



The race to sustainable retail trade: An exploration of brand personality within the South African context

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Honours in BA Strategic Brand Communication 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.

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Abstract

Sustainable retail trade is essentially the responsibility on manufacturers' and retailers' part to conduct business operations without compromising future generation's ability to meet their own needs. This is regarded as a sensitive issue of increasing interest due to the reduction of single-use plastic usage and consumers' expectations of their retailers rising. This comes as a result of a global education of what sustainable conduct is. The existing literature exploring consumers' expectations of their retailers to conduct themselves in a more sustainable manner is limited. Woolworths was of particular interest because they have been the most profitable food retailer in South Africa for many years, and was identified as having made the most concerted effort to be more sustainable. Woolworths Holdings was evaluated according to consumer's perceptions as well as Aaker's Brand Personality Model. The brand's stated vision is to be the world's most sustainable retailer by 2020. Ultimately, it was found that Woolworths values providing quality offerings more than they do becoming a more sustainable retailer.

Key Words

Sustainability, brand personality, consumer perceptions, customer expectations, retail trade, business operations

Section A: Study Background

1.1 Contextualisation

Sustainability is defined as the avoidance of the depletion of Earth's resources to maintain ecological balance (Oxford, 2019). Worldwide, there is a movement to increase sustainable manufacture and trade. This includes the reduction of the use of single-use plastic due to its non-biodegradable nature as a result of education of what sustainable conduct is (Wolchover, 2011). According to Blenkinsop (2018), this has largely stemmed from the decision made by negotiators from the European Parliament and the 28 European Union (EU) countries, who agreed on a list of 10 single-use plastic products that have alternatives and should be banned

Various countries adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in attempts to combat the threat of climate change, which went into force in November of 2016 (United Nations, 2016). In the agreement, countries, including South Africa, who signed, agreed to work to limit the global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees centigrade (United Nations, 2016). This agreement affecting businesses, large-scale operations and individuals has been made by government officials and the United Nations. It illustrates that people, retailers and manufacturers all over the world are left with no other option than to fully conceptualise climate change's potentially disastrous effects and take action for prevention and the betterment of the planet for generations to come (United Nations, 2016).

Woolworths has been chosen as the brand of focus as within South Africa, they were found to be most aligned with this study compared to all their retailer competitors. Woolworths Holdings Limited is a company that has been established for 87 years and has a well-known reputation of having a brand selling quality products (Woolworths' Annual Integrated Report, 2018). They are the first large-scale retailer in South Africa to start making sustainable business changes by starting to buy and sell organic products; they are planning to change their entire product range to organic products as well as products that have minimal to no impact on the environment, to name a few (Woolworths, 2012). According to an official report on BusinessTech (2018), Woolworths South Africa has followed suit with the announcement that they will be the first retailer in South Africa to have all single-use

plastic packaging phased out by 2020. Woolworths' stated vision to become the most responsible retailer in the world by 2020 runs parallel with Woolworth's brand personality. This brand personality is to be explored as a result of them being the leading retailer for food consumables in South Africa for many years with R75,2 billion in turnover and concession sales in 2018 (Woolworths, 2018).

The brand personality should be relatable to the consumer in the same way a human personality is, and a successful brand can increase its brand equity with a consistent set of traits that their target consumer segment enjoys (Lim, 2018). Brand personality can be defined as a set of human characteristics that attribute to the brand name they belong to (Lim, 2018). In this study, Woolworths will be measured against Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997) which has five personality types being sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Woolworths' compliance with Aaker's Brand Personality model (1997) according to consumers perceptions of this assessment will be evaluated through research conducted.

1.2 Rationale

Major food chains all over the world, including Woolworths, have realised they need to keep up in order to maintain their competitive advantage (Woolworths Good Business Journey (GBJ) Report, 2017). According to (GBJ) Report in 2017, Woolworths aims to be more sustainable according to four identified risk areas, namely: waste generation, food waste, waste disposal, and natural resource consumption.

The Woolworths Group stated in their 2018 Integrated Report that their vision is to be one of the world's most responsible retailers, which will be a shift requiring hefty funding and revolutionary operational changes. This would be done with the intent to have a widespread positive impact on their operations from grassroots levels to their end-consumer. Nonetheless, it cannot be neglected that numerous retailers have been accused by consumers of 'profit-maximizing' on their ethical and sustainable efforts most recently (Koch, 2010).

