

Exploring The Role Integrated Marketing Communications Has On Brand Resonance: A Checkers Perspective.



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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BCom 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 for Higher Education Institution for degree purposes



Abstract

Brand resonance maintains the idea that building a strong brand is dependent on how its target audience feels, thinks and acts when a brand is involved (Keller, 2001). For a brand to be easily memorable to its consumers, it needs to be effectively developed and managed to further build its brand identity and maintain active relationships with its consumers through integrated marketing communications (Keller, 2001:3; Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, and McDonald, 2013:70). Hence, this research explored the role integrated marketing communications has on how consumers resonate with the brand Checkers.

This research took an exploratory research where qualitative data was collected through three semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's subjective perspectives concerning Checkers' pursuit of brand resonance (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). The data was analysed through a thematic analysis that enabled the researcher to explore both the hidden and evident themes rooted in the interview transcripts (Schreier, 2014). The findings showed that Checkers' IMC strategy helped ensure that consumers resonate with the brand by driving active engagement, attitudinal attachment and behavioural loyalty. This research contributes by assisting researchers and other brands understand the importance of an IMC strategy as a relationship building tool used to build strong brand connections and resonate with the consumer (Keller 2001:).



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION:

1.1. Introduction

This section focuses on providing the reader with context needed to gain a full understanding of the research problem and its significance. It consists of elements such as the research background, rationale, the problem and purpose statement. It also sets out the research question, purpose statement and research objectives.

1.2. Contextualisation

Building a strong brand is the main objective for every organisation with the goal to be successful. For a brand to be easily memorable to its consumers, it needs to be effectively developed and managed to further build its brand identity and maintain active relationships with its consumers through integrated marketing communications (Keller, 2001:3; Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, and McDonald, 2013:70). It is clear that integrated marketing communications has undergone some drastic changes over the years. As a result, marketers are now challenged with designing, implementing and evaluating integrated marketing communication programs and strategies that will effectively reach the consumers through diverse communication options to help the brand dominate the market and differentiate them from their competitors (Keller, 2001:219; Barker, 2013:184).

Checkers has developed an integrated marketing communications strategy that puts the brand ahead of their competitors. Their collectable campaigns such as My Little Shop, Stikeez, Super Animals, Angry Birds, My Little Garden and the recently launched My Little Checkers (Crouth, 2018) have become a unique way used by the brand to communicate and promote their offerings to the consumer.

Brand resonance maintains the idea that building a strong brand is dependent on how its target audience feels, thinks and acts when a brand is involved. These communication encounters and experiences with the consumer allow the brand to enjoy the benefits of brand equity, whereas consumers enjoy the benefits of brand resonance (Keller, 2001: 15).



Therefore, brands in the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) industry such as Checkers are challenged to form relationships with consumers that run deeper than just repeated purchases to drive sales, but also form relationships that resonate with n benefit the consumer to help form deep brand connections (Keller, 2001:13). Thus, this research helped in underpinning the role Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy played in building their brand equity by helping the brand resonate with their consumers.

1.3. Rationale

The FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) industry is becoming more competitive and dynamic. These are the frequently bought, consumer packaged goods that are in high demand (Kenton, 2019). Because of this, consumers are becoming increasingly savvy and changing their behaviour to make shopping more than just about buying goods but receiving a valuable experience, which has pushed brands within this industry such as Checkers to rethink and structure their communication approaches to affectively target their consumers (Dicey, 2016).

Being the pinnacle of the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, pursuing brand resonance can help reconnect consumers and brands within the current business context further increasing its market share and value in the market (Porter & Kramer, 2011)

By gaining an in-depth understanding of brand resonance and integrated marketing communications as a strategy used by Checkers can potentially provide other brands with ways of holistically communicating with consumers and delivering great value that will ultimately drive brand growth (Crane *et al.*, 2014). This presents a gap that can help other brands build and maintain better relationships driven by customer loyalty (Enslin & De Beer, 2015).

Therefore, it was relevant to research whether integrated marketing communications can be seen as a strategy used by Checkers to elevate their brand resonance by holistically communicating messages and delivering customer experiences that evoked various sets of feelings and emotions that influenced how consumers connected and felt "in sync" with the brand.



1.4. Problem statement

A brand has the ability of having a stronger impact and power on consumers than the product itself. To make sure that brands deliver value, communicating and presenting their offerings is very important to spark awareness and drive brand loyalty (Drewniany and Jewler 2014: 26).

Using integrated marketing communications as a strategy has grown in popularity due to the growing need for brands such as Checkers to originally integrate all of their communication efforts with the aim of creating a long-lasting emotional and psychological effect on consumers with the aim of building a strong customer-brand relationships induced by the consumers' experiences and perception of the brand (Hanekom, 2003 ; Sonhknd, 2014). Brands like Checkers are in pursuit of and use brand resonance to solidify these emotional and psychological links to consumers in order to build a strong brand that delivers value in more ways than one (Keller, 2001:9).

Therefore, this research explored the role Checkers' integrated marketing communications played in nurturing and maintaining brand relationships that influenced how consumers resonated with the brand.

1.5. Purpose statement

Applied research was the goal of this study. This allowed the researcher to assess integrated marketing communications in the context of Checkers and its role in driving brand resonance.

1.6. Research question

What role did integrated marketing communications have on how consumers resonate with Checkers as a brand?



1.7. Research objectives

2. To explore integrated marketing communications in the context of Checkers as a brand.
3. To explore the influence of integrated marketing communications on the consumers' relationship with Checkers.
4. To explore the role of brand resonance in building a strong brand.

1.8. Conclusion

This section provided a contextualisation of the research by providing a background and the relevance of the investigation. Furthermore, the research problem was defined, the purpose of the study was addressed which also detailed the research questions and research objectives.



SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses on discussing the theoretical foundation where central concepts that fall a part of the research are well-defined and a contextualized summary of previous literature is provided to provide a comprehensive understanding of brand resonance. The purpose of this literature review is to put the research into perspective, to identify the relevant models, as well as determining what is known or unknown regarding brand resonance (Howard, 2014:104).

2.1. Conceptualisation

The key concepts relevant to this study have been defined in the table below:

TABLE 1: KEY CONCEPTS

Term	Definition
Brand	A unique construct that aims to sustain all its stakeholders through products and services that bring value to their consumers (Smith, 2013). This research was carried out in context of Checkers, a brand within the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) sector known for providing consumers with quality products at supermarket prices (Checkers, 2019).
Brand equity	The market-based value acquired by a brand and given to its consumers to leverage and improve the organisation (Bick, 2011: 33; Bhasin, 2017). Checkers uses their brand and integrated marketing communications strategy to build positive brand associations and experiences that keep consumers aware of their products and their overall brand showing that the brand aims to deliver value to its consumers (Dods, 2017).



Brand Resonance	The relationship and connection that customers have with a brand influencing how they feel “in synch” with that specific brand (Keller, 2001: 8). Brand relationships are key in building and ensuring the success of a brand. Through their integrated marketing communications strategy Checkers was able to create various sets of feelings, emotions, associations and experiences that took a broader view on how loyal consumers are further impacting how connected and “in-sync” they felt with the brand (Keller, 2001: 8).
Integrated marketing communications	This represents the voice of a brand in ways that enables it to create a dialogue that communicates with consumers by informing, persuading, inciting and reminding them about a brands product or service offerings (Barker, 2013: 183; Keller, 2001: 823). Checkers uses integrated marketing communications as their chosen strategy to communicate with their consumers to create long-term relationships with both current and potential customers further contributing to an increase in consumer behaviour and consumer loyalty (Keller, 2001:6).

2.2. Theoretical foundation

This research’s theoretical foundation unpacks brand equity as an essential framework relevant for exploring the role integrated marketing communications has on Checkers’ brand resonance. This also serves as the starting point that ultimately frames the research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Bezuidenhout, 2016). Because this research adopted a interpretivist nature, the selected framework enabled the researcher to explore the research problem in a rich, in-depth and subjective manner that contributed towards a better understanding of the research topic (Bezuidenhout, 2016).



2.2.1. Brand Equity

In the world we are currently living in, brand equity is a frequently explored concept. This refers to a market-based asset that brings value to consumers and can be used to leverage and improve the organisation (Bick, 2011: 33; Bhasin, 2017). Brand equity consists of the marketing efforts that make up the different parts of a brand and is very dependent on the consumers' awareness and the relationship they have with the brand along with its monetary value (Keller, 2008; Bhasin, 2017). Tarrant (2018: 55) however takes a contradicting approach to brand equity that highlights the fact that there is a limited number of brands that consumers genuinely engage with in ways that evokes meaningful personal relationships. His views are motivated by the premise that people create deep relationships with other people but have shallow relationships with brands (Tarrant, 2018:55).

Brand equity is a model explored by both David Aaker and Kevin Keller. Aaker approaches brand equity as all assets and liabilities linked to a brand such as its name, logo and symbols which adds to or takes away from the value brought by a brand's product/service (Aaker, 1991). Aaker's brand equity model uses four drivers to create and measure the relationship consumers have with a brand. These drivers ensure that consumers receive good experiences with a brand's products or services further influencing the relationship that aims to make them feel connected to the brand (Aaker, 1991). The four drivers are; brand associations, brand loyalty, brand quality, brand awareness and other brand assets.

Brand associations can be understood as all the consumer associations triggered by a brand (Aaker, 1991). Aaker (1991), explains brand loyalty as "the degree to which consumers feel loyal to a brand". For example, how loyal customers are to the Checkers brand gives them the motivational reason to buy their products over the products offered in another competitor's stores. Perceived quality looks at the extent to which a brand's offerings are considered high quality by the consumer (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness looks at the degree to which consumers are made aware of a brand (Aaker, 1991). Lastly, other brand assets aim to channel relationships with other brands to increase their competitive advantage (Aaker, 1991).



Summarised, these drivers can be used by Checkers to build a strong, profitable and valuable brand that creates brand awareness, drives brand loyalty and creates good brand associations through their integrated marketing communication strategy (Aaker, 1991). The successful implementation of this strategy drives the perceived quality of the brands offerings, ensuring that consumers resonate enough with it to stop them from switching to competitor brands like Pick n' Pay and Spar for example.

