were over 18 years old. The sample size is sufficient for a qualitative study and the researcher could still gain thorough results as the questions were open-ended (du-Plooy Cilliers, et al., 2014, p. 135).

Data collection

The research study will make use of the Means-End Chain as the basis whereby laddering interviews will be used to collect the data. The laddering technique is a semi-structured interviewing technique that aims to understand consumers' motivations (Gruber, Szmigin, Ripple & Voss, 2008) and the reasons behind certain consumer decision-making in order by exploring consumers' views, ideas, beliefs, preferences and attitudes towards the topic. According to (Park, Vandekerckhove, Lee & Jeong, 2020) it is the main technique used to elicit the Means-End Chain. This more in-depth profiling of the consumer and their relationship to products offers potential not only for understanding the "cognitive" positionings of current products but also permits the development of positioning strategies for new products.

Laddering interviews are relevant to the research study as they will ensure that the researcher gains in-depth insight into the specific views, ideas, beliefs, preferences, and attitudes of the consumers with regard to menstrual hygiene brands Palesa Pads and Lil-lets. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to differentiate a specific brand,

not by focusing on a product attribute, but rather by deducing how brands can communicate how they deliver higher level consequences and ultimately how they may be personally relevant to their consumers and thus, how they create a positioning which they use for advertising (Zinas & Jusan, 2009)

This subjective data collected from the participants correlate with the interpretivist paradigm and as such the qualitative approach.

The semi-structured interview will be conducted by the researcher in order to probe participants by repeatedly asking them questions about why specific attributes, consequences, and values are significant to them. Each answer the participant gives will be used as a follow-up question in order to further elicit more information from the participants. Each question will pertain to the consumers' perception of menstrual hygiene management brands and in turn, their positioning strategies in comparison to each other.

Data Analysis

According to Nieuwenhuis (2021), the content within qualitative data is full of symbolic meaning and qualitative data analysis aims to interpret the way in which participants understand a phenomenon based on their perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and feelings (Nieuwenhuis, 2021). It is inductive in nature, whereby the most dominant themes within the raw data are allowed to emerge on their own accord.

The approach the researcher will use will be content analysis. Content analysis is defined by Stemler (2001) as cited by Nieuwenhuis (2021) as “a systematic replicable technique for compressing many words of texts into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding”.

After all the interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the content and read through it to familiarise themselves with the data. Following the multiple read-through the data, the researcher categorised the data into different themes that emerged, a process known as coding that provides meaning to the raw data collected in the field. This facilitate the analysis process by decreasing the volume of

text collected by identifying categories that helped the researcher understand the perceptions consumers held about the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands.

An inductive thematic coding approach was used in order to find themes. Some of the themes identified reiterated the themes identified from the theories and literature review. A qualitative content analysis was used which allowed the researcher to identify themes and patterns in the data collected (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014, p. 234-235). The steps that were used to analyse the data are outlined below:

1. Preparation of data collected:

The participants were notified and they gave consent for their interview sessions to be recorded. The interview was transcribed and prepared using Microsoft Word Documents. The researcher made notes and impressions throughout the interview process as well as when transcribing the data to get familiar with the data.

2. Defining the coding unit to be analysed:

Words and phrases were used as a coding unit by the researcher as it was easy to manage the participants' answers. The word and phrases were colour-coded according to their similarities and differences.

3. Developing categories and coding schemes:

The related data were grouped together according to similarities and colour-coded. This made it easier to identify the categories.

4. Drawing conclusion from the coded data:

The researcher interpreted the themes and codes that were created. The researcher then looked over the theories identified in the literature review namely the Means-End Theory, the Emerging Brand Dynamics Theory, and the Brand Positioning Effectiveness Theory.

5. Methods and findings report:

The information that was not coded or categorised into themes was disregarded and the specific categorised data was used to answer the research question and objectives.

