



**“Exploring how the COVID-19 outbreak affects consumer
buying behaviour within South Africa.”**

Summative Research Report

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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 or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

COVID-19 has had an impact on consumer buying behaviours towards various brands (Criteo, 2020). Some brands have struggled to cope and survive due to the unpredictable consumer buying behaviours and economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 (Accenture, 2020). This research examined how the global pandemic was affecting the buying decisions of consumers. Maslow's Motivation-Need Theory was used to aid this research and explore consumer needs as well as gain a deeper understanding of consumer purchase decisions based on the needs of consumers.

The research that was conducted was exploratory qualitative research. In-depth online interviews were conducted on 4 participants which helped the researcher to further understand the phenomenon based on respondents' subjective views. The responses were further analysed using the thematic analysis and the findings revealed that consumers prioritise lower-level needs (basic needs) when facing uncertain events such as the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Furthermore, this research provided insight as to how South Africa brands can survive, adapt and flourish in the unforeseen COVID-19 global pandemic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Contextualisation

The first cases of the COVID-19 virus were identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Sheikh & Rabin, 2020). COVID-19 is a virus that is known to cause severe illness in people and animals such as respiratory infections. This virus is highly contagious and is spread by small droplets from the mouth or nose, therefore people need to distance themselves within social gatherings to prevent the virus from spreading (Sheikh & Rabin, 2020). Scientists are currently researching to try and find solutions that will help combat the virus.

COVID-19 has had an impact on consumer buying behaviours towards various brands (Criteo, 2020). Some brands have struggled to cope and survive due to the unpredictable consumer buying behaviours and economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 (Accenture, 2020). As many physical retail stores were forced to close, brands have had to strategise and form alternative solutions such as encouraging consumers to purchase products through e-commerce (Shashwat Das, 2020). If brands fail to evaluate the buying behaviour of consumers and seek an alternative way of supporting their business during this pandemic, there will be a consequence of not generating enough income to keep the business running (Jansen, 2020).

This research examines how the global pandemic has affected the buying decisions of consumers. Maslow's Motivation-Need Theory was used to aid this research and explore consumer needs as well as gain a deeper understanding of consumer purchase decisions based on the needs of consumers. Furthermore, this research gives insight into how South African brands can survive within a global pandemic.

1.2 Rationale

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic being a new worldwide phenomenon, there has been no previous research formed relating to the topic of this study (Nielson, 2020). Additionally, this topic was chosen because there is currently very limited research that explores the influence of COVID-19 on South African consumers' buying decisions (Nielson, 2020). The research that was conducted aimed to fill this gap in research by

gaining an understanding of the shifts in consumers' behaviours within South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brands who do not understand the influence of COVID-19 affecting consumer buying behaviour decisions within the global pandemic will struggle to execute a strategic solution that will assist the survival of the business (Webb, 2020). Reviews on previous global pandemics have indicated and given background on how pandemics have affected consumer buying decisions and brands in the past (Murphy, 2020). However, there was a need to conduct the current research as it gives further insight into how COVID-19 is affecting consumer buying behaviours.

There was no literature found on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the buying decisions of South African consumers. By addressing this gap in the literature, it provides methods and insight for marketers on how brands within South Africa can operate and survive during a global pandemic. By conveying this research, it will provide insight and new knowledge on how COVID-19 has affected consumer needs and buying behaviours as well as provide insight into the overall phenomenon.

1.3 Problem Statement

Due to the increase of social distancing, consumers were limited to purchase products from a variety of physical retail brands (Criteo, 2020). The global outbreak of COVID-19 virus had resulted in worldwide economic turmoil and a major shift in consumers buying behaviours (Accenture, 2020). The failure of analysing and evaluating the purchasing behaviours of consumers and seeking alternative strategies that could be used to assist businesses within the global pandemic resulted in brands not generating enough income and being forced to close down (Jansen, 2020). It was essential to identify the needs of consumers within the global pandemic and strategise how brands could satisfy these needs to ensure the survival of different brands (Shashwat Das, 2020). The research that was conducted sought to gain an understanding of the shifts in consumers behaviours within South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. By conducting this research, various trends that have taken place within consumer purchasing decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic were identified which would ultimately benefit marketers when gaining further insight into how brands can survive within global pandemics. Therefore, the problem that was being investigated was how

the COVID-19 global pandemic has been affecting the needs and buying behaviours of South African consumers.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore how the influence of consumer buying behaviour of South African consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic would affect the way South African brands operate and survive. This research aimed to gain further insight into consumers' needs by conducting interviews with South African consumers to gain a deeper understanding of how the needs of consumers influenced their buying behaviours. These insights on consumer buying decisions could give South African brands some recommendations on how to form strategies that will assist the brand with survival during global pandemics. The central research question is stated below.

1.5 Research Question

What influence does the COVID-19 pandemic have on consumer buying behaviour of South African consumers?

1.6 Objectives

- To identify consumer buying behaviours within a global pandemic.
- To explore the impact COVID-19 has on the needs of South African consumers.
- To explore the influence and effects a global pandemic has on South African brands.
- To explore the influence consumer buying decisions have on brands.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review aimed to examine and analyse consumer buying behaviour as a concept and further explored how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected consumer's buying decisions in South Africa. The global outbreak of COVID-19 virus has resulted

in worldwide economic turmoil and a major shift in consumers buying behaviours (Accenture, 2020). The research being conducted seeks to gain an understanding of the shifts in consumers behaviours within South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To further enhance the study being researched, Maslow's Motivation-Need Theory, formulated by Abraham Maslow, was used as the theoretical foundation to further understand the decisions made within consumer buying behaviour as well as used to gain insight into consumer needs (Maslow, 1943). Various literature will be analysed to further understand the link between the COVID-19 pandemic and consumer buying behaviour. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic being a new worldwide phenomenon, there has been no previous research formed relating to the topic of this study (Nielson, 2020). Therefore, previous literature on previous worldwide viral pandemics will be analysed and discussed for the background research of the study. Various relevant literature relating to the worldwide trends of consumer buying behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic will be analysed to gain insight into consumer behaviour and consumer's needs within the worldwide phenomenon.

The objective of this study was to conduct exploratory research that would determine the influence of consumer buying behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic that could give marketers further insight into how their brands can operate and survive within a global pandemic. Therefore, the research being conducted is necessary as it is new research being conducted and it is being conducted to enhance the understanding of consumer buying behaviour within a global pandemic for marketers who are facing this dilemma. This research will analyse the theoretical foundation used as the framework for the study, review previous literature linking to the study and lastly conceptualise key concepts identified within the study.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

To further understand consumer buying behaviour within the COVID-19 pandemic, the theoretical foundation that was chosen for the research is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Maslow's Motivation of Needs Theory was developed by Abraham Maslow (1943), this theory explains the basis of human motivation with the use of a

pyramid that demonstrates the five levels of satisfying human needs. This theory suggests that the ability to satisfy human needs are influenced by five levels of human needs, listed from the lower-level needs to higher-level needs; physiological needs, security and safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's pyramid further explains how lower-level needs are a priority for humans to satisfy before fulfilling the higher-level needs (Maslow, 1943).