Keller approaches brand equity through the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model. Keller (2003:7) argues that brands use this to build and evaluate a strong brand with a significant amount of equity guiding their marketing and brand building efforts. The model's is based on the premise that the power of the brand lies in the hands of the consumer through what they have felt, seen or heard about the brand. Therefore, marketers need to ensure that consumers have the right experiences with Checkers in order to evoke the right feelings, thoughts, perceptions, associations and beliefs (Keller, 2001:3; Stydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Keller's model of brand equity is represented in a brand pyramid consisting of four steps with 6 phases namely; brand building through brand awareness, brand meaning through unique brand associations, brand responses, and brand relationships through brand resonance (Keller, 2001:1). In his discussion, Keller (2001:3), highlights brand resonance as the most important step in his model placed at the top of the pyramid. This step is also the most relevant step that is most applicable to this research study.

2.2.2. Brand resonance

Brand resonance can be defined as how connected and "in-sync" consumers feel with a brand. This is achieved when a brand succeeds in building strong brand relationships with its consumers (Keller, 2001:15). Brand resonance is characterised by the depth of the psychological bond between the consumer and the brand and how the consumers activity influences the relationships formed with brands (Keller, 2001:15). In this model Keller (2001:14), highlights brand resonance as the most wanted yet difficult level for brands to successfully reach as It is only achieved when successful brand relationships are built on intensity, like how emotionally and psychologically consumers are attached



to Checkers, as well as activity, which focuses on how often consumers buy from Checkers and engage with the brand in other ways that are not linked to the buying and consuming of their products (Keller, 2001:3). Brand resonance can further be broken down into four sub categories namely; behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachments, a sense of community and active engagement (Keller, 2001:15).

Behavioural loyalty is defined as the frequent and repeat purchases of a brand like how frequently consumers purchase and make use of Checkers products. To generate high profits, the brand must find ways of generating generous amount of purchase volumes (Keller, 2001:15). Attitudinal attachment looks at how consumers love and see a brand as a special purchase (Keller, 2001:15). A sense of community looks at the consumers' shared sense of togetherness with other individuals associated with the brand whereas, active engagement focuses on how actively engaged consumers are with a brand through their time, energy, money and resources even when they are not purchasing or using it (Keller, 2001:15).

2.2.3. Checkers applied to Keller's CBBE model

- Behavioural loyalty: Through their campaigns, Checkers encourages behavioural loyalty by rewarding consumers with collectable items for every specific amount spent in store (Checkers, 2019).
- Attitudinal attachments: Checkers creates an attitudinal attachment through all the experiences consumers receive from every campaign they have launched. The brand has been able to tap into the consumers' emotions and cognition in order to be seen as a brand that is "collectable with a conscience" to create connections (Dicey, 2018; Crouth, 2018)
- A sense of community: Checkers' My Little Garden campaign positively benefitted both children and adults on a social level by encouraging and opening up the conversation that gave people the opportunity to start growing plants that benefitted their consumer. The campaign created a new community of self-sufficient gardens and gardeners that will continue once the campaign is over (Checkers, 2019; Dicey, 2018)
- Active engagement: This is carried out through a buzz wall that is created for every



Checkers' IMC campaign where the brand encourages consumers to actively engage with them by posting their pictures and tagging them on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the current running campaigns hashtag. In terms of their current My Little Checkers campaign, consumers are able to engage with the brand by exploring their online virtual store in order to stand a chance to win prizes. Consumers are able to engage with other elements of the virtual store which include solving brain blockers, learning through play and the block balance challenge for example (Checkers, 2019; Dicey, 2018; MediaUpdate, 2019).

Based on the evaluation of these two theories, Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model will be suited for this study as his model places brand resonance as an important aspect of brand equity where his brand resonance sub-categories can effectively be applied to help evaluate the role Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy played in building and ensuring consumers resonate with the brand.

2.2.4. Measuring brand equity

Keller (2003: 18) states that measuring brand equity can be done through two areas, namely; measuring the source of brand equity and measuring its outcome. Measuring the source of brand equity can be carried out using approaches that help capture the consumers' mindset and measure their perceptions, feelings, beliefs and attitudes towards a brand (Keller, 2003: 18). Measuring the outcome of brand equity focuses on using approaches to measure its outcomes such as customer loyalty (Keller, 2003:18). Measuring brand equity is key in helping the researcher determine if Checkers' IMC strategy was successful or not in building brand resonance with their consumers.



2.3. Review of literature

To help gain a complete understanding and detailed insight into the role integrated marketing communications has on brand resonance within a South African context, the Checkers brand will be studied. This section details branding, the Checkers brand itself and its use of integrated marketing communications in the brands pursuit of brand resonance.

2.3.1. Branding

Historically, brands were originally created as means to convey ownership and as a mark of quality (Kapferer, 2008:10; Berz, 2016). Brands have now evolved to become intangible assets with their own unique individual personality that is reflected through its identity, how it is presented and how it is perceived by its consumers (Drewniany & Jewler, 2014:26). A brand can be defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of these that delivers value, connects with its stakeholders and is differentiated from its competitors in the market (American Marketing Association, 2012; Enslin and Kloppe, 2016).

Brands play the role of signalling quality, fulfilling a promise of satisfying and consumers with unique products/services to create emotional and psychological connections while gaining financial return (Keller, 2003:2). Enslin and Kloppe (2011:15) reinforce this by highlighting that brands need to connect with consumers meaningfully no matter its social form by strategically defining what it stands for and delivering on its promise and purpose in all it does.

Within branding literature, Aaker (1996:112) and Keller (2001:8) outline the importance of brand identity in building strong brands which is directly linked to the brands image and perceptions held by consumers. Although multiple conceptualizations of brand identity exist, Aaker (1996:112) defines this as “a unique set of brand associations that a brand strategist aspires to create or maintain”. Whereas Keller (2001:8), argues that to create the most effective identity, brand salience needs to be created through strong brand associations that make up the brands image and also give it meaning. Both authors have different views on brand identity, however both views are grounded on the premise that an effective brand identity is key in informing, guiding, the developing, nurturing, and



implementation of a brand such as Checkers' overall Integrated marketing communications strategy, further contributing to its brand equity (Aaker 1996:112; Keller, 2001:8)

Therefore, for this research branding is relevant as the research intends to focus on Checkers, which is characterised as a distributor brand in all it encompasses, with the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding and insight concerning the brands integrated marketing communications strategy and its role in building and driving brand resonance ensuring consumers feel "in-sync" with Checkers.

2.3.2. Checkers

Checkers is a FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) retailer brand owned by the Shoprite Group operating in Southern Africa. The brand currently has a total of 239 stores, with 202 Checkers supermarkets and 37 Checkers-Hyper stores operating in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia (Checkers, 2019). Quality, convenience and freshness are some of the words that describe this brand which is targeted at the more affluent target audience falling under LSM 8-10 in search of a shopping experience considered world-class (ShopriteHoldings, 2019). Checkers has developed strong lifestyle departments with speciality ranges in cheese, wine, meat, deli foods and coffee, as well as in store departments that offer services like the Checkers Money market/Computicket that gives consumers the convenience of buying electricity, doing money transfers, buying domestic airline tickets, bus ticket, tickets to various leisure event and MediRite pharmacies that provide consumers with affordable and easily accessible healthcare services (ShopriteHoldings, 2019). The brands in store departments contribute to enhancing the consumers' overall grocery shopping experience.

2.3.3. Integrated marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) emerged from the field of marketing communications in the 1990's as a significant modern drive towards integrated actions. This represented the voice of a brand in ways that enabled it to establish a dialogue and communicate with their consumers by informing, persuading, inciting and reminding them



about their product/service offerings (Barker, 2013: 183; Keller, 2001: 823). In the 21st century, IMC is seen as a relationship building element used to manage communication programs over time through strategies that support the identity of the brand (Kliatchko, 2009:9; Barker, 2013: 185). Brands must capitalize on their integrated marketing communication in the most effective way, to ensure they create and maintain long-term relationships with current and potential customers further contributing to increased consumer behaviour and sustained consumer loyalty (Keller, 2001:6).

Therefore, these authors all approach integrated marketing communications from similar directions of IMC being focused on the consumer, centred around the specific channels used, and driven by the results generated from these actions.

The promotional mix is used by brands explain a set of components that work together to seamlessly communicate the brands value with consumers as well as to build a relationship between these 2 parties (Armstrong and Kotler, 2009). An effective promotional mix plays a role in stimulating consumer demands, effectively communicating the benefits of a brands offerings as well as creating and maintaining a favourable brand image, associations and perception (Todorova, 2015:368).

Moreover, Yang and Lee (2016:35) state that the promotional mix has the role of creating and maintaining a psychological connection between the consumer, the brand, its offerings and the ad campaign to further create brand loyalty. Without the promotional mix, Checkers would have not been able to cut through the clutter of information to successfully communicate their messages and make consumers aware of their campaigns. Along with their integrated marketing communications strategy, the brands use of the right promotional mix play a role in building relationships that ensure that consumers resonate with Checkers as a brand

For the purpose of this research, IMC is relevant because it helped support the identity of Checkers as a brand by informing, persuading, inciting and reminding consumers about their product offerings. IMC plays a role in focusing the research on the specific communications campaigns Checkers has implemented influencing what consumers felt, seen or heard about the brand. Therefore, IMC is essential in ensuring that the right



feelings, thoughts, perceptions, associations and beliefs were evoked to ensure that consumers felt “in-sync” with Checkers (Keller, 2003).

2.3.4. Checkers Integrated marketing communications

Checkers has developed an integrated marketing communications strategy that changed the game and put them ahead of their competitors. With successful campaigns such as the Little Shop, Stikeez, Super Animals, Angry Birds, My Little Garden and the new currently running My Little Checkers campaign, the brand had developed a unique way to communicate and promote their brand to their consumers (Crouth, 2018; TheLionsDen, 2019). The brands IMC strategy is driven by a loyalty campaign programme that reflects the brands core principles and focus areas by ‘rewarding’ consumers with collectible items which shows us that morals have become as important as value to the brand (Dicey, 2018; Crouth, 2018).

In a world where everything is digital, each campaign that was released by the brand played a role in encouraging adults and children to learn and play in a way that stimulates their imagination using functional and re-useable toys. The brands general manager, Willie Peters stated that innovative and educational collectables have become a part of who the brand is (Crouth, 2018; MediaUpdate, 2019).