Findings and Interpretation of findings

Attributes	Consequences (functional - immediate & tangible benefits from experience with the product) (psychological - emotional benefits achieved from experience with the product)	Values (Instrumental - the cognitive representations of 'preferred modes of conduct or behaviour') (Terminal - 'preferred end states of being', such as happiness or freedom)
Right fit (length)	functional	Terminal e.g Comfort when using the product
Absorbency	functional	Instrumental e.g Assurance of being hygienic/cleanliness
Affordability	functional	Terminal e.g. dignity
Accessibility (available where they shop)	functional	Terminal e.g. dignity
Quality	functional	Instrumental e.g.
Size (thickness)	functional	Instrumental e.g cleanliness
Scented/Unscented	functional	Instrumental e.g. cleanliness/hygienic
Longevity (reusability)	functional	
Comfort	psychological + functional	Instrumental e.g. confidence
Mobility (does it move around/are you are able to move freely with no worries of the product shifting)	functional	Instrumental e.g. confidence

Material used (cotton/plastic/fabric)	functional	Terminal e.g. dignity
Adhesiveness	functional	Instrumental e.g.
Packaging	Psychological	Instrumental e.g. feel girly

Findings: Consumers are aware of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands

Most of the consumers found information about the menstrual hygiene management brands through word of mouth, Instagram, YouTube ads or advertisements on Television. Consumers resonated more with the brand and product through visual media. Participants were able to identify that the established brand used visual media to evoke an emotional connection with the target audience and provided contextual information on their dedicated website. Lil-lets spread different messages across their various platforms whereas Palesa Pads spread the same message across all their platforms. When comparing the two videos, consumers resonated with the Palesa Pads visual media because it provided educational and constructive skills with regard to menstrual hygiene management. This demonstrates the shift Olivio (2017) stated in the context of the dialogue around the portrayal of menstruation within the media whereby consumers prefer dialogue that provides menstruators with tangible skills that contribute to menstrual hygiene management and sanitary dignity. All the participants were able to identify how the menstrual hygiene management brands positioned themselves through their use of media.

Interpretation of findings: Consumers resonated with the positioning of the emerging menstrual hygiene management brand Palesa Pads. Their perception is mostly as a result of the information that was shared by Palesa Pads.

Consumers perceive Palesa Pads, the emerging menstrual hygiene management brand, as educational, centered on sustainability although one associates the brand with the underprivileged. The consumers displaying their understanding of the differences and similarities they saw in each of the menstrual hygiene management brands helped answer the research question.

Findings: Consumers attitude towards established menstrual hygiene management brands

Established menstrual hygiene management brands have been in the menstrual hygiene management industry for a while. The participants recalled a time period, (the early 2000s) whereby menstrual hygiene management was taboo and rarely spoken of in the public. They recognised that the imagery that was used in that time

period (the early 2000s) was unrealistic, regressed the way they interacted with their menstrual cycle due to the way they demonstrated menstrual hygiene management through flowers and blue liquid. As time has passed, certain consumers feel as though menstrual hygiene management brands have evolved through the use of imagery they believe “shows the highs and lows of what women go through when they’re on their periods” a consumer states. This is corroborated by the literature which states that “there has been a shift in the way in which menstruation is communicated in the media”. Although, other consumers believe that established brands continue to display menstruation in a discreet manner through the use of imagery that is abstract such as sports and activities and words that do not align with the context.

Interpretation of findings: Consumer have some negative towards the positioning of established menstrual hygiene management brands

Consumers find that established menstrual hygiene management brands tend to have an abstract perspective when it comes to displaying what menstruation is. There is a use of imagery that is unrelated to menstruation or rather that displays menstruation incompletely. Consumers believe that established brands are pushing a narrative whereby menstruation is far from the reality of the experience as if the people coming up with the message have not experienced what menstruating actually feels like. One consumer states “why do we need to be poetic about periods guys? Can we not just speak about them? Why must they be philosophical” the consumer goes on to say “sometimes when we try to normalise stuff, we overcomplicate them”.