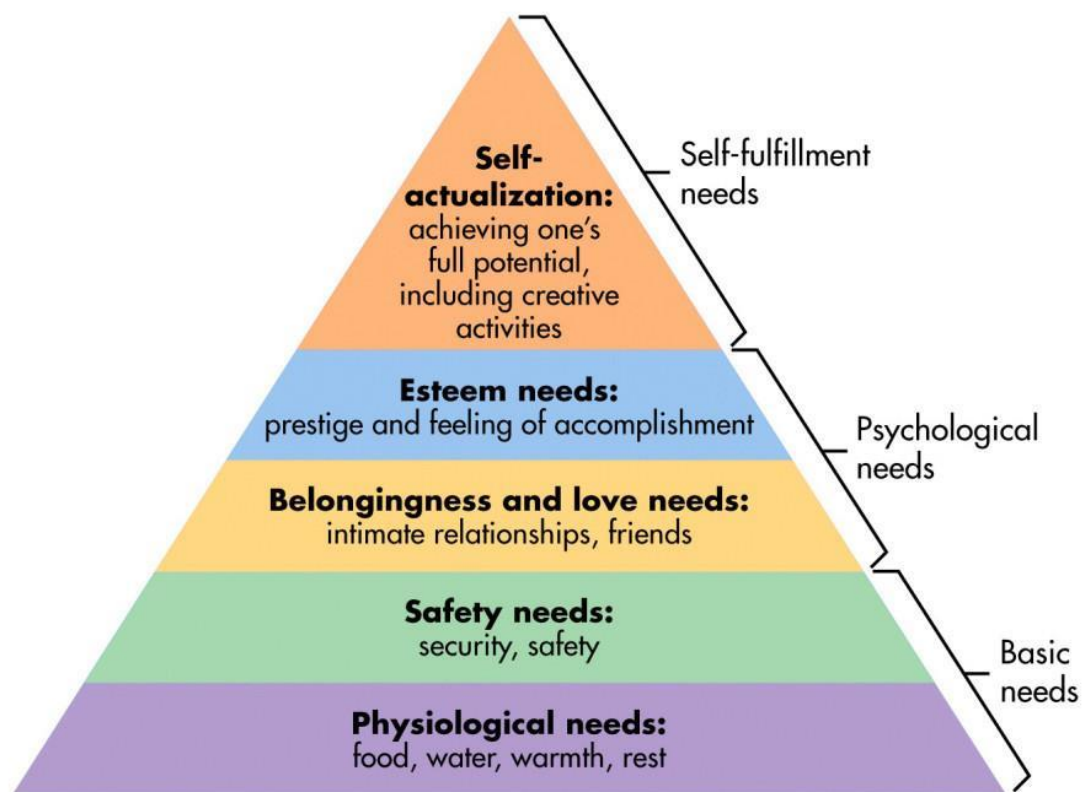


Figure 1: McLeod, S. 2020. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid

(Simply Psychology, 2020)

The five motivation needs are important to understand as this gives a further depth of the model and how Maslow decided to position each need based on each level of importance. The physiological needs are regarded as the first lower-level needs that are biological needs and are considered essential for human survival (McLeod, 2020). Examples of these needs include air, water, food, shelter and sex. It is noted that the absence of these physiological needs can result in the dysfunction of the human body (David, 2020). The second lower-level need considered is safety needs, every human need safety and security. It was identified by Maslow (1943), that many adults only recognize the need for safety and security when there is an emergency. Some safety

needs include protection, health and stability. The third need identified on Maslow's pyramid is social needs, this includes love, belonging, friendship and affection. It was identified that humans seek to overcome feeling lonely through belongingness and giving and receiving love from those around them (Maslow, 1943). The fourth higher-level need is esteem needs, which includes status, recognition, achievement and prestige. This need reveals that every human wants to be respected by those around them which builds up an individual's esteem. Through this, individuals feel appreciated and valued which builds on their confidence and esteem (Maslow, 1943). The fifth need on the pyramid which is recognised as the highest-level need is self-actualisation. Self-actualisation consists of self-development and self-fulfilment. This need refers to how an individual is capable of reaching their potential in life with their unique qualities. As humans satisfy all of the previous lower-level needs, it allows individuals to move up and reach the highest-level needs on the pyramid (Maslow, 1943).

Bouzenita and Boulanouar (2016) identified a limitation in Maslow's Theory because the study is more focused on individualism rather than a collectivist society. Maslow developed the Hierarchy of Needs Theory based on his direct surroundings in the 1940s which was an extremely individualistic society based in the United States, therefore, he did not consider collectivist societies such as the Middle East (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016). It was identified that South Africa is an individualist society whom mainly focus on taking care of themselves and direct family (Hofstede Insights, 2020). Therefore, for this research, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory was suitable when researching South African individuals as well as suitable to the paradigm of the study which focused on individuals' experiences.

2.2.2 Maslow's Theory Applied to Consumer Buying Behaviours

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory has been used by many researchers to further analyse and understand consumer's buying behaviours and motivations. It is recognised by Noonan (2016) that consumers decision-making starts with the identification of a need, thus Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is considered an important theory to use when analysing consumer buying behaviour. Researchers use Maslow's theory as they have recognised it as a useful model within marketing when providing

further understanding on what motivates a consumer to purchase goods and the theory recognises that the goods purchased by consumers are aimed to fulfil and satisfy the consumer's needs (Gladden, 2017). This model has been useful within consumer behaviour as it enables marketers to understand how consumers satisfy their purchasing needs as well as guiding marketers with their marketing strategies for their brands (Noonan, 2016).

Many researchers have applied Maslow's Theory to consumer's needs based on the products they have purchased (Siyanbola, 2020). The examples of Maslow's Need Theory applied to consumer's products include physiological needs with essential products such as food, medicines, beverages and hygiene products (Malgorzata, 2008). The second level is safety needs which ensures the physical safety of consumers through personal and financial security such as alarm systems, insurances and clothing (Malgorzata, 2008). The third level of Maslow's Theory includes social needs which include products that make the consumer stand out with other people. Examples of this include beauty products, luxurious products, furniture (Malgorzata, 2008). The fourth level is esteem needs which helps consumers to gain recognition from other people by the consumer's wealth, examples include designer clothing, vehicles, apartments, houses and credit cards (Malgorzata, 2008). The fifth level of Maslow's Theory includes self-actualisation which includes products that help a consumer to develop themselves such as education, vacations and personal hobbies such as horse riding and skiing (Malgorzata, 2008). An issue identified when adapting consumer's purchased products to Maslow's Theoretical model is that some of the products overlap on the five different levels of needs, this can become difficult when categorising consumers needs within specific levels of the pyramid (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016). However, for this research the model was used as a foundation when identifying the needs of consumers, thus it is not a major issue if the products overlap on different levels.