The brands IMC strategy takes an omnichannel approach, ensuring that the campaign used the right promotional channels that added value to the consumers’ lives across all of their touch points (Dicey, 2018; Keller, 2001: 820).

2.4. Conclusion

This section included the identification of an appropriate theoretical framework and critically reviewing previous literature that is relevant to the exploration of brand resonance. This research’s theoretical foundation unpacked brand theory, brand equity as an essential framework relevant for exploring the role integrated marketing communications has on how consumers resonate with the Checkers brand (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Furthermore, a discussion on Checkers applied to Keller’s CBBE Model and measuring brand equity was provided in the brands pursuit of brand resonance. A



review of the previously published literature on the topic was finally provided. This detailed branding, an overview into the Checkers brand, integrated marketing communications and how the brand has made use of and leveraged this strategy.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology outlines the specific procedures used by a researcher to identify, gather, process and analyse information relating to the research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This section provides details into the selected paradigm for the study, the research approach, research design, population and sampling, the data collection method and the data analysis method used to explore integrated marketing communications and its role in ensuring Checkers consumers resonate with the brand.

3.2. Research paradigm

Paradigms are common concepts in the natural sciences and have been understood differently by different authors. It refers to the beliefs and norms that control and have an influence on what scientists in a specific field should study, how their research should be carried out and interpreted (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014:19). Bogdan & Biklen (1998: 22), define paradigm as "a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that guide thinking and research". Paradigms help determine and shape the abstract beliefs that influence how the researcher should view the world, how he/she interprets and acts in the world (Lather, 1986:52). Therefore, we can understand that paradigms guide how meaning will be created from the data collected, based on the researchers' point of view. There are three dominant research paradigms namely; positivism, critical realism and interpretivism which is the chosen paradigm to be further explored in this research (du Plooy-Celliers, 2014:19).

Interpretivism aims to gain a deep empathetic understanding of people's social behaviour



by being immersed in the population's environment. This is a paradigm used to describe meaningful social action and interpret human interaction. (du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014: 27). This paradigm is subjective and considers the interpretations and perceptions of humans to understand their social reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:60).

Taking this approach gives participants in this study the chance to educate the researcher about their lives through openly discussed values, beliefs, meanings and representations they have attached to Checkers, which ultimately shaped and answered the research question and objectives (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 28).

Epistemologically, interpretivism looks at the relationship between the researcher and the participant where the researcher creates meaning of their data through interactions with participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). In that regard, when generating information, common sense, reason, intuition and experiences can be seen as a subjective means of generating knowledge (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Therefore, the knowledge held by Checkers customers allowed for an in- depth understanding of their values, beliefs, meanings and the role the brand's integrated marketing communications strategy played in how they resonate with the brand (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:27).

Interpretivism considers reality to be a subjective social construction that is flexible as people's views, perceptions and sense of reality is continually changing due to the unique interactions and experiences they encounter (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:60). Ontologically, this helped the researcher reframe their thinking about the research problem, its significance, and how it will be approached to contribute to the solution (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Therefore, this research looked at the subjective views, perceptions and meanings participants created after interacting with and being exposed to Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy.

Interpretivism places high value on the uniqueness of the participants interpretations. Axiologically, it takes into consideration the value that will be gained from the different aspects of the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:28). It considers what value will be attributed to the different aspects of the research, the participants, the data and the



audience that will be exposed to the results of this research. The unique views, opinions and perceptions of Checkers gathered from the different participants all added value to the overall research enabling for a better understanding and meaning guided by the research question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Interpretive research does not seek the answers to the research question in rigid ways. Instead, reality is understood from the participants of the study by being immersed in their environment or the culture (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:28). Methodologically, a qualitative research design was used to help the researcher immerse themselves in the consumers environment, gain an in-depth understanding of their thoughts, feelings, emotions and values (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014: 174), which in- turn uncovered if Checkers succeeded in building brand resonance through their integrated marketing strategy.

Using interpretivism as a paradigm is relevant because the research explores integrated marketing communications in accordance with Checkers and how the brand has used this strategy to build brand resonance. The approach will guide the researcher in gaining an in-depth understanding of the subjective views, perceptions, values and meanings created by the consumers after being exposed to the brands strategy, and its role in driving a strong customer- brand relationship and loyalty.

3.3. Research approach and design

Research approaches influence how researchers choose to gather, analyse and interpret research data. This can be done both quantitatively and qualitatively. Furthermore, the chosen approach will determine the data collection and analysis methods that will be used (Davis, 2014: 93).

A qualitative research design was used to help the researcher gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings, behaviours, attitudes, values and experiences through data interpretation and understanding brand resonance from the unique and subjective meanings (axiology and ontology) consumers have attached to it (Davis, 2014: 93; du Plooy Cilliers, 2014: 21).



This approach was most suited due to the study's exploratory nature requiring the researcher to be fully immersed with the sample and data to be able to describe, unpack and gain a better understanding of the research problem to be able to answer it accurately and objectively (Dudovski, 2019; Lewis, 2015).

Additionally, this research was naturalistic in a sense that data collection will occur in a natural social setting (coffee shop in Menlyn) where interaction between the researcher and participant occurred, further solidifying the qualitative nature of this research (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

This research was conducted deductively where the researcher explored the general concepts of a theory (integrated marketing communications and brand resonance) and applied them to a specific topic under investigation (in the context of Checkers) with the help of a theoretical framework (Bezuidenhout, 2014: 48). The theoretical framework that was used to guide the research and benchmark the interview questions was Keller's CBBE model that helps reflect a harmonious customer-brand relationship driven by brand building efforts that measure the success of Checkers in successfully/unsuccessfully ensuring consumers resonate with their brand.

3.4. Population and sampling

3.4.1. Population

Population can be defined as the total number of people or groups where research information is gathered. The research problem and research question influence who the population of a study should be (Pascoe, 2014: 132; Wiid and Diggins 2013:186). The research population was measured using units of analysis that took into consideration the total amount of objects or people that make up the population (Pascoe, 2014:132). Three population parameters were used to adequately define the research population namely the nature, unique characteristics and size. These population parameters further played a role in defining and distinguishing between the research's target population referring to everyone fitting the populations constraints to help generalise the findings and accessible population referring to people or objects that can easily be accessed (Pascoe,



2014: 132; Bryman and Bell, 2015; du Plooy, 2001:100).

- **Nature of the population:** This study's unit of analysis consisted of people as the research was targeted at Checkers consumers in order to gather the necessary data that will in turn answer the research question and objectives.
- **Unique characteristics:** This research was targeted at affluent income earning males and females under LSM 8-10 aged between 18-35 years old who regularly purchase goods at Checkers stores.
- **Target population:** The target population for this research was frequent Checkers consumers from all geographical areas in South Africa.
- **Accessible population:** The accessible population for this research included frequent Checkers consumers within the Menlyn region in Pretoria.

3.4.2. Sampling

A sample is representative of the study's population and consists of people or objects with the same characteristics that will be contacted and analysed for research data (Pascoe, 2014: 134). Therefore, the sample for this research consisted of Checkers consumers (people) who became participants in this research (McLoed, 2014). Sampling can be carried out in two ways namely probability and non-probability sampling which was most applicable to this research. Non-probability sampling, which is qualitative in nature happens when objects or people are given an unequal chance to be a part of the research sample (Pascoe, 2014: 134; Uprichard, 2013: 9).

This method was best suited for this research as it was difficult to access all of Checkers' customer base. This research was qualitative, maintaining its exploratory nature that aims to understand the role Checkers' IMC strategy plays in helping consumers resonate with their brand. The focus was on the number of people needed from the accessible population to make up the sample size (Pascoe, 2014: 134). Therefore, the sample size for this research was three people in the Menlyn area who are frequent Checkers consumers.



Convenience and purposive sampling were the methods that was most applicable to this study. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to use a sample that consisted of people that are already known or those that can already be accessed at the convenience of the researcher (Pascoe, 2014). Whereas, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to purposely choose the people they wanted to be a part of the sample based on the stated population characteristics (affluent income earning males and females under LSM 8-10 aged between 25-35 years old and regularly purchase goods at Checkers stores) and disregarding those that don't qualify (Pascoe, 2014:142).

- **Inclusion criteria question:** This refers to the characteristics all the prospective participants needed to have in order to qualify and be included in the research (Garg, 2016). Therefore, participants needed to be aware of the Checkers brand to be included in this study.
- **Exclusion criteria question:** This refers to the characteristic that disqualified all prospective participants from being included in the research (Garg, 2016). Therefore, participants that were unaware of the Checkers brand were not part of the study.

3.5. Data collection

Data collection is a process of gathering information from all relevant sources. These are tools that will be used to gather and analyse data that will influence the outcome of the research (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014:174; Dudoviskiy. 2019). To explore the subjective reality upheld by each Checkers consumer, standardised semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as a data collection method for this research. This allowed the researcher to conversely ask the participants open-ended questions with the aim of learning more about their views, opinions, values, beliefs and their individual experiences with Checkers (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014:188; Stewart and Shamdasani. 2014). The interview guidelines (as seen in annexure 4) were benchmarked and structured around Keller's Brand resonance framework which asked questions that helped reflect a customer-brand relationship driven by Checkers' IMC strategy and it's role in ensuing consumers resonate with their brand. These interviews were conducted in a quiet coffee



shop in Menlyn mall and were recorded on 2 digital audio recording devices to aid in transcribing during data analysis and to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

To conduct this research in an ethical manner, participants were asked to sign a consent form (see annexure 3) before the commencement of any interview. This method was appropriate as it helped the researcher to conversely ask participants a set of questions driven by the research objectives to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' views, opinions, values, beliefs and experiences built around the Checkers brand (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014:188). A pre-test interview was scheduled with a participant that was not drawn from the sample but however, fit the population parameters. This was done in order to test the data collection method, establish the approximate time it will take to carry out the interviews as well as determining if any changes or additions/deletions need to be made to the interview questions (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014:188).

3.6. Data analysis

Once the research data is collected, it is important to establish how the researcher aims to sift through, sort, and organise the data through a chosen method (Dudoviskiy, 2019; Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014: 229). Due to the qualitative nature of this research, a qualitative data analysis approach was most suitable to enable the researchers to be immersed in the collected data, to identify the common patterns and to transform the data into meaningful findings relating to the role Checkers' IMC strategy has on how consumers resonate with their brand (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014: 229).