This initiative's rollout has been acknowledged by the CEO of Woolworths South Africa, Zyda Rylands, to not be an easy one that will not happen overnight (Woolworths, 2018). A paradigm shift is thus required and will include their

consumers, suppliers, contracted packagers, converters, and recyclers. Woolworths' upholding of their brand personality is notable, as Woolworths has a large scale of operations that includes food, the manufacture and sale of clothing and home products. This ultimately integrates Woolworths' into many spheres, physically and emotionally, of their consumers' lives.

The research is intended to provide insight into South Africans' perceptions to retailers in South Africa, as well as how they ought to conduct sustainable actions here forward. Consumers who will gain deeper understanding of the brands they purchase from. It is acknowledged that consumer's perceptions of Woolworths are of great value to the company; especially when implementing big changes in operations such as this one, as without their support, the business could potentially fail or even lose its essence in its entirety if gone about in the wrong way and the study aims to explore consumer's perceptions of this business move in response to global and industrial changes (GBJ, 2018).

1.3 Problem Statement

Worldwide, there is a conscious shift to increase sustainable manufacture and trade influencing retailers to comply with this movement in order to remain relevant, retain their competitive advantage and reap profits (Wolchover, 2011). The researcher will analyse consumers' awareness level of the extent of retailers environmental damage when it comes to production and transportation, excessive single-use packaging layers and a manipulation of advertising to sway consumers to believe their goods are more sustainable than they are in reality, online and in-store.

Exploring South African consumers' perception of Woolworths' operational sustainability practises, as well as the changes they are making in order to in terms of their vision of being the most sustainable retailer in South Africa by 2020. These consumer perceptions may not be limited to Woolworths' identified four risk areas they have outlined to improve: waste generation, food waste, waste disposal and natural resource consumption (GBJ, 2017).

1.4 Research goal and question

The goal of this applied research study is to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' perceptions of Woolworths in particular by the gathering of additional data. From the consumers' perspective, the requirements set to meet the recently raised standard of sustainable practices are to be identified. This will gain a larger degree of understanding of shoppers' expectations of their retailer of choice.

This sustainable standard has come about as a result of a rise in climate change developments, a larger degree of consumer education and more research made available to the public. Therefore, this study intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, as well as examining the effect of consumers' perceptions of Woolworth's sustainability efforts.

What is Woolworths' South African consumers' perception of their efforts towards their vision to be the most ethically responsible retailer globally by 2020?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To explore Woolworths' conduct of more sustainable, ethical business operations that will enable them to maintain their competitive advantage, and how this move was done in accordance with their brand personality.
2. To identify which elements of the brand personality model Woolworths is and is not adhering to regarding their sustainability changes.
3. To determine which operations Woolworths has been perceived to have been placed importance upon to make sustainability and ethical improvements by the consumer.
4. To explore the honesty and transparency Woolworths consumers have experienced from the brand, and their product offerings, that they have experienced in their communications with them in-store and online.

Section B: Literature Review

Conceptualisation

- The origin of sustainable retail trade, as well as elements which make up a sustainable brand that will earn them a competitive advantage (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2011:935)
- Which aspects make up brand personality and an analysis of Woolworths' unique brand personality. The way this has been established in consumers' minds for many years leaves a lasting impression and was evaluated against Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997).
- The stricter legislation implemented by the European Union that forces retailers and manufacturers to act more sustainably, and the impact of consumers' awareness' has on their shopping habits and expectations of retailers (Blenkinsop, 2018).
- A critical analysis of Woolworths' sustainability claims and efforts up until this point, as well as the way they have communicated this with their consumers.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The Balance Theory is a motivational theory proposed by Heider, (1958) that states presents an attitude change as the drive toward a psychological balance. He claims that "sentiment" or liking relationships are balanced if they affect valence in a system multiplies out to a positive result (Heider, 1958). The Balance Theory was illustrated by means of a triad, with the 'Perceiver' at one end, the attitude 'Object' at another, and the 'Other' person or item at the last point (Heider, 1958). Any combinations that presented themselves as the result, whether it be that a perceiver likes or dislikes an object, is either shown with a minus or plus symbol (Chaiken & Stangor, 1987: 575). It was found by Heider (1958), that in the event of a plus trumping a minus, a balance occurs; and in the event of an imbalanced relationship, the perceiver's attitude change would need to change to restore the balance once more.