It is identified that only once the lower-level needs have been satisfied then the consumer will be able to start fulfilling the higher-level needs (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's Need Theory was an integral model used for the research as it allowed the researcher to further analyse consumers buying behaviours based on their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theoretical foundation gave further insight into

consumer's decision making based on their needs within a given time and based on their external influence (Gladden, 2017). Therefore, with the assistance of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, the research being conducted was able to explore the different levels of needs of consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory was useful and relevant for this research study as it identified what needs consumers are likely to satisfy first based on the lower-level needs in the pyramid before the consumers attend to fulfil their higher-level needs. Maslow's Theory was beneficial for the researcher to understand the needs of consumers and the purchasing decisions that individuals make based on the needs they need to fulfil. The theory identified from Maslow's Needs Theory was used to further analyse the needs of consumers within the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

2.3 Review of Previous Literature

There has been an abundance of research conducted within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the link between consumer behaviour, however, there was no research that had targeted consumer buying behaviour within the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The literature further analysed the key issues relating to consumer buying behaviour within previous pandemics such as MERS, SARS and the H1N1 pandemics. The literature further analysed notable consumer trends within the COVID-19 pandemic. The insights identified with consumer trends in the COVID-19 pandemic include the increase in online purchases, an increase in purchases of health and safety products and lastly how economic turmoil had affected consumers behaviours. Each part was integrated with the theoretical foundation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Through the analysis and exploration of literature, the research provided a good foundation of knowledge for the study.

2.3.1 Consumer Buying Behaviour within MERS, SARS and H1N1

Since the research being conducted was exploratory, it was essential to identify the trends of consumer's behaviours from previous pandemics. This gave the researcher an extensive understanding of trends that have occurred within consumers buying decisions when facing previous pandemics.

People worldwide have been experiencing virus outbreaks causing world epidemics ever since the early 2000s (VCU Health, 2020). The viruses that have taken place globally causing major issues include the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), H1N1 influenza virus (swine flu) and most recently COVID-19 (VCU Health, 2020). During the SARS, H1N1 and MERS pandemic, there was a reduction in people's involvement with outdoor activities which resulted in reducing people's daily expenditures in physical stores (Jung & Sung, 2017). Within the SARS pandemic, it was noted that there was a decreased need for luxury products and a high demand for hygiene and safety products from consumers who were travelling and there was an increase in public hygiene standards (Wen, Huimin & Kavanaugh 2005). The H1N1 virus was identified to be a highly contagious virus which influenced consumers to take preventative measures to reduce the risk of obtaining the virus by purchasing sanitizers and other products such as vitamins, thermometers, cleaning products, medicinal remedies (cough syrups), soups and teas (Jung & Sung, 2017). There was a reduction in consumer's demands for leisure, tourism, entertainment, dining and educational facilities; however, there was an increase in the demand for daily necessities (Jung & Sung, 2017). It was identified by Jung and Sung (2017), that people strongly desire the need to be safe and this has an imperative influence on the buying behaviour of consumers.

The research that was conducted by the authors above are based on previous virus pandemics, thus it was useful to compare the previous pandemics' consumer buying behaviour to the current global pandemic of COVID-19. This literature was used as a foundation when analysing the needs of consumers during a pandemic, however, there was a gap in the research as none of the literature was conducted in South Africa. A trend identified within the consumer buying behaviours from the previous pandemics includes the increased healthcare expenditure. Linking this back to the theoretical foundation of Maslow's Need Theory, it was identified that health and safety was a lower-level need on the pyramid, thus emphasising how this was an identified need of consumers when facing a global pandemic. Consumers lean into their health and safety, seeking to satisfy this need.

2.3.2 Consumer Buying Behaviour within the COVID-19 Pandemic

A review of recent literature was analysed to get a deeper understanding of current trends of consumer buying behaviour within the COVID-19 pandemic.

Increase in Online Purchases

The research was conducted in China, analysing the impact COVID-19 had on consumers purchasing behaviours with food retailers and it was found that the online retail sales increased from 11% to 38% because people wanted to reduce their chances of getting infected by limiting their contact with people in physical stores (Li, Hallsworth & Coca Stefaniak, 2020). The trend of consumers choosing to purchase their products online was a major trend within the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it was also noted that during the SARS, H1N1 and MERS pandemic, consumers would avoid physical contact which involved going to local stores for groceries (Jung & Sung, 2017). This emphasised how consumers need safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus shifting their purchasing behaviour from physical stores to online platforms.

Increased Purchases of Health and Safety Products

Nielson (2020) identified that when the COVID-19 outbreak took place, there was an increase in demand for emergency health and safety products such as hand sanitisers and medical face masks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is noted that necessities and fulfilling consumers basic needs are taking precedence (Accenture, 2020). It was further analysed by Accenture (2020), that personal health is a top priority for consumers, followed by food and medical security as well as personal safety. This insight was relevant to the research because it indicated that consumers health and safety was a key issue identified within the COVID-19 pandemic, thus emphasising how consumer prioritised purchasing products that fulfil their lower-level needs (Physiological and Safety Needs) within Maslow's Need Theory.

Economic Downturn affects Consumers Purchasing Decisions

The global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced consumers to re-evaluate their purchasing and consumption of products (Accenture, 2020). According to Magzter (2020), the economic turmoil taking place within the COVID-19 pandemic had caused many people to lose their jobs and ultimately lack

financial security. Due to this issue, consumers were adapting their purchases specifically to their basic needs. It was further analysed that due to the economic uncertainty leading to people's financial insecurity, consumers were avoiding purchasing luxury and durable goods and they were focusing on purchasing their daily necessities such as foods and beverages (Magzter, 2020). Once again, there was an identified trend whereby consumers were ensuring they were fulfilling their lower-level needs before prioritising their high-level needs within the COVID-19 pandemic.

A common gap in all the literature being analysed was that none of the research was conducted in South Africa, therefore it created a gap for the researcher to further analyse whether the trends of consumer buying behaviour worldwide was similar within South Africa.

2.4 Conceptualisation

The table below illustrates some of the key concepts identified in the research. These key concepts are defined for the use of a further understanding of the research being conducted.

Figure 2: Conceptualisation Table

Concept	Definition
Consumer Buying Behaviour	Consumer buying behaviour is an analysis of how people purchase when they purchase, what they purchase and why they purchase (Kotler, 1994). Faison (1977) identified that this concept was the belief that people have many needs which lead to a driven state of purchase. This concept had great importance and relevance to the research as it was the fundamental concept within the study. This concept was important as it revealed that consumer buying behaviour was based on individual needs as well as the actions consumers take when purchasing products.