Thematic analysis was this study's chosen data analysis method as it helped the researchers identify the hidden and obvious patterns and themes rooted in the data collected from the participants during the interviews in detail (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014: 234; Clarke and Braun, 2013). The data will be analysed according to the following steps as presented in Table 2 below:



TABLE 2: THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS STEPS (ADAPTED FROM CLARKE & BRAUN, 2013; CLARKE & BRAUN, 2013).

Step	Data-analysis technique	Technique description
1	Prepare the data	This step focused on transcribing the raw data collected from the interviews with participants into Microsoft Word format (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).
2	Defining the code to be analysed	This focused on breaking the transcribed data down into parts that will represent the coding units prevalent in the data. These coding units was all be assigned a specific colour and marked differently to ensure that they can easily be distinguished for further analysis format (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).
3	Coding all the text	This step focused on scrutinising the data and using a specific colour to code the different parts of the text. Open coding was used as this research did not make use of set codes, but a coding scheme was established and adapted throughout the analysis process (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).
4	Identifying themes and coding consistency	This step focused on combining and labelling all the related codes into themes that was also reviewed and checked to ensure consistency during the analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).
5	Discussion of themes	This step focused on defining and interpreting all the themes uncovered as the researchers reconstructed meaning of the data by taking into



		consideration the meanings that were derived from the coding categories and themes to gain an understanding of the study in a broader context format (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).
6	Interpreting the findings	This focused on interpreting the findings gathered and created from the overall thematic analysis in relation to the research problem, question and objectives format (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The findings gathered in this step was linked and substantiated with the data under the literature review to ensure that these findings are solid, meaningful and align with the overall research study.

3.7. Conclusion

In this section the methodology followed during this research study was outlined. An interpretivist paradigm was selected, along with a qualitative research approach and an exploratory research design was applied. The population of the study in terms of the key characteristics and population parameters were discussed. Moreover, sampling was discussed and a non-probability sampling technique that aligned with the research was selected. Convenience and purposive sampling methods were used with a sample size that comprised of three participants who were Checkers customers. Finally, the chosen data collection method used was semi-structured in-depth interviews and thematic analysis was the chosen data analysis method.



SECTION 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

This section focuses on first interpreting and presenting the analysed data into research findings (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). As stated in the previous section, this data was analysed using thematic analysis which enabled the researchers to be immersed in the collected data to identify the common themes and to transform the data into meaningful findings relating to the role Checkers' IMC strategy has on how consumers resonate with their brand (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014: 229).

In this section, the uncovered themes are interpreted and further linked to the literature, theoretical framework, the research question and objectives.

Below is a summary that illustrates the main uncovered themes, the themes uncovered from the interview questions and the themes that addressed each research objective.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF THEMES

Uncovered theme	Interview question	Research objective
Theme 1: Understanding of Checkers as a strong brand.	Questions 2 and 3	Objective 3
Theme 2: Brand experiences.	Questions 4 and 5	Objective 2
Theme 3: The customer-brand relationship.	Questions 7 and 11	Objective 1 and 2
Theme 4: Brand loyalty.	Question 10	Objective 2
Theme 5: Participants' feelings regarding Checkers	Question 1, 6 and 9	Objective 1

The main themes that were uncovered from the three in-depth interviews [Please see Appendix 4] conducted amongst Checkers consumers at a coffee shop in Menlyn mall include: : Checkers as a strong brand, the consumers' experience with the brand, the customer-brand relationship, brand loyalty and brand image. Each main theme was



discussed to give context on what it is about and interpreted to help describe what the finding from the theme means (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

4.2. Findings and Interpretation of Themes

Theme 1: Understanding of Checkers as a strong brand

This theme incorporates the participants' response with regards to their understanding of what a strong brand is in context of Checkers and if they would consider it a strong brand or not.

Building a strong brand is the main objective for every organisation with the goal to be successful (Keller, 2001:3). All three participants stated that they would consider Checkers as a strong brand. By considering Checkers as a strong brand this shows us that participants agree with Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, and McDonald (2013:70)'s notion that strong brands are effectively developed and managed to deliver maximum value to the consumers.

Based on the responses it can be seen that Checkers fits all three participants' understanding of what a strong brand is.

Participant 1 stated that: "they know their customers, they know their target market and usually whatever that they are trying to do, advertise or whatever brand that they have it really attracts their marketed audience."

Participant 2 stated that: "it's a big brand because it is well known."

Whereas, participant 3 stated that: "It's just very inviting, that builds that strong connection with the consumer because it is something that you are used to and something that is familiar and I mean it's something that is not just for students like myself. I go there, I mean I know my mom would buy there, my brother would buy there, my uncle would buy there."

Interpretation of theme 1

The power of a brand lies in the hands of the consumer through what they have felt, seen or heard about the brand (Keller, 2001:3). Therefore, the findings mentioned above confirms the theory discussed in the literature review whereby Checkers was successful



in prompting positive feelings thoughts, perceptions, associations and beliefs among participants regarding their overall brand (Keller, 2001:3; Stydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Thus, contributing towards building a stronger brand equity that helps ensure that consumers feel connected with Checkers (Keller, 2001: 15). Because Checkers was considered by participants as a strong brand, it plays the role of signalling quality, fulfilling a promise of satisfying and consumers with unique products/services that create emotional and psychological connections while gaining financial return (Keller, 2003:2). Enslin and Klopper (2011:15) further reinforced this by highlighting that brands need to connect with consumers meaningfully no matter its social form by strategically defining what it stands for and delivering on its promise and purpose in all it does. Therefore, participants considering Checkers as a strong brand supports this statement.

Theme 2: Brand experiences

This theme incorporates the participants' judgements of the experiences they have encountered or subjected to with regards to Checkers. These past experiences helped participants determine the role Checkers plays in their lives and what makes it unique from their competitors. When asked what role Checkers play in their lives based on their experiences, 2 out of the 3 participants highlighted how the brand is always there for them and keeps them coming back by providing for all their needs/wants.

Participant 1 stated that: "I think it does play a role because in my shopping that is the shop that I usually go to its Checkers. Every month I go to Checkers, every weekend I go to Checkers, so I think they've played a major role in convincing me that they have a good customer service I think."

Whereas participant 3 stated that:" Checkers is just a store that is there for when I need to do my groceries at the end of the month...So, it keeps me coming back. So, feel like they play that role of; they are very consistent and they always have what I want."

Moreover, 2 out of the 3 participants felt that Checkers was unique because of the brands credibility and ability to cater to their various needs all at once which further shows that



participants find value from the different product/services they receive from Checkers (Aaker, 1991).

Participant 1 stated that: "Well Checkers they have a variety of most of the things. If you want a variety of cheese go to Checkers, you'll have all the variety of cheese. Whatever the cheese you think of, go to Checkers. To me it's a one-stop shop or something like that but me when I go to Checkers, I just come up with everything."

Whereas participant 3 stated that: " So, it is not just a grocery store, but it helps me fulfil other needs that I have like sending money or receiving money. It is like uhm, what can I say? It..yoh..It's gone ah! So, it's a brand that is able to suit like different needs of different customers and depending on their behaviour as well coz it has things for kids, things for adults, things for students depending on what you need, Checkers probably has it."

Interpretation of theme 2

The findings discussed above show that the participants' experiences and encounters with Checkers has enabled them to develop positive judgements regarding the role that it plays in their lives and what makes it unique. In the theoretical framework (Keller, 2001) argued that attitudinal attachment looks at how consumers love and see a brand as a special purchase. Checkers taps into this by using their credibility in terms of their ability to retain and cater to all of their consumers' needs/wants which has lead to them being more confident in the brand and its capabilities. Therefore, marketers need to ensure that their consumers have the right experiences with Checkers in order to evoke the right and desired response that will work in favour of the brand (Keller, 2001:3; Stydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). This is supported by Aaker (1991)'s notion that receiving good experiences with a brands products or services further influences the relationship that aims to make the participants feel "in-sync" and connected to the brand thus driving brand resonance.



Theme 3: The customer-brand relationship

This theme incorporates the type of and nature of the relationship that participants have with the brand as developing a good customer brand relationship is key in helping brands like Checkers drive customer loyalty which ultimately results in brand growth (Enslin & De Beer, 2015; Crane *et al.*, 2014).

It was identified that 2 out of the 3 respondents think that Checkers does go the extra mile to nurture and maintain its brand-relationship with them.

Participant 1 stated that: "I think they do, they go beyond."

Participant 2 stated that: "Well yeah, I would say that. I haven't went to Checkers one time and not gone back. So, with the things I buy they're probably on special and that is my sole reason for going back."

These respondents also made positive remarks with regards to how the brands' marketing strategy has influenced the relationship participants have with Checkers.

Although participant 1 and 2 had positive remarks regarding their customer-brand relationship with Checkers, participant 3 had contradicting responses.

Participant 3 stated that: "Uhm, currently no!..I don't receive any messaging unless it is that student discount campaign that they have rolling out at the time. The only time you receive communication for me is when you like see an advert on tv, or like you go in store where you have access to those pamphlets or brochures whatever the case may be. Either than that I don't engage with Checkers as much as I'd like to or as well as they should."

Interpretation of theme 3

The findings discussed above show the majority of participants' willingness to continue supporting Checkers due to their integrated marketing communications strategy. This was further displayed by participants stating that it attracts them to enter a store and helps



them shop with pride. This drives active engagement amongst participants which focuses on how actively engaged consumers are with a brand through their time, energy, money and resources (Keller, 2001:15).

This is supported by the theoretical framework because to achieve brand resonance, Checkers needs to succeed in building strong brand relationships with its consumers as stated by Keller (2001:15). He also states that brands like Checkers need to create an emotional and psychological bond with consumers as these influences the form of relationships formed with brands (Keller, 2001:15). Not all the participants (1/3) had positive remarks regarding their customer-brand relationship with Checkers. This finding is supported by Tarrant (2018: 55), who highlights the fact that there is a limited number of brands that consumers genuinely engage with in ways that evokes meaningful personal relationships. Because participant 3 feels that Checkers does not go the extra mile to nurture their relationship, this aligns with this authors views that are motivated by the premise that people create deep relationships with other people but have shallow relationships with brands (Tarrant, 2018: 55)

Theme 4: Brand loyalty

This theme incorporates participants' level of faithfulness towards the Checkers brand. Although brand loyalty demonstrates the participants' ability to repeatedly purchase Checkers' brand's offerings, this theme focuses on looking at brand loyalty driven by Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy (Keller, 2001:13). It was revealed that 1 out of the 3 participants think that Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy contributes towards their brand loyalty.