Although consumers’ perception of the positioning strategies of established menstrual hygiene management brands was negative, the researcher found that most consumers’ still preferred to use established menstrual hygiene management brands during menstruation as they provided attributes that led to terminal values such as dignity. One consumer states “I am lazy during my periods, so it is o much eaier for me to use a product that I won’t need to wash everyday I can just dispose after use, thats why I still use normal pads”

Findings: Consumers attitudes towards emerging menstrual hygiene

management brands

When looking at emerging menstrual hygiene brand Palesa Pads, there was an understanding from consumers about the importance of sustainability and the significance of using products that are reusable. One consumer stated that “Palesa Pads saves a lot of money and it somehow saves the planet because there are people that dispose of pads in the wrong way”. Consumers associated reusable menstrual hygiene products as having quality and longevity. Consumers who had no prior knowledge of the brand were willing to try it out with one consumer stating “I would like to try out Palesa Pads now that I know about them”.

However, there were consumers who associated reusable pads as products for the underprivileged. One consumer stated “if we could do pad drives with reusable pads they would never have to worry about menstrual hygiene product access because of the longevity of a reusable pad but, the perception of it would be that it is a thing for poor people and you know we hate poor people and we don’t want to use things that are for poor people”.

A consumer appreciated the message that Palesa Pads was displaying as it was educational and “they break down what their products has the different layers, the waterproof layer”. The consumer identified the knowledge shared through the ad and stated that it contributed to what menstrual hygiene management brand they gravitated towards.

Interpretation of findings: Consumers have a positive attitude towards the positioning strategy of the emerging menstrual hygiene management brand Palesa Pads

Most consumers understood the significance of Palesa Pads in the context of their sustainable approach to menstrual hygiene management. They appreciated the effort to educate menstruators about how to use their product and identified this as a way in which the menstrual hygiene management skill was being nurtured and developed.

Although, consumers expressed that the effort of using a reusable pad during

menstruation discouraged them from using it. This is reiterated by Zinas & Juan (2009) as they identified that the experience of the product/service outweighs the functional benefits.

Findings: The role of product attributes of menstrual hygiene management products in the perception of the positioning strategy of menstrual hygiene management brands

Product attributes are usually communicated through visuals and copy. When looking at the brand material of Palesa Pads, consumers were able to identify and associate attributes such as “right fit”, “size”, “absorbency”, and “longevity” to the emerging brand. However, they could not identify any attributes associated with Lil-Let based on the visuals displayed. One participant mentioned, “Palesa Pads is selling their actual product, they explain how to use it, the product sizes that are available whereas Lil-Lets sells an abstract concept attached to their products like women empowerment”. Although the attributes are explicitly shown in the visuals, (UPrepository, 2006) mentions that because of the nature and aggressiveness of advertising there are usually determinant attributes that influence the decision-making of consumers. This was corroborated by one consumer who mentioned that “Palesa Pads has a good initiative because they don’t contribute to littering, although I prefer Lil-Lets because Palesa Pads is better for the disadvantaged who don’t have the means to buy pads every month and they are reusable”.

Interpretation of findings: Consumers’ perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands were influenced by the use of product attributes although the purchase decision was not

Based on the product attributes that were visually displayed by the emerging brand Palesa Pads in their advertisement, consumers’ were able to answer J.-N. Kapferer (2008) positioning questions that provide the relevant value proposition in the minds of consumers namely; why? For whom? When? Against whom? Through this, Palesa Pads positioned themselves as a sustainable alternative to the everyday conventional menstrual hygiene management brand by communicating the longevity of the product, the reusability and the right fit, the absorbency, and the material used.

Although some consumers had a negative attitude towards the brand, the positioning was distinct because of the product attributes that were displayed.

Lil-Lets echoed what Keller, Aperia, and Georgson (2012) stated in terms of established brands utilising their core brand associations and what they stood for as it evolved as a positioning strategy. The brand does not corroborate with the Means-End Chain as it does not utilise product attributes to influence consumer perceptions of the brand.