Consumer Behaviour	This is the behaviour consumers demonstrate when purchasing, evaluating, using, searching for and disposing of services and products that are supposed to satisfy the needs of consumers (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). According to Solomon et al. (2010), consumer behaviour is the study of the practices involved when groups of people or individuals purchase, select, use and dispose of products, ideas, services and experiences to fulfil the desires and needs of consumers. Consumer behaviour is a broader term as appose to consumer buying behaviour. However, they are closely related concepts that were useful to understand for this research. It was highlighted in these definitions that consumer behaviour was closely linked to satisfying the needs of the consumer, this was relevant to the research and the theoretical foundation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.
Consumer Needs	According to Clark (2011), consumer needs are identified as the consumer's desire for products that offer specific functional or emotional benefits within a specific situation or time. Lumen (2020) identifies that a need is the consumer's desire for a specific benefit of a service or product whether it be an emotional or functional benefit. The author said that emotional benefits can be stronger driving forces for consumers than functional benefits because functional benefits can be copied easier by competitors. This concept was essential for this research as it revealed that consumers purchases are based on specific situational experiences and there is a need for consumers

	to fulfil a functional or emotional benefit when making decisions.
COVID-19	COVID-19 is identified as a disease that is initiated by a recent strain of coronavirus, “CO” is short for corona, “VI” is for virus and “D” stands for disease (Cennimo, 2020). The disease started in 2019 in Wuhan China, hence COVID-19. This virus is a family virus of the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and different types of common colds (Cennimo, 2020). This term was used repetitively in the research as it accounted for one of the main reasons for turmoil in consumer buying behaviours in 2020. Thus, it was essential to understand the meaning of COVID-19 and where it derived from.
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	Abraham Maslow (1943) formulated the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory that reveals that human needs can be structured in a hierarchy. The hierarchy ranks from lower-level concrete needs such as water and food to more abstract needs like self-fulfilment. Maslow (1943) states that once our lower-level needs have been met, people’s focus will rank up to the next higher level of needs. This concept was identified as the theoretical foundation used for this study. Maslow’s Need Theory is relevant to the study of consumer behaviour because many researchers have used this theory to further analyse the needs of consumers.
Epidemic	An epidemic disease is defined as a disease that affects numerous amounts of people in the same given time and the disease is capable of spreading from individual to individual in a location where the disease is not necessarily permanently dominant (Marriam-Webster, 2020). Merriam-

	Webster (2020) further identifies that the disease affects a large number of people within a population at the same time. This concept was referred to frequently within the study as it is a term that is directly linked to COVID-19 which was an important concept within this research.
Pandemic	A pandemic disease is defined as an epidemic which is widespread throughout a country, a continent or even the whole world (Dictionary.com, 2020). A pandemic disease is known to be spread over a large geographic area and it affects a high percentage of a population (Dictionary.com, 2020). The concept of a pandemic was referred to often within this research as there was a strong coherency with the term COVID-19. Thus, the terms were used interchangeably throughout the research.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigm

As previously mentioned, the research aimed to explore the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had on South African consumer's buying decisions, thus, the paradigm that had been chosen for this research was the interpretive approach. The interpretive paradigm focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the respondent's experiences based on the respondent's subjective view (Maree, 2016). The interpretive paradigm was relevant to this research as the research aimed to explore consumer's buying behaviour, which was subjective to their personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research assisted the study by comprehending consumer's personal experiences on how the COVID-19 crisis affected the purchasing decisions of consumers. The research that was conducted specifically focused on consumer buying behaviours and the interpretivism paradigm ensured that the researcher could

understand the consumer through the participant's personal experiences and perceptions. Therefore, this allowed the researcher to further understand human behaviour based on the participant's preference. The main objective of the interpretive approach was to understand consumer behaviour and this approach was important for this research as it considered people unique to individual experiences, thus, enhancing the fact that individuals are invariably adapting to diverse environments they exist in (Maree, 2016). The interpretive paradigm was useful as it is inclusive, therefore, enhancing the exploration of diverse views from a diverse range of individuals (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). The ability to explore the study from a range of different views ensured that the researcher does not generalize the views and acknowledges that individuals are all different. This paradigm was beneficial for the research being conducted as it focused on seeking an in-depth understanding of consumer buying behaviour instead of predicting and generalising consumer behaviour (Thanh and Thanh, 2015).

The interpretivism paradigm includes three variations of philosophical concepts, such as symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Phenomenology evaluates how people experience a phenomenon (Maree, 2016). Therefore, the objective of using the interpretivism paradigm sought to explore the phenomenon of COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on consumer buying behaviour, thus, focusing on human behaviour. This paradigm was relevant to this research as it directly correlated to the experiences of individuals and human phenomena (Maree, 2016). The research that was conducted, therefore, sought to understand human phenomena through the analysis of individuals experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and further assessed their purchasing choices. The research aimed to support South African marketers with insight into consumer buying behaviours during a global pandemic to strategize coping techniques for their brands.

3.2 Research Design

Exploratory research is used to explore a specific problem or situation that has no information or limited research on that specific research problem (Starkey, 2017). A phenomenology qualitative approach was used in this study to explore the influence of consumer buying behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic affected how South African

brands operated and survived. A qualitative approach was useful when conducting exploratory research as it provided insight and a new understanding of the phenomenon that has not yet been explored (Yang, Al-Shabaan & Nguyen, 2014). The chosen phenomenology design assisted in gaining a deeper understanding of consumer buying behaviour, the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it had on brands in South Africa.

3.3 Population

The units of analysis included a target population which comprised of female consumers aged between 21 to 23 years old who were aware of the concept of COVID-10 and were regular purchasers of various brands in South Africa. The targeted population was invited to participate in an in-depth online individual interview. The females who participated in the research were aware of the concept of COVID-19 and were regular purchasers of various South African brands. This information was communicated with the participants and stipulated during the online interviews. The participants that were selected for this research were young females' consumers because they have a high purchasing power within South Africa (Dos Santos, 2016).

The accessible population was a segment of the target population whereby the researcher had access to gain information from (Maree, 2016). The population the researcher had access to are South African female consumers residing in Johannesburg, Gauteng and were aged between 21 to 23 years old. These consumers were aware of the concept of COVID-19.

The population parameters for this research included young South African female citizens, young female consumers who were aware of the concept of COVID-19, female consumers that were aged between 21 and 23 years old, young females who were frequent purchasers of various South African retailers, young females who had access to the internet and young females who resided in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

3.4 Sampling

3.4.1 Non-Probability Sampling Methods

Non-probability sampling was used within this research by further analysing academic literature and subjective judgements (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). The researcher chose to conduct in-depth interviews with young South African female consumers aged between 21 and 23, whom the researcher had already established personal contact with. One sampling method that was used within this research was purposive sampling. Within the purposive sampling, the researcher chose the homogenous sampling as it focused on individuals who belong to the same subculture, thus having similar traits such as; age, gender, background (Laerd Dissertation, 2012). This sample was best suited for the research as the sampling focused on distinctive characteristics of the population group and would help to gain a deeper understanding of this particular phenomenon being researched. This research was purposive as it focused on young South African female consumers, therefore the participants had the same trait of being a female market. This purposeful sampling method focused on a subjective judgement conducted by the researcher and it was not based on random selection.