Participant 1 stated that: " Hmm, ja I am a loyal customer hence I said on the other question that their marketing strategy is really working. The fact that I go to Checkers every week. I can go to Checkers during the week. I can go to Checkers every month. So, I'm a loyal customer to Checkers. I don't know, but I'm a loyal customer to Checkers."



Whereas, 2 out of the 3 participants gave responses that contradict the notion that Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy contributes towards their brand loyalty.

Respondent 2 stated that: "I buy coffee there all the time, legit like my loyalty to Checkers is based on their coffee range and cookies legit."

Respondent 3 stated that: "Their marketing does not drive my loyalty, well personally for me. Like I said Checkers caters to my different needs at the time and just knowing that I am getting value for my money and I've never had a bad experience with Checkers, that is what keeps me going back and just how the whole store kind of looks, it is easy to find thing and I know what I am looking for and I think that is what builds my loyalty instead of their marketing like I said I've never really been exposed to all their ads or any other messaging they have for example newspapers."

Interpretation of theme 4

The findings discussed above reveal that participants are indeed loyal to the Checkers brand. Their loyalty to the brand is driven by repeat purchases which is an indicator that behavioural loyalty subsequently contributes towards Checkers achieving high profits and generating generous amounts of purchase volumes (Keller, 2001:15). Although participants are behaviourally loyal to Checkers majority of the respondents stated that the brands integrated marketing communications strategy does not contribute to their loyalty towards the brand.

This contradicts with Keller (2001:6)'s notion that brands must capitalize on their integrated marketing communication in the most effective way, to ensure they create and maintain long-term relationships with current and potential customers further contributing to increased consumer behaviour and sustained consumer loyalty. Thus, the brands pursuit of integrated marketing communications does not contribute towards brand loyalty among participants.



Theme 5: Participants' feelings regarding Checkers

This theme incorporates the emotional responses and reactions that the participants displayed with regards to Checkers and their integrated marketing communications strategy. The two major feelings that were evoked among the participants include: admiration and discontent.

The feeling of admiration towards Checkers was a big emotional response demonstrated by all 3 participants. Furthermore, the participants' admiration towards Checkers was revealed in their positive feelings that convey their approval for the brand and how its integrated marketing communications strategy contributes to how participants view the brand as a whole.

Participant 1 stated that: "I think the Checkers brand is one of the well marketed brands or one of the oldest brands that I know and its one of my favourite shops. I usually shop at Checkers." This participant also stated that: "I think the fact that I always go buy at Checkers means they've managed to find their way in convincing me...I think that their brand as a whole is really working for me."

Participant 2 stated that: "Uh, I would say that I view them as a go in a sense that I can see their continuity. Uh you do give out specials because you're trying to get stock out but uh it says a lot about your continuability uhm after having set specials."

Participant 3 stated that: " My overall view currently is convenience, based on the fact that I live in Menlyn and I frequently purchase at the one in Menlyn mall and I feel that their times are very flexible because I am a student."

The feeling of discontent was also evident among participant 3 who stated that: "Because they don't meet me at all the touchpoints I could explore. For me the only time I get to engage with their marketing is like I said through purchasing my ticket for events and purchasing my groceries in store and that's about it. So, I think that says that there is room for improvement in terms of their marketing they can explore the different types of touchpoints that are available."



Interpretation of theme 5

In response to Checkers' pursuit of brand resonance through their integrated marketing communications strategy, the participants displayed a mix of both positive and negative feelings towards the brand. This is important because brand resonance maintains the idea that building a strong brand is dependent on how its target audience feels, thinks and acts when a brand is involved (Keller, 2001: 15). Therefore, these emotional responses and reactions that the participants displayed with regards to Checkers further ties in with the brands overall image, how it is presented through their integrated marketing communications strategy and how it is perceived by them as confirmed by authors Drewniany & Jewler (2014:26). These findings correspond with that of authors Keller (2001:3); Stydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) who found that the power of the brand lies in the hands of the consumer through what they have felt, seen or heard about the brand. Therefore, marketers need to ensure that participants have the right brand associations that make up the brands image and further give it meaning to evoke certain feelings (mostly positive) towards Checkers from the participants' perspective.

4.3. Trustworthiness

When conducting research, the researcher becomes the key instrument in collecting the data, analysing it, making decisions about the decontextualizing and reconstruction of the data into meaningful findings (Starks and Trinidad,2007). It is important that research findings can be trusted as they are the researcher's way of persuading readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To successfully achieve this validity, reliability and trustworthiness needs to be determined (Koonin, 2014:253). Validity and reliability are used interchangeably in quantitative research, whereas trustworthiness will be perused in this qualitative research ensuring confidence in the data methods used and the interpretations created to produce a quality study (Koonin, 2014: 253). Therefore, to ensure the rigour of this study, the researcher took into consideration the four criteria namely: credibility, depending, dependability, comfortability and transformability to enhance the trustworthiness of this research (Lincoln and Guba,1985).



- **Credibility:** Credibility is concerned with how believable and trustworthy the researchers' findings will be (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This will be achieved by implementing a research design (exploratory) that aligned with the research question, as well as adapting a well-established* data collection and analysis method through using semi-structured in-depth interviews and thematic content analysis (Niewenhuis, 2016). Credibility was also achieved by spending enough time engaging with the participants during the interviews to gain an in-depth understanding and insight into their lives (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). The interviews were recorded on two mobile devices to ensure that the data collected will remain accurate and valid for transcription (Connelly, 2016:435).
- **Transferability:** This is concerned with how the research findings can be applied to a similar* situation where similar* outcomes can be achieved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Transferability in this research was achieved by keeping all the audio recordings obtained from the in-depth interviews with participants, providing a rich and detailed description of the research phenomenon (IMC and brand resonance) and being transparent about the data collection and analysis process. This allowed the readers and fellow researchers to gain a full understanding of the research context and make transferability judgements (Amankwaa, 2016; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Niewenhuis, 2016).
- **Dependability:** This is concerned with the quality and how stable the data collection and analysis methods are over time and during various conditions of the study (Polit and Beck, 2014; Woman et al, 2006). Dependability in this study was achieved through means of various consultation sessions with the allocated research supervisor who played a role in aiding and auditing the research process ensuring that it is of good standard quality and that the findings were supported by the data collected during the interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A full description of the research process was provided to enable readers to examine and scrutinise the research findings and evidence gathered linked to Checkers' IMC strategy and brand resonance.
- **Comfortability:** This helps ensure that the researchers' meanings and findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Comfortability was



achieved through maintaining neutrality of the data collected to ensure that the research findings were not bias to achieving specific results that may or may not be in favour of Checkers by influencing the participants' feelings, behaviours, opinions or attitudes during the data collection process.

4.4. Conclusion

In this section the research findings that were gathered from the main themes were defined and discussed. Through thematic analysis five major themes from the data set were uncovered and defined. Furthermore, these themes were critically evaluated in relation to the gathered literature, the theoretical framework, research question and objectives. The research study's trustworthiness was also discussed.



SECTION 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This section outlines the implications of the findings for Checkers, evaluates the research study's success and the anticipated contribution it will make to Checkers. Furthermore, this section details the recommendations for Checkers, the ethical considerations followed during the research process and the limitations. Finally, this section gives the heuristic value of the research through possible suggestions for future actions and comments.

5.2. Implications of the Findings for Checkers

The main goal of this research study was to explore the role IMC has on how consumers resonate with the Checkers brand. Once the research findings were analysed and interpreted, the implications that link to these include: Checkers as a strong brand, developing positive brand experiences, strengthening the brand relationship, developing brand loyalty and provoking positive brand feelings about Checkers.

Checkers' pursuit of brand resonance has strengthened the degree whereby participants consider it as a strong brand. The power of a brand lies in the hands of the consumer through what they have felt, seen or heard about the brand (Keller, 2001:3). The implication of this is that Checkers becomes engrained in the consumers' mind, making the brand less sensitive to the actions of its competitors because of the participants' consideration. Checkers also enjoys the benefits of an increased overall brand equity that brings value to consumers and can be used to leverage and improve the brand (Bick, 2011: 33; Bhasin, 2017).

The participants' experiences and encounters with the brand has facilitated Checkers' credibility which has led to them being more confident in the brand and its capabilities. The implication of this is that by creating positive judgements about the brand leads to customer satisfaction that ensures that Checkers' offerings meet and surpass the consumers' expectations. This ultimately links to brand loyalty as satisfied consumers become loyal consumers (Fincher, 2018).



Checkers' customer-brand relationship has driven the majority of participants' willingness to continue supporting the brand which positively impacts on their commitment towards the brand (Sallam, 2015). Committed customers have the implication that enables Checkers to enjoy the benefits of consumers that engage in repeat purchases that further strengthen their relationship with the brand (Sallam, 2015). These consumers also become brand evangelists that are more attached to the brand and actively promote it to others (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013).

Continuing, Checkers has succeeded in developing brand loyalty among participants. Their loyalty to the brand is based on their purchasing behaviour and driven by repeat purchases. The implication of this for Checkers is that although the brand achieves high profits and generates generous amounts of purchase volumes to achieve brand resonance, Checkers needs to find a way to establish deeper emotional and psychological bonds with the consumer to further influencing the relationship they form with the brand (Keller, 2001:15).

In the pursuit of brand resonance, Checkers has managed to provoke a mixed response of feelings from participants, with majority of them being positive responses. These responses consisted of feelings such as admiration and discontent which in turn has an influence on Checkers' overall brand image, how it is presented through their integrated marketing communications strategy and how it is perceived by the participants (Drewniany & Jewler, 2014:26). Consequently, these emotional bonds created by Checkers helps convey the participants' approval and slight discontent with the brand and its IMC strategy. The implications of these emotional bonds help influence the brands credibility in the eyes of the consumer while driving a sense of belongingness for them therefore, making them hesitant to switch to other competitor brands (Aaker, 1991).