Trustworthiness of research

Trustworthiness

The nature of the research study is qualitative in nature as it aims to explore individuals' feelings and decision-making process which, in context, is the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of the menstrual hygiene management brand of Palesa Pads and Lil-Lets. Therefore, trustworthiness will be used to reflect the validity and reliability of the research conducted. Nieuwenhuis (2021) states that trustworthiness is significant to qualitative research as it Trustworthiness shows that the results from the study are sound and that the outcome that has been stated from these findings is true and can be trusted (du- Plooy Cilliers, et al., 2014, p. 258). It is divided into four principles namely; credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

According to Nieuwenhuis (2021) credibility refers to the accurate and believable description of the phenomenon being studied and researched. In the context of this research study, credibility will be ensured by means of conducting ladder interviews where the questions will be open-ended and in-depth descriptions of the consumer's perceptions are collected.

Transferability

According to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as cited by Nieuwenhuis (2021) transferability refers to the ability of the research study to be conducted by a different researcher and produce similar results. In the context of the research study, the transferability

will be enhanced by means of thorough descriptions of the research methods such as the research design and the participants. The use of a purposive sampling method will also enhance the transferability of the research.

Dependability

Dependability is the process that takes place between data collection, data analysis, and the theory that is produced from the data; it also refers to the stability of the data over time and under different conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability is upheld by the research design in terms of the data analysis procedure as the way in which the researcher will arrive at their interpretation will be documented throughout the data analysis process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is how the findings and interpretation are supported by the data collection. The way in which other researchers will interpret the data collected will guide them to arrive at a similar conclusion (du-Plooy Cilliers, et al., 2014, p. 259). The confirmability will be enhanced by describing the participants' responses in thorough detail that excludes bias from the researcher.

Conclusion

The conclusion completes the research on consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of the menstrual hygiene management brand Palesa Pads compared to Lil-Lets. The research question, objectives, and problem are discussed, and how the researcher addressed this. Furthermore, the ethical considerations, limitations, and heuristic value is discussed as well as recommendations going forward.

The research question was: What are the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands Palesa Pads compared to Lil-lets?

The objectives were: To compare the brand positioning strategies of the emerging brand *Palesa Pads* and the established brand *Lil-Lets* and to explore consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of the emerging brand.

The research question was answered by conducting in-depth interviews online via zoom and understanding their perceptions of the phenomenon. The in-depth interviews led the researcher to find that consumers perceive the emerging brand Palesa Pads to be sustainable, environmentally friendly, and of quality. Furthermore, the consumers perceive the established brand Lil-Lets as abstract, unrelated to menstruation or menstrual hygiene management.

This addressed the objectives as it revealed consumers' perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands. The majority of the participant's responses were negative towards the established brand Lil-Lets as their positioning within the visual advertising campaign did not include any product attributes. The researcher found that even though the perception toward the positioning of Lil-Lets was negative, the overall perception of the brand was positive due to the experience with the products offered by the brand as compared to the product offered by Palesa Pads. Furthermore, the researcher found that the sustainable positioning strategy, as well as the product, attributes affected the purchase decisions for Palesa Pads.

The research problem was: There is limited research conducted on the positioning strategies used by menstrual management brands, the consumer perceptions of these positioning strategies, and how they have allowed for the growth of the menstrual hygiene management industry within South Africa. The research study aimed to explore and compare the consumer perceptions of the positioning of the established brand Lil-Lets, and the emerging brand Palesa Pads in the market by comparing the positioning strategies used by each brand.

The researcher felt that the research problem has been solved, as there was insight gathered into what consumers' perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management through the research study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance will be obtained from The Independent Institute of Education (IIE) before the data collection process begins. According to the IIE Policy, high-risk research includes people under the age of 18 and illiterate people who are not fluent in the language of the study (The IIE, 2018). This will not be applicable to the research study as the population that has been identified is everyone above the age of 18.

For the researcher,

The participants adequately informed the participants about the intentions of the study and their power to decide if they want to participate or decline.