The second non-probability method that the researcher made use of was convenience sampling. The participants of the target population were chosen based on geographical proximity, easy accessibility, willingness to participate and time availability (Maree, 2016). The researcher chose participants in close geographical proximity to Johannesburg as there was easier access to participants showing a willingness to participate in the in-depth interviews. One critique of convenience sampling was that it could be a biased sample, nevertheless, this method had been suggested for exploratory research as it could provide effective insight into a phenomenon (Chawla & Sodhi, 2011).

To determine the sample size, the following factors that would need to be considered included data analysis methods, time constraints and financial costs (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Due to conducting in-depth interviews and the time constraints that came with this, the sample size that was chosen by the researcher was 4 female participants living in Johannesburg.

3.4.2 Sample Size

Data saturation was evident in this research. Data saturation is when the researcher recognises that there are no new themes or information discovered within the data analysis as the data collection of participants start to produce similar outcomes which confirm developing themes and conclusions (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). The researcher managed to collect enough data from the 4 participants to reach the objective of the research question. The data collected from the participants were repetitive and started becoming redundant, therefore the researcher only had to interview 4 participants. As this research conducted an in-depth interview, the sample size that was chosen by the researcher for this study was 4 participants living in Johannesburg. The in-depth interviews were recorded which allowed the researcher to further examine facial expressions and emotions of the participants.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The data collection method that was used included online in-depth semi-structured interviews with respondents. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were an appropriate data collection method for this research as it allowed the researcher to gain deeper insight and understanding of the participant's choices, attitudes, opinions, perceptions and motives (Pleming, 2016). The in-depth interview method was chosen rather than the focus group method because the researcher did not want the respondent's opinions to be influenced by other respondents as this would not reflect the individual's personal views (Maree, 2016).

The interviews were conducted with open-ended questions from a pre-determined questionnaire, which allowed the respondents to express their viewpoints clearly and therefore enhanced the reliability of the qualitative data. The open-ended questions were chosen because it allowed respondents to give detailed explanations and an opportunity to give feedback on their personal experiences and perspectives whilst still giving the researcher control (Starkey, 2017).

Here are several reasons explaining why the researcher chose to conduct in-depth interviews. The researcher chose to conduct interviews with participants instead of surveys as the researcher could explain questions further to avoid misunderstanding of

any information provided to the respondents. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to ask for more detailed responses from participants and follow-up questions if necessary. The in-depth interviews consisted of homogenous questions that were asked by the researcher, this was to ensure that there was consistency throughout all the responses. The researcher ensured that the questions being asked started broad and later followed a narrower focus. The semi-structured interviews were chosen as the researcher could take audio and video recordings of each interview. This gave the researcher the ability to directly quote responses from participants to enhance the reliability and validity of the research. The data that was measured from this research was based on South African consumers' personal experiences and could be used to further understand the phenomenon being researched.

The interviews were recorded electronically so that they could be analysed in-depth at a later stage. This collection method assisted the research by understanding consumer behaviours through personal experiences and perceptions of respondents when purchasing products during the COVID-29 pandemic in South Africa. This method benefited the research as the outcomes evaluated would determine future possibilities on how South African brands could survive, based on the South African consumers buying behaviours within the pandemic.

3.5.1 Application of Data Collection Method

The researcher followed a process when applying the data analysis method which will be discussed in further detail. Over two weeks, the researcher approached and invited accessible participants through WhatsApp's digital platform to participate in the in-depth interviews. The researcher had access to the participant's contact details as the participants were chosen based on specified traits and characteristics which was stated in the sampling.

The researcher approached participants who were aged between 21 and 23, residing in Johannesburg, South Africa. The researcher managed to get access and permission from 4 female participants to conduct voluntary interviews through convenience sampling who were regular consumers in South Africa and are aged between 21 and 23. The researcher then asked the females who agreed to participate in the interviews

for their email addresses so that the researcher could send out the consent forms for participation and permission to record the interviews. The researcher communicated with the participants over WhatsApp and scheduled a time and date that was suitable for the participants to have online interviews. Once the time and dates were confirmed, the researcher sent a follow-up message the day before the interview which included a reminder message and the Zoom meeting link whereby the interviews were conducted. The participants sent their consent forms to participate in the interview and the forms gave the researcher permission to record the online meetings on Zoom.

Each participant had 30 minutes to discuss and respond to the questions. Within the interview, the researcher told the participants when the video/voice recording would start then proceeded to give a brief introduction to explain why the research was being conducted. The researcher read out each question and allowed the participant to respond freely. If participants did not fully understand the questions, the researcher was able to clarify ambiguous questions. This ensured that there was no confusion or ambiguity within the interviews. While the respondents were talking, the researcher wrote notes of the participant's responses and reactions. Once all the questions were answered, the researcher thanked each participant for their time and ended the video recording on the Zoom meeting.

Once all the interviews were completed, the researcher gathered all the voice and video recordings from the Zoom meeting and saved them in a safe folder on the computer. The researcher also took note of relevant quotes and responses that were spoken by participants within the interviews and transcribed them into a document.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

The data were analysed using the thematic approach. The data analysis method was deductive. The deductive data analysis uses prior evidence and themes from literature to analyse the data (Maree, 2016). The researcher used a deductive approach as Maslow's Theory of Needs was used to identify key themes in consumers buying behaviours. The researcher examined how the data findings align with Maslow's Theory of Needs and previous literature. The data was processed by reviewing the transcripts, creating codes for relevant themes and analysing the themes identified. The thematic

analysis approach was chosen as it is a method that analyses and identifies and records trends and patterns within the data collection (Olive, 2017). By using this method, the researcher could identify relationships and themes based on the given responses by participants (Pleming, 2016).

By identifying themes, feelings and similar responses by participants, the researcher was able to explore how COVID-19 pandemic affected South African consumer buying behaviours. This revealed and gave insight into the global pandemic and consumers purchasing behaviours and decisions. The data that was processed would be further interpreted using a six-phase analysis tool, namely; familiarisation, coding, themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and final phase (Psych, 2017).