5.3. Evaluation of the research

The above mentioned implications helped address the research objectives by exploring integrated marketing communications in the context of Checkers, its influence on the consumers' relationship with the brand and the role of brand resonance plays in building a strong brand. Therefore, by addressing these three objectives, it is clear that a well developed and implemented IMC strategy influences the consumers relationship with Checkers and hences how consumers resonate and feel 'in-sync' with the brand (Keller, 2001).

It is imperative to acknowledge that the power of achieving full brand resonance and its benefits to Checkers exists in what the participants thought about it. Although all the research objectives were met, through analysing the data it is evident that Checkers only meets 3 out of the 4 categories of brand resonance namely; behavioural loyalty, attitudinal and active engagement as addressed in Keller (2001)'s CBBE model. It is the participants' feelings, thoughts and opinions of Checkers and their IMC strategy that allows the brand to reap the benefits of brand equity and resonate with their consumers to a certain extent. Although Checkers is fully responsible for how they design and implement their IMC strategies, its success is ultimately achieving full brand resonance is dependent on how consumers respond and connect with it (Barker, 2013).

5.4. Anticipated contribution to Checkers

Many brands have now adopted integrated marketing communications as a unique strategy used to grab the target audience's attention. Brands like Checkers have grown to making this strategy a vital part of their brand and brand communications making this research study relevant to our current branding and marketing landscape. This research plays a role in helping readers and brands like Checkers understand how brand resonance is key in determining how "in-sync" consumers feel with a brand (Keller, 2001:7). This research added on to the existing body of knowledge by using Checkers as an exemplary point of reference brand readers can use to gain a deeper understanding of Keller's CBBE model and what role brand resonance has on a brands overall equity and value to its consumers. Readers with existing brands and those aspiring to start their own brands can look to this research to understand how important a consumer- brand



relationship built on a connection driven by brand resonance is (Keller 2001:8). This research can be used guide their marketing communications and further evaluate their brand building efforts using Keller's CBBE model to resonate with consumers and build strong brands.

5.5. Ethical considerations

Ethics refer to the researcher's code of conduct and morals that influence the standard for their attitudes and behaviours (Louw, 2014: 263). Ethics have an impact on all the stakeholders involved in the research therefore, It is important that that the researcher be trusted (Louw, 2014: 262). When conducting research, it is key to take into consideration the ethical issues that affect both the participant and the researcher. Ethical considerations linked to the participants of the research study include; informed consent, collecting data from participants, dealing with private information and deception (Louw, 2014: 264).

- Informed consent: When conducting research, each participant should be well aware of their participation in the study by giving their consent in the form of signing and returning a consent form that will be kept on record. Participants were debriefed on what will be required from them during the research process. (Louw, 2014: 264). Consent must be given willingly without any force and participants are obliged to withdraw opt-out at any point during the interview with no desire to be contacted in the future (MRA Code of Marketing Research Standards, 2007).
- Collecting data from participants: This ensured that the researcher prioritized and avoided any physical and psychological discomfort that might have harmed participants (Louw, 2014: 264). With regards to this research, the researcher ensured that the chosen location where the interviews took place was safe ensuring the safety of participants. The participants being interviewed were allowed to stop the interviewee if clarification on questions was needed which further ensured that participants had a full understanding of what was needed of them (Louw, 2014: 264).
- Dealing with sensitive information: This ensured that a participants' sensitive and personal information remains protected and does not interfere with the research



(Louw, 2014: 265). Therefore, for this research all the information gathered from the interviews was kept confidential only to be viewed by the researcher, research supervisor and the relevant people within VEGA.

- Deception: When conducting research deceiving the participants should be avoided at all costs (Louw, 2014: 268). Therefore, for this research the interviewee did not influence the participants' feelings, behaviours, opinions or attitudes during the data collection process.

Ethical issues linked to the researcher include; falsifying information, distorting results, being bias towards results (Louw, 2014: 268).

- Falsifying information- This refers to the altering or changing of data for specific gains (Louw, 2014: 269). Therefore, for this research the data collected from the interviews was not be altered/ changed in any way during the data analysis process.
- Distorting results: This occurs when the researcher manufactures information and finds other ways of conveying these results differently (Louw, 2014: 269). Therefore, the findings uncovered from the thematic content analysis of the interviews was not be distorted or fabricated by the researcher.
- Being bias: Research bias happens when the researcher aims to achieve specific results influencing how the data is interpreted the data (Louw, 2014: 271). Therefore, for this research the interview data was collected on the grounds of neutrality ensuring that the research was not driven by favour or disfavour of Checkers as a brand.



5.6. Limitations

Limitations are out of the researchers' control. These are the constraints that present themselves during the research process (Enslin, 2014: 275). Limitations help researchers support the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study (Enslin, 2014: 275). These included; time, resources, triangulation and demographic representation

- Time: Time was a limitation due to the total time taken to carry out the research throughout its various stages (Enslin, 2014: 276). Rushed or limited time affects the depth of the research findings where the researcher won't be able to get an in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings, behaviours, attitudes, opinions, experiences and values towards Checkers and their IMC strategy.
- Resources: Resources are key in ensuring that the research process and its various stages are effectively carried out (Enslin, 2014: 277). Human resource limitations may present themselves during course of this research. This can include certain participants not being present/ unavailable during the conducting of the interviews which may further have an impact on the findings and results obtained due to the inability of obtaining/recruiting the required sample size of 3 participants.
- Triangulation: This refers to the use of more than one research approach to answer the research question. The main objective of triangulation is to increase the confidence and trustworthiness of the findings uncovered using 2 or more independent measures (Heale and Forbes, 2018). Because the data for this research was collected using a single approach (in-depth interviews), this may potentially put the trustworthiness of this research under question.
- Demographic representation: This ensures that all of the country's demographics are well represented in a research study (Enslin, 2014: 277). Because this research takes an interpretivist view and is qualitative in nature, it was not entirely representative of all South Africa's demographics due to the small sample size of 3 individuals. As a result, this did not take the other demographics that are not represented in this research into consideration.



5.7. Possible Future Actions (Heuristic Value)

To gain an in-depth understanding of the role IMC has on the way Checkers resonates with its consumers, future contributors need to consider the following:

- Increase the sample size of Checkers consumers. By doing so, this will enable future contributors to gain a deeper view of the different perspectives and opinions of a larger amount of Checkers customers further enabling a more thorough exploration of the research topic (Pascoe, 2016).
- Broaden the context of the research to include other Checkers stores across South Africa. By doing so, future contributors will be able to determine whether Checkers' pursuit of integrated marketing communications influences how other consumers across the country resonate with the brand (Marzocchi et al., 2013).

5.9. Conclusion

This research explored IMC and its influence on how Checkers consumers resonate with the brand. The collected data among Checkers consumers confirmed that the brands IMC strategy influences brand resonance to a certain extent by encouraging active engagement, behavioural loyalty and attitudinal attachments to the brand. Therefore, this confirms that successfully leveraging IMC as a strategy can indeed play a role in driving brand resonance. Moving forward, further exploration into the topic of and its role on driving brand resonance within the South African context is recommended



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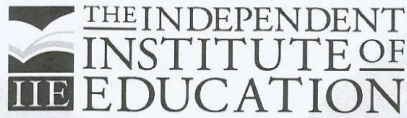
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Annexures

Annexure 1: Ethical clearance letter



August 26, 2019

Student name: Dineo Madiga

Student number: 15015537

Campus: Vega Pretoria



Re: Approval of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Strategic Brand Communication Proposal and Ethics Clearance



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 we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,



Amalia van Schalkwyk
Supervisor
Coordinator



Name: Dineo Madiga
Campus Postgraduate

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Annexure 2: Interview guidelines

In-depth interview Guidelines for Checkers research participant

Please take note of the following:

- This in-depth interview will be carried out face-to-face at a public coffee shop venue in Menlyn.
- The in-depth interview will be semi-Structured with set open ended questions that will help gather as much rich data as possible. The interviewee may be stopped if the participant requires some clarification on questioned asked.
- The in-depth interviews will be recorded using two different mobile devices for trustworthy purposes.
- The participant is encouraged to sign a consent form prior to the interview.
- A pilot interview will be scheduled to help ensure that the approximate time for conducting the interview be under one hour, as well as to help establish if any changes or additions/deletions need to be made to the questions.

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained during the interview, will be kept confidential, to only be viewed by the researcher and relevant people within VEGA.

The names of individual participants will be kept confidential by the researchers.

2. ETHICS IN RESEARCH:

The participant must clearly understand and be aware of what will be required of them during the interviews. This will ensure that the participant is well aware of their participation in the interview.

3. OPENING:

- Brief introduction and 'thank you' for agreeing to the interview.

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for taking your time to participate in this in-depth interview. This interview will strictly focus on Checkers a brand that is part of the FMCG industry that has been using integrated marketing communications as a strategy to



creating a lasting differentiated brand impression in the mind of the consumer. This research study focuses on exploring the role Checkers' integrated marketing communications strategy plays in nurturing and maintaining relationships, that help consumers resonate with the brand.

If there are any questions that the participant does not understand, please do not hesitate to express this so that it can further be explained.

The interview will not go on for more than sixty minutes and will be timed. When the allocated time is up, the interview will stop, and you will be free to go. There are no right or wrong answers therefore, you are encouraged to be as open, honest and free as possible to express your opinions and feelings of the questions being asked.

I'm going to ask you for your name and contact details if you are comfortable with that. Any information given will remain confidential and anonymous.

SCREENING QUESTION:

Are you aware of the Checkers brand?

BRAND RESONANCE AND IMC DISCUSSION:

This section will focus on asking questions related to the research objectives:

"Building a strong brand is key in delivering maximum value to consumers and driving profitability"

1. *What is your overall view of the Checkers brand and why?*
2. *Would you consider Checkers as a strong brand?*
3. *What about the brand makes it fit/not fit your understanding of what a strong brand is?*

"Brands need to connect with consumers meaningfully no matter its social form by defining what it stands for and delivering on its promise and purpose in all it does"

4. *Based on your previous experiences with the brand, what role does Checkers play in your life?*



5. As a Checkers customer who engages with and experiences the brand on a frequent basis, what do you think makes Checkers unique as compared to their competitors?
6. What are your views on Checkers' customer relations?
7. Do you think the brand goes the extra mile to nurture and maintain its brand-relationship with you as their customer? (If yes or no why is that?)