1. Informed consent

All the participants will sign a consent form whereby they outline their consent to participate in the study. No incentives will be given. The researcher avoided misinterpretation, falsification, or the misinterpretation of results (Arifin, 2018) and this will be assured by correctly coding, categorizing, and thoroughly analyzing the data provided by the participants. The researcher has ensured that participants clearly understand what is expected of them during the participation by explaining the process the in-depth interview will take beforehand.

2. Confidentiality and anonymity

The researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants by substituting the names of the participants with numbers.

3. Dealing with sensitive information

The researcher ensured to remove any bias when conducting the data collection as well as when analysing and interpreting the data by being objective.

For the participant

All participants will be required to sign a consent form whereby they agree that they will be volunteering and willing to participate in the research study before they could begin with the interview. Due to the research being voluntary, participants will be informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any given time. The confidentiality of the participants will also be upheld by not revealing their names and identity in the collection, analysis, and presenting of the data.

Limitations

For this study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 6 participants. The research project focused on the consumer perspectives of South Africa which is a developing country thereby, the findings may not be applicable to a developed country whereby there is no menstrual poverty. Additionally, the research was conducted over a limited time whereby, the researcher only had 3-4 months after they had obtained ethical clearance to conduct the in-depth interviews, analyse and interpret the data.

Anticipated Contribution

The research study will add to the information regarding consumer perceptions on the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands within a South

African context as there is limited research that has been conducted. The study will include information about consumers' purchasing decisions and perceptions and how these are influenced by the positioning strategies of the brands. The findings and information gathered will be valuable to both emerging MHM brands looking to enter the market and start targeting consumers as well as established brands either looking to improve their competitive advantage and increase their market reach. Although the research identifies consumer behaviour, it is imperative that evaluation also includes the competitive relationship among the brands within the market.

Concept Document Table

<u>Project Details</u>		
<u>Your Name:</u> Motheo Mokoto	<u>Student Number:</u> [REDACTED]	
<u>Supervisor:</u> Cerneels Coetzee	<u>Date:</u> 02 December 2022	<u>Version:</u> 4

<u>Proposed Title</u>	
<u>Title</u>	Exploring consumers' perspective on the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brand: a comparison between Palesa Pads and Lil-Lets.

<u>Research details</u>	
<u>Problem statement</u>	There is limited research conducted on the positioning strategies used by menstrual management brands and how these strategies have allowed for the growth of the menstrual hygiene management industry within South Africa
<u>Purpose statement</u>	The purpose of this study is to compare the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategy of an emerging and established menstrual management brand and how the brands create brand trust. This will allow for an in-depth understanding to be gained into the different strategic brand positioning strategies used by an established menstrual management brand, Lil-Lets, and a newer emerging South African menstrual management brand, Palesa Pads.
<u>Research question/s</u>	What are consumer perceptions on the positioning strategies of emerging brand Palesa Pads compared to established brand Lil-Lets?
<u>Hypotheses/ Objectives</u>	- To compare the brand positioning strategies of emerging brand Palesa Pads and established brand Lil-Lets - To explore consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of emerging brand Palesa Pads and established brand Lil-Lets
<u>Research rationale</u>	South Africa is plagued by menstrual poverty, in the recent years, as menstrual justice and activism has increased, there has been an emergence of menstrual management brands. Seeing as the products produced by these brands are extremely personal choices, and most consumers prefer not to take risks when it comes to hygiene products (Businesswire, 2015) the research aims to compare how brands <i>Palesa Pads</i> and <i>Lil-Lets</i> position themselves within a fragmented market in order to create brand trust for their consumers. In order for these brands to compete in a fragmented market whereby even big brands are struggling to create differential advantage (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos,

	2010), the research looks to understand how Lil-lets South Africa and Palesa Pads currently position themselves as well as understand the differences between their positioning strategies.
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<u>Literature overview</u>						
<u>Key theories</u>	Means End Theory					
<u>Seminal authors/sources</u>	Gutman (1982)					
<u>Literature review themes</u>	<u>Theme 1</u> Menstrual Hygiene Management	<u>Theme 2</u> Menstrual Hygiene Management perceptions	<u>Theme 3</u> Brand positioning	<u>Theme 4</u> Emerging brand dynamics	<u>Theme 5</u> Consumer perceptions	
<u>Sources</u>						
<u>Key concepts</u>	Menstrual hygiene management Brand positioning effectiveness Consumer perception Established brand Emerging brand dynamics					