3.6.1 Application of Data Analysis Method

Within this data analysis method, the researcher identified relationships and themes within the responses of the research questions (Pleming, 2016). This data analysis method created codes for themes transcribed from the video and audio recordings into a document and then further analysed the themes identified (Starkey, 2017). Once the themes were identified, conclusions were made to help answer the research question. The process of the data analysis includes six steps that were developed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

Step 1: Familiarisation with the Data

The first step focused on the organisation and preparation of the data (Pleming, 2016). This allowed the researcher to transcribe the video and audio recordings as well as read through the written transcripts (Olive, 2017). This step allowed the researcher to have a comprehensive understanding and familiarisation of the data. As the researcher started to engage with the data, common themes and topics were found within the data which the researcher used for the next step of the thematic analysis. This step allowed the researcher to have a good foundation of data and comprehensive understanding of the data being analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Once the researcher had familiarised herself with the data, the next step involved identifying and producing codes which were the main aspects of the data which provided meaningful insight into the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes helped the researcher to organise the data and give context from the conversation of the interviews.

Step 3: Exploring Themes

The third step within the thematic analysis involved recognising themes within the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes capture interesting and significant patterns within the data. This step focused on organising, sorting and merging the initial codes into wide-ranging themes. The codes that were collected are known to have significant relationships with one another or related meanings (Olive, 2017).

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

Within this step of reviewing themes, the researcher looked at reviewing themes deeper by questioning whether or not it was necessary to refine, separate, combine or discard the initial themes that were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This ensured that the themes had a meaningful input for the research and that there were clear distinctions between various themes (Olive, 2017). This step ensured that relevant data was supporting each theme and the themes were comprehensively supported by the data that was collected.

Step 5: Naming and Defining Themes

Step five focused on refining and defining relevant themes within the data by providing names that describe the meaning and relationships of various themes that were identified in the research (Olive, 2017). Once each theme was given a name, the researcher defined the theme with a summary of what that theme entailed. During this step, an integrated summary started to develop from all the themes that were analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 6: Writing-Up the Report

The last step of the thematic analysis involved writing up the report which included an in-depth analysis with supporting empirical evidence that focuses on addressing the

main research question with the correct findings and interpretations of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation of Findings

4.1 Validity, Trustworthiness and Reliability

The validity of research refers to how the research tool being used reflects the truth of the concepts that were being measured (Maree, 2015). To ensure the data being collected for this research was valid, the researcher ensured the participants signed a permission letter for the interview, there were voice recordings of the interviews, there was a sheet of questions given to participants and a condensed transcript of each interview was provided of the data findings.

Trustworthiness is the ability for the research to have generalisability which indicates reliability and trustworthiness in the qualitative research (Maree, 2015). The researcher used previous literature by analysing previous consumer buying behaviours within global pandemics to identify collective themes within the research which would enhance the overall trustworthiness of the study being conducted.

Reliability is known as how credible the research findings are based on consistency and whether the results from the research can be generalised (Maree, 2015). The questions that were asked for each participant were identical questions throughout each interview, this ensured that the data being collected from participants would be collected consistently.

4.2 Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

4.2.1 Findings and Discussions for Objective 1

Research objective 1 stated, “To identify consumer buying behaviours within a global pandemic”. The findings for this objective further analysed the theme of consumer buying behaviours within a global pandemic. The findings below observe consumers emotions, experiences and lifestyle changes.

Figure 3: Presentations of Findings for Objective 1

Questions constructed:	Responses:
Emotions experienced when COVID-19 took place.	• <i>“Anxious, afraid, overwhelmed, frustration and interruption.”</i> • <i>“Scared, anxious, worried and fear.”</i> • <i>“Unexpected, fear of the unknown, uncomfortable, uncertainty.”</i>
The effect COVID-19 has had on consumers daily routines.	• <i>“Used to travel to university, then everything went online. Saved on travelling costs.”</i> • <i>“Couldn’t go out or travel anywhere. No freedom. No socialising.”</i> • <i>“Based more at home.”</i> • <i>“Now do more freelance work. Wearing masks everywhere.”</i>
Consumers life changes during the outbreak.	• <i>“Was going to move overseas and couldn’t anymore. More DIY projects to do at home.”</i> • <i>“No income. Lost my job.”</i> • <i>“Everybody working from home.”</i> • <i>“Spending more time with family at home. Don’t go out a lot.”</i>

The findings identified from the table above represent that consumers had a lot of uncertainty and fear when the outbreak took place. The pandemic had an effect on consumers daily routines as they were not allowed to travel and they spent more time in their homes. Consumer’s lives were changed as some people lost their jobs and others were forced to work from home. Most of the consumer's activities were based in their homes to ensure there was no socialising taking place.

4.2.2 Findings and Discussions for Objective 2

Research objective 2 states, “To explore the impact COVID-19 has on the needs of South African consumers.” This objective focused on identifying the needs of consumers that were prioritised during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 4: Presentations of Findings for Objective 2

Questions constructed:	Responses:
Products and brands consistently purchased by consumers during the outbreak.	• <i>“Sanitisers such as Dettol or Clicks but there were shortages.”</i> • <i>“The necessities were prioritised, not luxury products.”</i> • <i>“Cheaper options such as Checkers.”</i> • <i>“Medicinal products were prioritised such as Vitamin C and Zinc.”</i> • <i>“Essential foods were prioritised.”</i> • <i>“Hand sanitisers, soaps, masks, Dettol, hygienic brands.”</i> • <i>“Stocking up on food and toilet paper.”</i> • <i>“Supported Uber Eats more now.”</i> • <i>“Spar because it was close to where I live.”</i>
The personal needs these products were fulfilling.	• <i>“I was focusing on meeting my basic needs and only necessities.”</i> • <i>“My safety needs by using hand sanitisers.”</i> • <i>“My daily, basic needs. I cancelled out my luxury needs.”</i>

The constructs reveal that participants were focused on purchasing products that they needed and were essential. There was a pattern when purchasing hygienic and medicinal products such as hand sanitizer, masks, soaps, Dettol, Vitamin C and Zinc. Many participants said they focused on buying necessities such as foods rather than purchasing luxury products.

4.2.3 Findings and Discussions for Objective 3

Research objective 3 focuses on, “To explore the influence and effects a global pandemic has on South African brands.” This objective aimed to identify the effect the pandemic had on South African brands by looking closer at consumer purchasing decisions.

Figure 5: Presentations of Findings for Objective 3

Questions constructed:	Responses:
Products and brands consumers stopped purchasing from.	• <i>“Expensive brands such as Woolworths because I was more aware of prices.”</i> • <i>“Makeup brands such as Mac, Clarens and Bobby Brown.”</i> • <i>“Virgin Active, I cancelled my gym membership.”</i> • <i>“Unnecessary foods such as chocolate, chips and Coldrinks.”</i> • <i>“Avoided expensive restaurants such as sushi restaurants.”</i> • <i>“Stopped buying clothes such as Cotton On, H&M, Factory, etc.”</i>
How brands have prioritised consumers safety during the pandemic.	• <i>“Sanitising your hands at the door of entrance and taking my temperature. Making sure we wear masks.”</i>

	• <i>“Clean trolleys as you enter stores.”</i>
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These findings reveal that consumers have avoided purchasing expensive brands. Makeup and clothing brands and products were not prioritised for purchasing during the COVID-19 outbreak. Gym memberships had been cancelled by consumers to save on costs. Consumers had become more price-sensitive during the pandemic and therefore avoided eating from expensive restaurants. South African brands had put in safety regulations to help consumers feel safe during the pandemic.