“Integrated marketing communications is a strategy used by brands to communicate with their consumers by informing, persuading, inciting and reminding them about their product/service offerings. Checkers’ collectable campaigns such as My Little Shop, Stikeez, Super Animals, Angry Birds, My Little Garden and the recently launched My Little Checkers (Crouth, 2018) have become a unique way used by the brand to communicate and promote their offerings to the consumer”

8. What attracts you the most about Checkers' marketing strategy?
9. How does Checkers' marketing strategy contribute to how you view the brand as a whole?
10. How does Checkers' marketing strategy drive your loyalty towards the brand?
11. In what way has the brand's marketing strategy influenced the relationship you have with the brand?

4. CLOSING

Thank you for taking time out to participate in this interview. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.



Annexure 3: Consent form for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dineo Madiga and I am a student at Vega School of Brand Leadership. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ivan Mkhomazi about integrated marketing communications and the role it plays on how consumers resonate with Checkers as a brand. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how Checkers used integrated marketing communications to drive brand resonance and how these two key elements work together to help maintain strong brand relationships and determine how “in-sync” consumers feel with the brand.

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 it will provide insight that will help further enable the exploration of my chosen research topic. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you for a duration of forty minutes while recording the discussion on two audio devices.

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 personal opinions and feelings about Checkers. 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 of Brand Leadership 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 Honours in Strategic Brand Communications. 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:

Dineo Madiga

Tel: 076 160 5129

madigadineo@gmail.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Ivan Mkomazi

Tel: 073 528 3063

ivanmkomazi@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, KATLEHO DLAMINI, agree to participate in the research conducted by Dineo Madiga about integrated marketing communications and the influence it has on brand resonance.

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

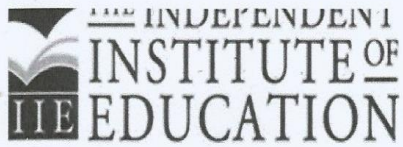
1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to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



Signature

20/09/2019

Date

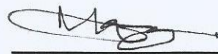


Consent form for participants

I, Mrs M Meidiya, agree to participate in the research conducted by Dineo Madiga about integrated marketing communications and the influence it has on brand resonance.

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

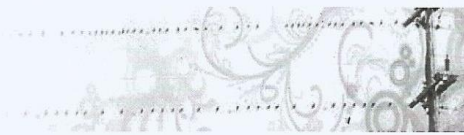
1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to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



Signature

24 September 2019

Date



Consent form for participants

I, Luyonde Ngobo, agree to participate in the research conducted by Dineo Madiga about integrated marketing communications and the influence it has on brand resonance.

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

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. 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.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.



Signature

19/10/2019

Date



Annexure 4: Interview transcripts

Interview 1:

Interviewer:	Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with me. We are going to start with a screening question: Are you aware of the Checkers brand?
Participant:	Yes, I am aware of the Checkers brand
Interviewer:	Okay question 1, what is your overall view of the Checkers brand and why?
Participant:	Uh, I think the Checkers brand is one of the well marketed brands or one of the oldest brands that I know and its one of my favourite shops. I usually shop at Checkers.
Interviewer:	Okay question 2, would you consider Checkers as a strong brand?
Participant:	Uh, I do consider Checkers as a strong brand but remember people have preferences, but to me yes Checkers is a strong brand.
Interviewer:	Question 3, what about the brand makes it fit or not fit your understanding of what a strong brand is?
Participant:	I think for whatever reason uh, they know their customers, they know their target market and usually whatever that



Interviewer:	they are trying to do, advertise or whatever brand that they <u>have it really attracts their marketed audience</u> Okay question 4, based on your previous experiences with the brand, what role does Checkers play in your life?
Participant:	Well..uh, I think it does play a role because in my shopping that is the shop that I usually go to its Checkers. Every month I go to Checkers, every weekend I go to Checkers, so I think they've played a major role in convincing me that they have a good customer service I think.
Interviewer:	Okay question 5, as a Checkers customer who engages with and experiences the brand on a frequent basis, what do you think makes Checkers unique as compared to their competitors?
Participant:	Well Checkers they have a variety of most of the things. If you want a variety of cheese go to Checkers, you'll have all the variety of cheese. Whatever the cheese you think of, go to Checkers. To me it's a one-stop shop or something like that but me when I go to Checkers, I just come up with everything.
Interviewer:	Question 6, what are your views on Checkers' customer relations?
Participant:	Well Checkers to me is one of the best as compared to the other shops that I've went to. They have a very professional customer service. Uh, they have cashiers that interact very well with the customers. So really to me its



Interviewer:	one of the best shops that I know that they have good customer relations. And then question 7, do you think the brand goes the extra mile to nurture and maintain its brand-relationship with you as their customer?
Participant:	Uh, I think they do, they go beyond. I remember there was some time back when they would have some things for the kids and the kids you mommy lets go to Checkers because they had these small nyana mini groceries that kids would love to just have and ja..ja.
Interviewer:	Okay question 8, what attracts you the most about Checkers' marketing strategy?
Participant:	Whoever is doing their marketing strategy they are doing a very good job. They are not losing their customers, they try to catch the attention of the customers by saying when shopping, go to Checkers. So whatever strategy that they are using I don't know, but its working for them.
Interviewer:	Question 9, how does the brands' marketing strategy contribute to how you view Checkers as a whole?
Participant:	Uh, the question says their marketing strategy contributes to me. I think the fact that I always go buy at Checkers means they've managed to find their way in convincing me. I know I am a very petty customer. I choose shops, I don't just go to buy at any shop. So the fact that they've managed to convince me to like be a frequent buyer at



Interviewer:	Checkers, so I think that their brand as a whole is really working for me.
Participant:	Okay question 10. how does Checkers' marketing strategy drive your loyalty towards the brand, how does it make you loyal?
Participant:	Hmm, ja I am a loyal customer hence I said on the other question that their marketing strategy is really working. The fact that I go to Checkers every week. I can go to Checkers during the week. I can go to Checkers every month. So, I'm a loyal customer to Checkers. I don't know, but I'm a loyal customer to Checkers.
Interviewer:	And last question, in what way has the brands marketing strategy influenced the relationship you now have with the brand?
Participant:	Uh, I think the way they are putting together their strategy, how they are marketing their products, the packaging, the cleanliness of the shop, how they are interacting with their customers has really influenced the relationship between me and Checkers as a customer so I think really their way of providing service works for me so I'll advice anyone who wants to shop with pride to go to Checkers. It's one of the best shops.
Interviewer:	Okay thank you for participating in this interview, your time and efforts are greatly appreciated
Participant:	Siyabonga!



Interview 2:

Interviewer:	Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with me. We are going to start with a screening question: Are you aware of the Checkers brand?
Participant:	Yes, of course I am
Interviewer:	Okay and what is your overall view of the Checkers brand and why?
Participant:	Uh, Checkers is more like, I would say it's more like of a household like groceries like you know what I mean? It's more for like the whole family stuff. I's not for like obviously I am not excluding anyone, but its more of like a homey type of thing.
Interviewer:	So, would you consider Checkers as a strong brand?
Participant:	Of course! I mean it's part of the big five or something isn't it?
Interviewer:	What do you mean the big five? Please elaborate a little more on that?
Participant:	Yeah, I mean your Shoprite, your Woolworths, your Game yeah it is part of that.
Interviewer:	Oh, you mean the big five supermarkets?



Participant:	Yeah, exactly, exactly!
Interviewer:	So, in your opinion that's what makes it a strong brand? Because they are well known?
Participant:	Yeah, it's a big brand because it is well known, you know what I mean?
Interviewer:	Okay, so what about the brand makes it fit or not fit your understanding of what a strong brand is?
Participant:	As I said its because they are part of the big five and to me that says a lot.
Interviewer:	Okay next question is; based on your previous experiences with the brand, what role does the brand play in your life?
Participant:	Okay, personally I love coffee so with Checkers they always have my coffee on special like with Woolworths as well but, they are the ones that make my coffee and lemontines so I guess that the big role they play, my coffee and lemontines.
Interviewer:	As a Checkers customer who engages with and experiences the brand on a frequent basis, what do you think makes Checkers unique as compared to their competitors? For example, like the big five as you mentioned.
Participant:	Uh, you see the thing about Checkers is that they don't have an online store where you can buy things online, so I



Interviewer:	think it works in their favour because then you're forced to actually go to the store and see what they have to offer. Okay so next question is; what are your views on Checkers' customer relations? In terms of how they treat you as a customer and how they nurture their relationship with you as a customer.
Participant:	Yeah, I won't lie, like I don't know of anything that Checkers does to nurture their relationship with them. Like I would assume should you have a problem they would fix it but nothing stands out from what they do.
Interviewer:	Okay the next question is; do you think the brand goes the extra mile to nurture the relationship you currently have with them?
Participant:	In the sense of?
Interviewer:	In the sense of like what they are currently doing right now, looking at that do you think that they like make an effort to basically make sure that you come back to their store
Participant:	Well yeah, I would say that. I haven't went to Checkers one time and not gone back. So, with the things I buy they're probably on special and that is my sole reason for going back. Uh it is nothing about the brand or the aesthetics that I go back for because for me its not about the brand per say, but its more of the quality of the stuff that I'm buying so I'm okay about that.



Interviewer:	So the next question; In terms of their marketing strategy, what attracts you the most about Checkers' marketing strategy?
Participant:	Personally, I've spoken about this in great detail. Like we all know whenever they have a special like I am there. They always have weekly specials every week.
Interviewer:	Okay that's what attracts you the most about their strategy? That they have specials that keeps you coming back for more?
Participant:	Yeah
Interviewer:	Alright, the next question is; how does Checkers' marketing strategy contribute to how you view the brand as a whole?
Participant:	Repeat that again?
Interviewer:	How does Checkers' marketing strategy contribute or impact to how you view the brand as a whole?
Participant:	Uh, I would say that I view them as a go in a sense that I can see their continuity. Uh you do give out specials because you're trying to get stock out but uh it says a lot about your continuability uhm after having set specials.
Interviewer:	Okay next question; how does Checkers' marketing strategy drive your loyalty towards the brand?