<u>Provisional Research Approach</u>				
Paradigm	<u>Paradigm</u> Interpretivism	<u>Epistemology</u>	<u>Ontology</u> Nominal	<u>Axiology</u>
Approach/design	Means End Chain Model			

<u>Provisional Research Plan</u>	
Population	The general population will consist of menstruating female South Africans, above the age of 18. The individuals who are targeted are expected to fully comprehend what factors they consider when purchasing menstrual management products. In context of this research study, the population parameters are as follows: Consumers who menstruate Consumers with access to the internet or wifi and a zoom account

	Consumers who are aware, or have been exposed to the menstrual hygiene management brands <i>Palesa Pads</i> and <i>Lil-Lets</i>
Sampling	A purposive sample
Data collection method(s)	Laddered Interviews and in-depth interviews
Data analysis method(s)	Content analysis will be used to analyse the interviews conducted. The information will be coded according to attributes, consequences and values. A meaning matrix that informs the hierarchical value map will be used to reveal connection between the model.

<u>Ethical considerations and limitations</u>	
Ethics	Anonymity will be maintained to protect the data collected (response) from the participants that may be used within the research. The research will be voluntary and consent will be requested. No participants under the age of 18 years old will be considered due to ethical considerations Ethical clearance will be obtained from the research supervisor as per institution guidelines
Limitations	The research project focuses on the consumer perspectives of South Africans which is a developing country thereby, the findings may not be applicable to a developed country whereby there is no menstrual poverty. Additionally the research will be conducted over a limited time.

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Anexxure

Ethical clearance form



Date

Student name: Motheo Mokoto
Student number: [REDACTED]
Campus: Online

Re: Approval of RESE8419/RMET8429 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS/PGDip ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

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

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

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

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

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

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:

Signature:

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name:

Signature:

Consent form

Annexure K

[Type here]

2021

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Motheo Mokoto to audio record my interviews as part of the research about exploring the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands Palesa Pads compared to Lil-Lets. 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

Ethical checklist



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☒	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Motheo											
Last name(s)	Mokoto											
Title of study	Exploring the consumer perceptions of the positioning strategies of menstrual hygiene management brands: a comparison between Palesa Pads and Lil-Lets											
Qualification	BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☒	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Cerneels Coetzee											

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

Explaining your research process						
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☐	Interpretivism	☒	Constructivism	☐
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐
	Functionalism	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐
	Other:					
Research design:	Interview	☒	Questionnaire (self administered)	☐	Focus group	☐
	Ethnography/ Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐
	Other (if so, state)	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	South African menstruators above the age of 18 who have experience with or have been exposed to Palesa Pads and Lil-Lets					
Target group sampling methods/ artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	Purposive	☒	Random	☐	Snowball	☐
	Convenient	☐	Stratified	☐	Census	...
	Explain selection process		In context of this research study, the population parameters are as follows: Consumers who menstruate as well as Consumers who are aware, or have been exposed to the menstrual hygiene management brands <i>Palesa Pads</i> and <i>Lil-Lets</i> .			

Ethics		
Documentation submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper's letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒

	Participant or respondent consent form	X
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	X

Campus ethics committee recommendation

Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included.