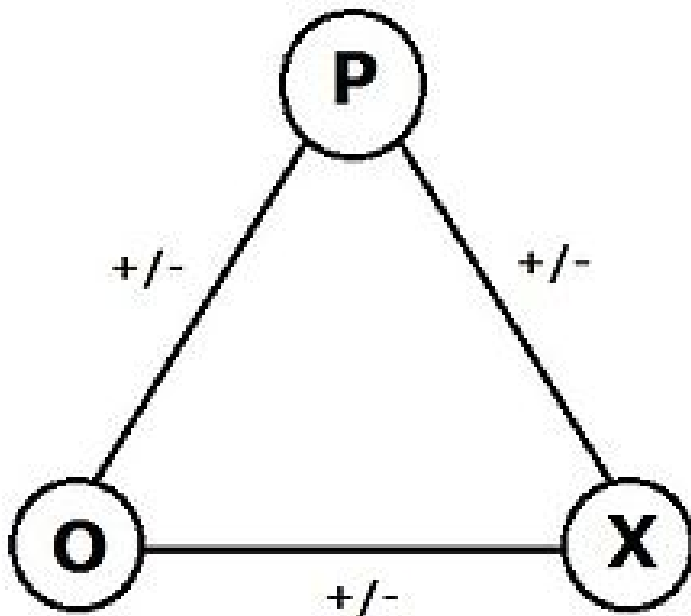


Figure 1: Heider, F. *The P-O-X Model. The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. (John Wiley & Sons, 1985)

In the context of the study, the researcher believed that this theory was fitting to provide the theoretical framework. It sufficiently supported literature and findings that stated that loyal consumers not only like and enjoy using the products that they purchase regularly, which provides them with reason to buy them again, but moreover, these consumers develop a liking for the brand as a whole and the values they stand for, ultimately causing an all-round positive experience (Keller, 2009).

The study aims to explore the possibilities that the Balance Theory (1958) presents upon certain factors in the triad changing, thus resulting in a shift in attitude. Moreover, the theory's application to Woolworths is of particular interest, with the researcher having identified the following key areas: Consumers at Woolworths being the 'Perceiver,' felt generally positive upon being asked about the brand itself, being the 'Other' element. However, their feelings and responses became more complex and negatively skewed upon having to describe their attitude and expectations, being the 'Object' in the triad, towards the recent global shift to become more sustainable, and how Woolworths' has realigned themselves to follow suit.

A critique of this theory is that if a particular person already had an established dislike for a product that is being endorsed or is not an area or item of interest to them, such as sustainability, they may begin disliking the endorser, item or concept altogether again to achieve a psychological balance. However, it was found that Heider's Balance Theory can explain why people holding the same negative attitudes of others promotes a sense of closeness, with it explaining why people who dislike a certain item or concept, find comfort and unity in coming together (Ohanian, 1990:39). This critique was highlighted to the researcher, and also applies to this study conversely, with many people disliking the conduct of retailers and large scale manufacturers that is harmful to the environment, and would stand together to change this.

Section B: Literature Review

We live in a socio-economic climate of gaining interest in the ethical consideration for the sourcing and impact of our consumables. A challenge that global retailers and in particular, Woolworths, face is implementing efforts which make up a sustainable brand that will earn them a competitive advantage (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2011:935). The retail store has been identified as an important organisational layer within retailers to operationalise sustainable consumption (Lehner, 2015). Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet (2012) suggests there is a positive relationship between perceived ethicality of a brand as well as trust in the brand, and that effect positively influences the brand and its projected personality. For this reason, Woolworths was found fitting to focus upon in this study as they are the leading retailer for food consumables in South Africa over a number of years, with R75,2 billion in turnover and concession sales in 2018 (Woolworths, 2018).

Blenkinsop (2018) claims that the European Union legislation has recently changed to ban all single-use plastic by 2021, in order to align itself with research revealing the devastating and unacceptable results of practices that do not pay attention to these areas. As a result, international and local brands are making varying changes and business alignments to adjust their back-end operations and the products their consumers buy to fit this new standard and survive economically unstable conditions (Lehner, 2015).

2.1 Brand personality

According to Vahdati and Nejad (2016), brand personality is regarded as instrumental for consumers as well as marketers, as it can create a procedure to differentiate among different brands and is a key determinant for consumer purchase intention. A relevant aid is Aaker's brand personality model (1997) which can be understood as the way consumers relate to brands on a more human level. Specifically, they are known to be: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. This model is regarded as one of the most widely used and trusted tools for measuring brand personality in numerous different industries, while others such as the Braunstein and Ross (2010) model is applicable in only one specific industry and not pertaining to branding.