4.2.4 Findings and Discussions for Objective 4

Research objective 4 focuses on, “To explore the influence of consumer buying decisions have on brands.” This objective further analysed how consumers would purchase their products, either online or in physical stores. This gave a further indication of how brands would have to survive when adapting to trends that occurred during the outbreak.

Figure 6: Presentations of Findings for Objective 4

Questions constructed:	Responses:
Consumers purchased mainly from online or physical retailers.	• <i>“I preferred physical stores because apps did not always have stock and there would be delayed deliveries.”</i> • <i>“Physical stores have more variety and it was quick and efficient. When I purchased online they got the wrong orders.”</i> • <i>“Ordering online would take too long to deliver.”</i> • <i>“We tried Checkers 60 minutes and it was good.”</i>

	• <i>“I would only buy takeaway food online. I prefer physical stores because I could see and touch the products.”</i>
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These findings reveal that consumers were more susceptible to purchasing products physically rather than online. Participants identify that purchasing their products in person resulted in having a variety of options to choose from and it was efficient and quick. Consumers argue that ordering products online would result in waiting a long time for products to be delivered at households.

4.3 Findings in Context

4.3.1 Objective 1

When evaluating the findings for research objective 1, it was noted that the emotions that consumers felt were strongly influenced by “fear and uncertainty” of the COVID-19 outbreak. The behaviours of consumers changed as all their daily activities were mainly based within their households. According to the related literature, consumers strongly desire the need to be safe when a pandemic takes place (Jung & Sung, 2017). This was relevant as when the outbreak took place, consumers were highly likely to be found in their households as this was a safe place where social distancing could take place. By understanding the patterns of emotions and lifestyle changes of participants, the research further examined what consumers purchases were prioritised during the pandemic.

4.3.2 Objective 2

Within the findings of objective 2, it was revealed that consumers focused on purchasing necessity products and essentials, such as food. Hygienic and medicinal products were prioritised such as hand sanitisers, facemasks, soaps, vitamins and minerals. When looking at the theoretical foundation for this research, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory revealed that people would always prioritise fulfilling their lower-level needs such as physiological needs within human survival which includes air, water, food, shelter and sex (David, 2020). The second level of needs that people were most likely to satisfy was safety needs which include protection, health and stability (Maslow,

1943). As found within the research, consumers were aiming to fulfil their lower-level needs during the COVID-19 outbreak from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs rather than the higher-level needs as stated by participant 2, "*the necessities were prioritised, not luxury products*". This revealed that consumer buying decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic were directed towards purchasing the necessities rather than extravagant products and brands.

4.3.3 Objective 3

When analysing objective 3, the researcher focused on understanding how COVID-19 affected South African brands. It was noticed that consumers were most likely to purchase lower-priced brands rather than the expensive brands. For example, "*I stopped purchasing makeup brands such as Mac, Clarens and Bobby Brown*" and "*expensive brands such as Woolworths because I was more aware of prices*". It was noticed that consumers became more price sensitive when the outbreak took place which resulted in them avoiding expensive products and brands. According to Magzter (2020), the economic turmoil taking place worldwide resulted in many people being retrenched and ultimately had a negative impact on individuals financial security. As stated by participant 4, "*before COVID-19 took place, I had a job and then after the outbreak, I did not*". COVID-19 had a major negative impact on the economy which ultimately influenced consumers purchasing decisions. Many consumers could not afford luxurious brands due to unstable financial security and economic downturn. Overall, this had resulted in an income loss for South African luxurious brands.

4.3.4 Objective 4

The last objective identified how consumer buying decisions had an influence on various brands during the pandemic. The main purpose of these questions was to identify whether or not participants were more likely to purchase products online or in physical stores during the pandemic. Most participants preferred to purchase their products online as it was time-efficient and there was a variety of products to choose from. It was noticed that during the COVID-19 outbreak, some people purchased online, however, preferred to go physically to the stores to purchase their products.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Research Question Addressed

The research aimed to address the question of, “What influence does the COVID-19 pandemic have on consumer buying behaviour of South African consumers?”. The qualitative exploratory research that was conducted using online interviews gave the researcher further insight into how COVID-19 affected young South African female consumers’ purchasing decisions during the pandemic.

The researcher was able to identify factors within the pandemic which influenced the buying behaviours of South African consumers. These findings revealed that the major factors influencing the consumers’ buying decisions within the pandemic included emotions such as uncertainty and fear which resulted in consumers purchasing products that fulfil their basic human needs in order to survive during the outbreak of the pandemic. The research revealed that when people are faced with uncertain events such as the outbreak of a global pandemic, the consumers' natural instinct is to satisfy their lower-level needs which can be noted on the base of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs pyramid.

Within the research, it was identified that consumers were affected financially by the outbreak of COVID-19 as many people lost their jobs. Therefore, consumers were not willing to pay high prices for products as they would prioritise lower-priced products. This indicates that consumers were price-sensitive during the pandemic and this is an important factor which could assist South African brands as they would need to consider pricing their products effectively within any future pandemics taking place in South Africa.

This research attained the objective of assisting South African brands with insight into how they could survive any future global pandemics that take place in South Africa, as it gave insight into knowing that brands should prioritise selling products which will first meet the lower-level needs (basic needs) of consumers. This will help South African brands to survive in the future because based on the research, consumers focus on purchasing products such as food and medicine, rather than luxurious products. This

indicates that South African brands should shift their marketing strategy to support the fundamental needs of consumers for any future global pandemics.

The research problem was solved as the study gave insight into how consumers behaved during the outbreak of COVID-19 in South Africa. The findings of the research are also valuable to South African brands as it provides information on the behaviours of South African consumers during a pandemic taking place in South Africa. This is useful as it helps marketers to understand what needs consumers prioritise during a pandemic. This research also provides a framework of how South African brands can prepare for future global pandemics by understanding the needs of consumers from the COVID-19 pandemic and adapting their marketing strategy to fulfil the needs of consumers.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

A suggestion for further research would be expanding the sample size and conducting the research throughout a variety of geographical locations in South Africa to enhance the accuracy of the results and further compare different responses from participants in different geographic locations. By having a larger sample size, this will help the researcher gain a deeper understanding of diverse groups of consumers buying behaviours and preferences during a global pandemic.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Research that involves the participation of humans requires the research should be conducted with a respectful approach by protecting the participants, ensure that the research that is conducted serves the best interest of society, individuals and groups and lastly that the research is ethically sound (Starkey, 2017).