- ☐ Accepted as is and provide letter
- ☐ Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: [e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor](#)
- ☐ Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Supervisor signature

	Date
--	------

Co-supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature

	Date
--	------

Research Consent Form



ANNEXURE E (b) – RESEARCH CONSENT FORM (IIE007)

The research consent form is to be completed by applicants who are conducting research for the **purpose of studying** towards a degree at either The IIE or another higher education institution. This form is to be completed by candidates who either already obtained **ethics clearance** from the registered institution or requires a **gatekeeper's letter** from The IIE for ethical clearance approval to consent on the use of The IIE students, staff sites or artefacts for the specific research project. The IIE subscribes to the Belmont Report as guideline for ethical research practice. The Belmont report highlights the following three principles *respect for persons*, *beneficence*, and *justice* as critical when considering ethical clearance or consent. Carefully consider your request from an ethics perspective before you submit. The IIE's Ethics Committee has the right to withhold any research that is not in alignment with the institutional policies and best practices of ethical research.

1. Candidates that are **not affiliated** to The IIE.

Applicants are required to submit the following documentation:

- Annexure E (b) – Research Consent Form (IIE007)
- Proposal of the study that served at the registered institutions ethics committee.
- Data collection instrument (for example: questionnaire, or interview Schedule).
- Copy of the consent form to be shared with participants.
- The ethics clearance certificate from the institution where you are registered for your studies. Should the institutions ethics committee require a gatekeepers letter from The IIE as part of the ethics application at the registered institution it should be noted as such on the below application.

Submit all documents to research@iie.ac.za

2. Candidates affiliated to The IIE.

Applicants are required to submit the following documentation:

- Annexure E (b) – Research Consent Form (IIE007)
- Proposal of the study that served at the registered institutions ethics committee.
- Data collection instrument (for example: questionnaire, or interview Schedule).
- Copy of the consent form to be shared with participants.
- The ethics clearance certificate from the institution where you are registered for your studies. Should the institutions ethics committee require a gatekeepers letter from The IIE as part of the ethics application at the registered institution it should be noted as such on the below application.

if you are a staff member of The IIE, kindly share your documentation with the respective brand research manager.

The purpose of this request for research consent is to obtain:

Gatekeeper's Letter	
Research Consent	

About the researcher															
Title	Prof		Dr		Ms	X	Mrs		Mr						
First name(s)			Motheo												
Last name			Mokoto												
Student number			[REDACTED]												
SA ID number			9	8	1	0	1	6	0	1	8	4	0	8	4
Passport number (if applicable)															
Home address							Postal address								
Unit 183 Erand Creek Estate 13th Road Noordwyk, Midrand Gauteng							Tick if same as home address							X	
							Click or tap here to enter text.								
Code:			1687				Code:			[REDACTED]					
Telephone number							Cell phone number			[REDACTED]					
Email			[REDACTED]												

About the researcher's affiliations														
Institutional affiliation														
Institution enrolled at			Vega -Online											
Qualification name			BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management											
Discipline of study			Strategic brand management											
About the supervisor or promoter														
Lead or Main Supervisor/ Promoter														
Title	Prof		Dr		Ms		Mrs		Mr					
First and last names			Cerneels Coetzee											
Email address			[REDACTED]											
Co-supervisor / promoter														
Title	Prof		Dr		Ms		Mrs		Mr					
First and last names														
Email address														

About the methodology				
Indicate by ticking the appropriate block and answering the relevant sections.				
Questionnaire		Interviews		Observations
Existing		Structured		Number of observations
Own		Semi-structured	X	Note what will be observed
Open-ended		Number of interviews		

Number of respondents		Focus group or workshop	
Briefly identify, describe, or explain the questionnaire.		Participants per focus group	
		Number of focus groups	
	Briefly expand on the interview, workshop, or focus group questions.		
List of the student or staff groups, sites or artefacts under study			
Average time participants or respondents will be involved in research activities	45 minutes to an hour		

About the ethics considerations for the research						
Aspects considered for ethics consideration.	Informed consent	X	Anonymity	X	Confidentiality	X
	Committed to give feedback on the study	X	Voluntary participation	X	Vulnerable group involved	
	Elaborate on vulnerable groups		Other (specify):			
Additional Documentation to be submitted for Consent to be considered.	Research Proposal					X
	Ethics clearance certificate or letter from institution who approved the research/ study or request for a gatekeeper's letter to be supplied for ethical clearance process by registered institution.					X
	Data collection Instrument(s): interview schedule or questionnaire					X
	Participant or respondent consent form that includes information sheet for participants or respondents					X
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable):					X
Proposed submission date of the Ethics Clearance Certificate to The IIE.	Completion of the below fields is only required for candidates who requires a gatekeeper's letter as part of the institutional research ethics application process.					