The five dimensions making up brand personality are built on the foundation that is the “Big Five” human personality structure (Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1958) and includes 15 facets. However, this scale was not chosen for this study as it will be evaluating a brand that has similar personality traits but is not itself a human. The human personality structure has been criticised by Avis (2012) of having definitions that are not specific enough, perceived as ambiguous and easily confused between “brand personality” and “user profiles.” For this reason, the researcher has made the deduction to make reference to Aaker’s Brand Personality Model (1997), as it is most specific to this study.

A brand personality is defined by Lim (2019) to be qualities that consumers are able to relate to. A successful brand increases its brand equity by having consistent traits that their consumer segment enjoys. Macrae (1991) asserts that brands are tangible, labelled products that can carry complex messages such as quality and customer value that are far greater than the product itself. It can be argued that Woolworths’ vast offerings need to advance innovation wise in order to remain relevant as many students, families and individuals of all age brackets and lifestyles buy from Woolworth’s offerings.

A considerable amount of research has been done in the field of personality psychology, with the “Big 5” dimensions having been identified and explored. They are: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness (Aaker, 1997). Organizations such as Woolworths with the capacity to develop an understanding of and ability in predicting customer's behaviour are organisations that have an edge over their competitors in the marketplace they operate in (Vahdati & Mousavi, 2016).

The dimensions that are found to be present within the organisation will be measured against the Brand Personality Model, with a valid outcome received from the measurements undergone, the researcher has found them to be namely: Sincerity (in their communication with their stakeholders and intentions to become more ethically aware), Competence (for their quality offerings and numerous awards received over time) Sophistication (with regards to their branding and luxurious appeal) and Excitement (with the brand being up-to-date and imaginative in their packaging and progressive concepts.) Ruggedness was not identified as befitting or

relevant in any way to the Woolworths' brand according to the five brand personality elements as it is not outdoorsy or tough.