Within the interviews that were conducted, the participant's identities remained anonymous and confidential (Maree, 2016). The participants were aware that only the researcher would know the identity of the participants. Each participant was required to fill out an ethical consent form. The participants all have rights that the researcher must respect and abide by and not misuse any of the information. The researcher ensured that the rights of the participants were communicated to them to ensure that the

participants were not positioned in any place of harm. Some of the rights of the participants include:

- The right to decline or refuse sharing answers for any given interview question.
- The right to access any personal data and information of the participant and the overall research study that was collected by the researcher.
- The right to retract from the interview at any given time.
- The right to confidentiality, therefore the researcher will not disclose any personal information about the respondent as they have the right to remain anonymous.

Both the researcher and the participant signed ethical consent forms. The research findings were used solely for academic purposes, therefore only the moderators, researcher and supervisors would have access to the research study. The research can only be published by Vega with the consent from the participants and the researcher.

5.4 Limitations

The limitations of the study included having limited access to interviewing participants face-to-face. This is due to COVID-19 pandemic taking place whilst the research was being conducted and there are strict health and safety measures that have to be followed. As the researcher had limited access to interviewing participants face-to-face, the interviewer conducted the interviews using online platforms such as Zoom. This assisted the researcher and participants as they were both complying to health and safety regulations. A limitation of not having face-to-face interactions with the participants was that the researcher could not take note of facial expressions and body language of the participants.

5.5 Conclusion

The qualitative exploratory research intended to explore consumer buying behaviours within the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The findings represented a group of young female consumers aged between 21 and 23 who are residing in South Africa. In conclusion, the participants had similar purchasing needs during the pandemic which they focused on fulfilling. The consumers were driven to make purchasing decisions based on the basic needs they needed to fulfil within the pandemic which was their

physiological and safety needs. Consumers refrained from purchasing luxurious and highly-priced products as these were not as essential as their basic needs such as food and medicine. The findings are beneficial for the body of knowledge and it can also help assist South African brands when adjusting their marketing strategy to fulfil consumer needs during any other future global pandemics taking place in South Africa. This research helped to fill the gap of understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affected South African consumer buying behaviours.

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7. Appendices

All consent forms and interviews response transcripts are available upon request.

7.1 Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Bronwyn Amy Schelin to audio record my interviews as part of the research about "Exploring how the COVID-19 outbreak affects consumer buying behaviour within South Africa". This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Bronwyn Amy Schelin about "Exploring how the COVID-19 outbreak affects consumer buying behaviour within South Africa". This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • I agree to be interviewed for this research. • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. • I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. • I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

7.2 Questionnaire

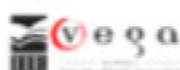
COVID-19 has had an impact on consumer buying behaviours towards various brands. Some brands have struggled to cope and survive due to the unpredictable consumer buying behaviours and economic turmoil caused by COVID-19. As many physical retailing stores were forced to close, brands have had to strategize and form alternative solutions such as encouraging consumers to purchase products through e-commerce. If brands fail to evaluate the buying behaviour of consumers and seek an alternative way of supporting their business during this pandemic, there will be a consequence of not generating enough income to keep the business running. This research is being conducted to understand how the global pandemic is affecting the buying decisions of consumers. This interview will help the researcher further understand the buying decisions of South African consumers within the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions:
• How old are you? • Do you currently live in South Africa?
• Are you aware of the COVID-19 pandemic taking place in South Africa? • How did you feel when COVID-19 outbreak took place, what emotions did you feel?
• How has COVID-19 affected your daily routine? • How has your life changed when the outbreak took place?
• What products and brands did you consistently buy from during the outbreak and why?
• Which products and brands did you stop buying from and why?
• What personal needs have these products been fulfilling for you?

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Did you prefer to buy most of your products at physical stores or online stores? Why? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have brands done to ensure your safety is prioritised during the COVID-19 pandemic? |

Thank you so much for your time. Have a wonderful day.

7.3 Ethics Clearance Letter



18 September 2020

Student name: Bronwyn Schelin

Campus: Vega Bordeaux



Re: Approval of RESE 8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance



HONOURS/PGDIP ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



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

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

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

ADVTECHHOUSE

Inanda Greens
54 Wende Rd West
Wende Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369
Randburg 2125



Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch, MD Aitken, FJ Coughlan
Group Company Secretary: KN Piki

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GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

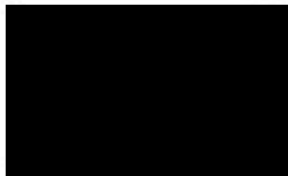
Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

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

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor: Dr Sibongile Vilakazi



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPCD): Dr Tish Taylor



7.4 Final Research Report Summary Document Table

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Literature Review - Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
Exploring how the COVID-19 outbreak affects consumer buying behaviour within South Africa.	What influence does the COVID-19 pandemic have on consumer buying behaviour of South African consumers?	To provide insight and understanding into consumer buying behaviours, the COVID-19 pandemic and affecting South African brands as well as the overall phenomenon.	Abraham Maslow	Theme 1: Increase in online purchases Theme 2: Increase purchases of health and safety products Theme 3: Economic downturn affects consumers purchasing decisions	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology This research aimed to assist South African brands with an understanding of customer behaviour insights to strategize coping mechanisms for South African brands.	Qualitative Approach	Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions	All participants signed a consent form stated the participants' personal information will remain confidential. Participants will not be subjected to any harm within the research process.	This research was conducted to contribute further understanding of how COVID-19 has affected consumer buying decisions within South Africa.	Maslow, A. 1943. <i>A theory of human motivation</i>. Psychological Review, 50, 370-396. Maree, K. 2016. <i>First Steps in Research 2</i>. 2nd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. McLeod, S. 2020. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. <i>Simply Psychology</i>. 20 March 2020. [Online]. Available at: https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html [Accessed 10 July 2020]. Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S., and Hogg, M. 2010. <i>Consumer Behaviour A European Perspective</i>. 5th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Methods	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
Examining how the global pandemic is affecting the buying decisions of consumers, further analysing how South African brands can survive.	To identify consumer buying behaviours within a global pandemic. To explore the impact COVID-19 has on the needs of South African consumers. To explore the influence and effects a global pandemic has on South African brands. To explore the influence consumer buying decisions have on brands.	- Consumer buying behaviour - Consumer Behaviour - Consumer Needs - COVID-19 - Maslow's Motivation-Need Theory - Epidemic - Pandemic	Maslow's Motivation-Need Theory (1943)	Ontology The research is a reality that is constructed by both laws and social reality. Axiology The research will seek to understand human phenomena.	Non-probability sampling	Purposive sampling method	Thematic approach using: familiarisation, coding, reviewing themes, defining themes and final phase to interpret the data.	The COVID-19 pandemic reduced the amount of face-to-face interactions; thus, the interviews were conducted online.	Aim to gain a deeper understanding of consumer buying behaviour, the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it has on brands in South Africa.	