Participant:	I buy coffee there all the time, legit like my loyalty to Checkers is based on their coffee range and cookies legit.
Interviewer:	Okay last question is; does the brands marketing strategy influence your overall relationship you have with the brand?
Participant:	Yes, because if they didn't do what they did I probably wouldn't walk into Checkers. I'd probably just walk in and walk out.
Interviewer:	Okay thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview, your efforts are greatly appreciated.



Interview 3:

Interviewer:	Hi, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview with me
Participant:	Hello!
Interviewer:	We are first going to start with a screening question and it says; are you aware of the Checkers brand?
Participant:	Yes, I am!
Interviewer:	First question is; what is your view of the Checkers brand and why?
Participant:	My overall view currently is convenience, based on the fact that I live in Menlyn and I frequently purchase at the one in Menlyn mall and I feel that their times are very flexible because I am a student. So I am able to go anytime from the morning to the evening which is like 8 o'clock uhm, because I am on a student budget it helps me budget more or less and I am able to buy what I need at cheaper prices and they also have on some occasions a student discount thing for a few months provided that you are a student and you are over 18 so I have used before and it has majority of the things that I like from cosmetics, to clothing, uhm and food ja!
Interviewer:	Second question; would you consider Checkers as a strong brand?



Participant:	Personally <u>I would</u>, just mainly because besides them being uhm, a retail store that sells groceries and stuff, <u>they do give incentives</u> uh, for example they had that build a garden, I'm not sure of the specific name, where if you spent R150 you get those little plants that you can plant yourself and <u>that builds engagement</u> as well it is not just them selling a product but you get something that the consumer can engage with Checkers through sustainability because it was a garden that you could build in your own home through Checkers.
Interviewer:	I think your response somewhat answered my third question
Participant:	It's okay, what is it?
Interviewer:	It says; what about the brand makes it fit/not fit your understanding of what a strong brand is?
Participant:	Eish okay! So I think relating to the previous answer that I gave you in the previous question I think in terms of how Checkers is built on just giving you <u>better deals</u> and I think how it's a <u>very family oriented kind of brand</u>. <u>Its just very inviting, that builds that strong connection</u> with the consumer because it is something that you ae used to and something that is familiar and I mean its something that is not just for students like myself when I go there, I mean I know my mom would buy there, my brother would buy there, my uncle would buy there. Uhm, I think it has everything for everyone just depending on your preferences and also some of their adverts as well. Some



	of them are humorous and straight to the point and when you walk into the store there's..I don't know what you call those things like deals of the week sort of on pamphlets or brochures. But then you can get that as like the first contact point that lets you know what you're going to purchase or like what's on sale for you to you know..bargin at that time.
Interviewer:	So, our fourth question is; based on your previous experiences with the brand, what role do you think Checkers plays in your life?
Participant:	Hmm..It keeps me fed ha! Uhm, for me Checkers is just a store that is there for when I need to do my groceries at the end of the month. Uhm, I really try out different supermarkets just based on that so I'm not really sure what is happening around me, but because I am so used to Checkers and knowing very well that they run monthly promotions on anything from food to cosmetics as I said. So, it keeps me coming back. So, feel like they play that role of; they are very consistent and they always have what I want.
Interviewer:	Okay so fifth question; as a Checkers customer who engages with and experiences the brand on a frequent basis, what do you think makes Checkers unique as compared to their competitors?
Participant:	What makes Checkers unique? Okay, well for me I think all supermarkets do this, but however, I am a very outgoing person in terms of like going to events so for something like their money market which they have and you can find at



	Checkers and Shoprite because they are all under 1 umbrella uhm, I know that when there is an event coming up I can go to Checkers and get that ticket and I know that I can send money, or people can send me money as well. So, it is not just a grocery store, but it helps me fulfil other needs that I have like sending money or receiving money. It is like uhm, what can I say? It..yoh..It's gone ah! So, it's a brand that is able to suit like different needs of different customers and depending on their behaviour as well coz it has things for kids, things for adults, things for students depending on what you need, Checkers probably has it.
Interviewer:	Okay and question six; what are your views on Checkers' customer relations?
Participant:	Customer relations I think that is one point where I think they are lacking a bit. Maybe their contact point in terms of the cashiers, it might just put a customer off. We understand that sometimes it is a frustrating job and they are there for a long time and it gets tiring however, sometimes you just need to keep that smile and if a customer initiates a conversation or says hi to you, you need to respond or if you ask for assistance, don't waffle around and then do your own thing and then help the customer because it is always the customer first. When it comes to retail that is the number 1 golden rule; that the customer is always right or the customer always comes first. So, I think that is one thing that they need to work on because the shopping experience becomes dreadful because you could've went into the store, get what you need, but that closing point of sale just turns you off



Interviewer:	completely. So now the cashier is upset, the customer is upset which might initially put you off to going there again if you are not a frequent customer.
Participant:	And then question seven; based on your previous answer do you think the brand goes the extra mile to nurture and maintain its brand-relationship with you as their customer? Uhm, currently no! Uhm, besides dealing with a cashier that is probably not uhm, not kind but then uhm, what's the word..that's not reciprocal to your energy kind of thing towards that point in time. I don't receive any messaging unless it is that student discount campaign that they have rolling out at the time. The only time you receive communication for me is when you like see an advert on tv, or like you go in store where you have access to those pamphlets or brochures whatever the case may be. Either than that I don't engage with Checkers as much as I'd like to or as well as they should because they have the opportunity to like create like a loyalty system or like have an app that constantly sends messages because what if there are specials and you don't know about them until you go in there, then you've missed the point completely.
Interviewer:	Okay next question; what attracts you the most about Checkers' marketing strategy?
Participant:	I think it is fun. That is the simplest way I can put it. Uhm, because at some point obviously as old as I am I still enjoyed the my little stikeez, my little garden, I didn't experience the my little Checkers however it is just a fun



	and engaging way. It is something you can constantly use. It is like a toy, so families with children it is very efficient because now the kids will remember the brand and eventually somewhere along the line they can recall the brand at that stage where they need to do their own groceries they are able to say that oh I experienced this as a child. They are able to recall them and it makes them likeable as well.
Interviewer:	Okay so question nine says that; how does Checkers' marketing strategy contribute to how you view the brand as a whole?
Participant:	Hmm, I think I've mentioned this previously. Because they don't meet me at all the touchpoints I could explore. For me the only time I get to engage with their marketing is like I said through purchasing my ticket for events and purchasing my groceries in store and that's about it. So I think that says that there is room for improvement in terms of their marketing they can explore the different types of touchpoints that are available because sometimes let's say I buy groceries this month and I buy in bulk, I'm not gonna go back next month because I have everything I need from the previous month. So maybe I might miss out on something they have in that specific month that could be relatable to me. But if I don't know about it, I might miss it.
Interviewer:	Question ten; how does Checkers' marketing strategy drive your loyalty towards the brand?



Participant:	Their marketing does not drive my loyalty, well personally for me. Like I said Checkers caters to my different needs at the time and just knowing that I am getting value for my money and I've never had a bad experience with Checkers, that is what keeps me going back and just how the whole store kind of looks, it is easy to find thing and I know what I am looking for and I think that is what builds my loyalty instead of their marketing like I said I've never really been exposed to all their ads or any other messaging they have for example newspapers.
Interviewer:	In what way does the brands marketing strategy influence the kind of relationship you have with them?
Participant:	Hmm, currently I haven't experienced any marketing from them per say. I had to go to them physically, it's not something that came to me. I wasn't exposed to their marketing through their platforms but because I was looking for something specific that's when I bumped into them so then it defeats the purpose of them having a communication strategy because it is supposed to talk to me, not then like I have to go out and seek it, so because I haven't experienced it like that it hasn't influenced me to go or check something out at Checkers.
Interviewer:	Alright then that is the end of our interview, thank you very much for your time.
Participant:	It's a pleasure!



Annexure 5: Originality report



Exploring The Role Integrated Marketing

Communications Has On Brand

Resonance: A Checkers Perspective.

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Qualification: ① BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communications

Module code: RESM8419 (POE)

② Date of Submission: ③ 25 October 2019

Supervisor: Ivan Mkhomazi

Word count: 12084 words

④ I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BCom Honours in

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Research Report 1

Dineo Madiga on Fri, Oct 25 2019, 5:08 PM

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aeea9ef603ea

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Citations (23/23)



① Another student's paper



② Another student's paper



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Appendix 1: Research report summary table

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
Exploring The Role Integrated Marketing Communications Has On Brand Resonance: A Checkers Perspective .	What role did integrated marketing communications have on how consumers resonate with the brand Checkers?	Brands now look to IMC as a strategy to holistically communicate with consumers as a way to connect and resonate with them	Keller, K. CBBE model.	Theme1: Brand equity Theme 2: Brand equity applied to Checkers	Interpretivism Ontologically it looks at the subjective views and meanings consumers have or created after being exposed to the brands imc Axiology-it interprets consumers' values Methodologically- used to gain insights as it aligns with an interpretivist paradigm as a system to gain knowledge	Qualitative approach	In-depth semi structured interviews	Informed consent	Consumers highly resonate with the brands effective use of integrated marketing communications	du PlooyCilliers , F., Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout. 2014. Research Matters. Claremont: Juta Keller, K. 2001. Building CustomerBased Brand Equity: A Blueprint for Creating Strong Brands
						Population		Dealing with sensitive information		
						income earning males and females aged between 25-35 years old and regularly purchase goods at Checkers stores.				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions OR Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Methods	Limitations	Anticipated Contributions	
Exploring the role Checkers' imc plays in nurturing brand relationships that influence how consumers resonate with the brand.	To explore the role of imc in the context of Checkers To explore the influence of imc on the consumers' relationship with Checkers. To explore the role of brand resonance in building a strong brand.	Brand Brand equity Brand resonance Integrated marketing communications	Keller, Brand Equity model with a focus on Brand resonance			Non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling and convenience sapling method Sample size=3	Thematic analysis	Falsifying information Distorting results Being bias	helping readers and brands like Checkers understand how brand resonance is key in determining how “in-sync” consumers feel with a brand	