Conditions for conducting research on or about students, staff, sites or artefacts of The Independent Institute of Education

1. A copy of the final paper must be submitted electronically to The IIE's Dean for Research and Postgraduate Studies at research@iie.ac.za as well as the Brand Research Manager no later than 30 days post finalisation.
2. The researcher(s) is not permitted to either refer to The IIE or any of its educational brands or to the name, logo, brand or any other identifiers of The IIE or any of its educational brands in any way, including, but not limited to, in questionnaires, surveys, interviews, proposal or research reports/articles. The IIE or educational brand in question must be referred to in a generic manner, for example, 'A private higher education institution/provider'.
3. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in the sample if the study is not anonymous.
4. If the Learning Management System (LMS) of The IIE is used, the researcher(s) is not permitted to refer to it by name. Learn needs to be referred to in a generic manner, for example "the Learning Management System of a private higher education institution/provider."
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the relevant person(s) at the brand or The IIE that would be involved in the study.
6. Research must be conducted in such a way that the normal programme and operations of the site/ offices is not interrupted.
7. The campus head of a site must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher(s) may carry out the research at the site.
8. The researcher(s) may only use this data for these research purposes and in no other way.
9. Should the researcher(s) wish to publish this research or in any way make the results public, for example by publishing the results on a social media platform, this IIE's Ethics Committee will need to approve a request to this end first.
10. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
11. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research and informed consent from the participants or respondents was obtained, and, even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising their own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. If any of The IIE reports or policies are used as part of the research, all identifying information needs to be removed.
14. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled or advised based on this.
15. The reference number of the permission letter, if permission is granted, must appear, in one format or another, on all research documentation distributed amongst IIE staff or students.

Declaration by the researcher (student)

1. I declare that all statements made by myself in this application are true and accurate; and
2. I accept the conditions associated with the granting of approval to conduct research and undertake to abide by them.

	19 June 2022
	
Signature of the researcher (student)	Date

Declaration by the supervisor/promoter

I declare that

1. the above student is enrolled at the institution to which the undersigned is attached;	
2. and that the research proposal and or study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the institution at which the student is registered; or request a gatekeepers letter as part of the institution's Research Ethics Clearance application process.	
3. and that the questionnaires/structured interviews/tests meet the criteria of: • Educational accountability; • Proper research design; • Sensitivity towards participants; • Correct content and terminology; • Acceptable grammar; and • Absence of non-essential/superfluous items.	
Signature of the supervisor/promoter	Date

Research Questions

1. What is your perception of Menstrual Hygiene Management brands?
2. How many menstrual hygiene management brands have you tried before settling with the one you currently use?
3. What are the considering factors when purchasing Menstrual Hygiene Management products?
4. What kind of Menstrual Hygiene Management brand do you prefer scented or unscented?
5. What kind of Menstrual Hygiene management product do you prefer tampons, pads, menstrual cups, period underwear or other?
6. What kind of Menstrual Hygiene Management pads do you prefer organic or normal or reusable?
7. Why do you consider those aspects when purchasing Menstrual Hygiene Management products?
8. How do you usually find information about Menstrual Hygiene Management brands?
9. What do you research about menstrual hygiene management brands before you purchase?
10. What is your understanding of a sustainable menstrual hygiene management product?
11. Which one of the two brands between Palesa Pads and Lil-Lets do you prefer?
12. Why is that your preferred brand of Menstrual Hygiene Management brands?
13. What do you notice first when watching Menstrual Hygiene Management brand ads?
14. What in the ad motivates you to purchase a specific Menstrual Hygiene Management brand?
15. Why are those the first impressions you notice about Menstrual Hygiene Management brand ads?