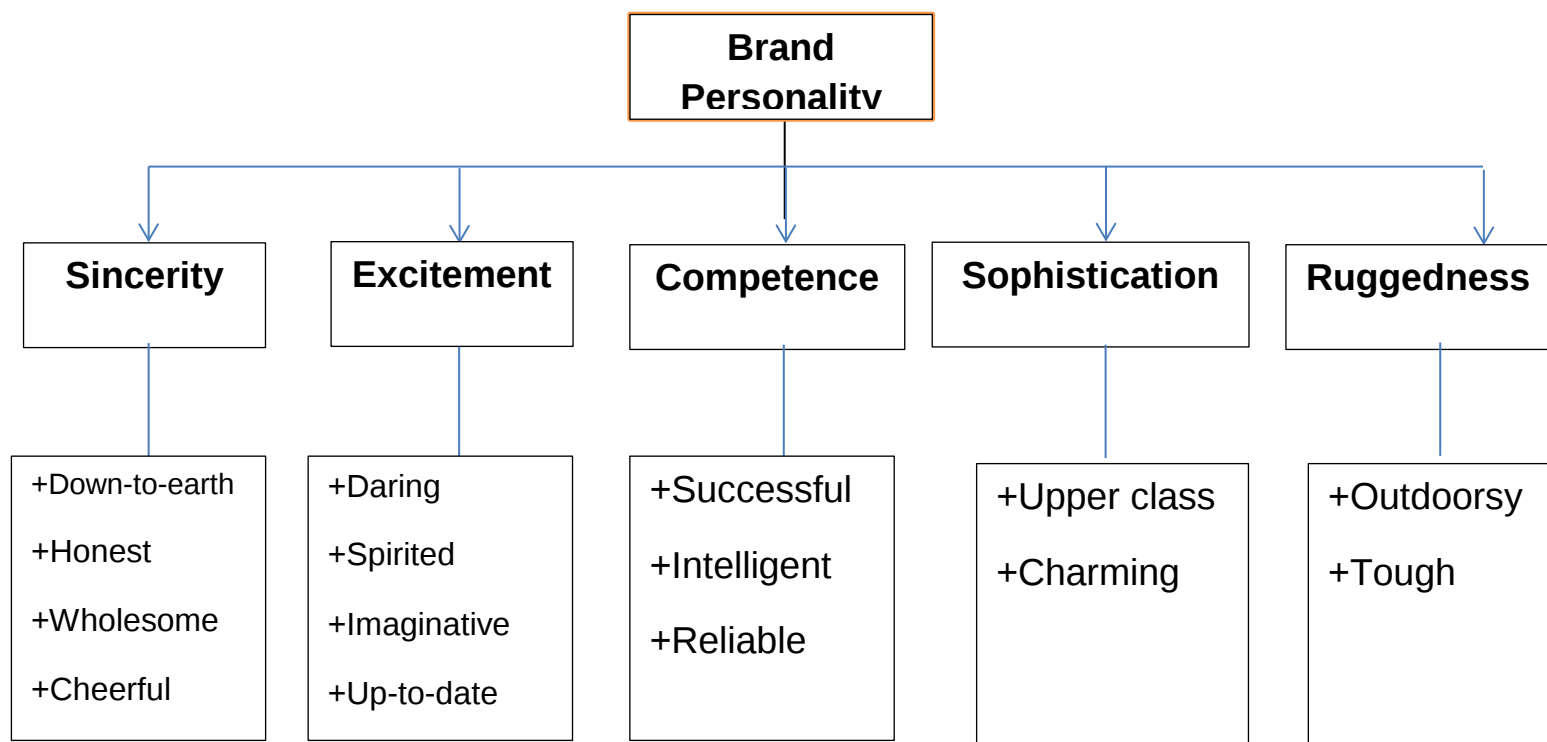


Figure 2: Aaker, J. *Dimensions of Brand Personality* (*Journal of Marketing Research*, p347).

Duncan, the Senior Manager of the Marine Programme of the WWF-SA, has said in 2018 that by setting holistic and ambitious plastic packaging commitments, Woolworths is taking a leadership role on this issue by raising the bar in rethinking how and when they use plastics (Pace, 2018). This shift to set holistic packaging commitments may alter South African consumers' perceptions negatively; causing consumers to view them in a negative light as a result of no action being taken in comparison to other more progressively sustainable retailers.

Woolworths has stated that their triple bottom line sustainability is one of their strategic brand's corporate issues of importance to them (Woolworths, 2018). Woolworths has prioritized sustainability issues in its employee's scorecard that is a point of reference in evaluating their annual job performance (Woolworths Holdings Limited, 2018). The brand goes on to say that sustainability is an issue that is driven from the top management and filtered down to floor employees in their company (Woolworths, 2018). Woolworths (2018) claims to have received substantial benefit

from their voluntary action of conducting themselves in an ethical, sustainable manner, as they now understand their products origins and whether products are safe and healthy. These actions have been taken to ultimately strengthen Woolworths' brand equity by strengthening their relationships with their suppliers, with them receiving local and international recognition and praise in the process (Woolworths, 2018).

It is evident that Woolworths aims for a continual positive trend in profits economically, as does any profit driven company. Moreover, they have proved since the inception of their initiative, The (GBJ) which their social and ecological factors positive correspondence is of equal importance, with systems in place to combat other issues such as unemployment and enhancing public image through sustainability (GBJ Report, 2017). Nonetheless, it can be argued that Woolworths is profit-driven in terms of their implemented store changes which no longer offer plastic bags, as they pocket the money made on the new product offering that consumers forcibly have to make in the event that they have not made provision to bring their own bag from home.

It can also be considered from the consumer's perspective that Woolworths is not doing more to educate their consumers on the environmental issues at hand. If it were communicated in-store, online and via word-of-mouth the reasoning for Woolworth's changes, the impact and vision they desire to achieve and a timeline overview of their plans, then consumers may gain a deeper resonance and understanding of Woolworths intentions and movements to become the world's leading sustainably responsible retailer (GBJ, 2017). It would be easy for consumers to not take note of the fact that Woolworths has already successfully light-weighted and reduced their packaging by almost 700 tonnes to date, proving their integrity in not only reducing their harmful packaging, but also minimizing food waste in the event of this not being communicated effectively to their consumers (Woolworths, 2018).

The Aaker brand personality model (1997) ultimately ensures that the brand under question does not make the error of positioning themselves as a brand that is animated or too distinct to the point that they do not contain human-like features. In this way, they make themselves more reliable, valid and easy to remember. The

possibility of this model being ineffective was evaluated by Romanuik and Ehrenberg (2012) and the major finding of their study was that past users of a brand consistently have the highest tendency to elicit negative beliefs about brands. A negatively biased study would not be suitable as a foundation for my own unbiased research to be developed upon. Woolworths' adherence to sustainable practise standards in a changing external environmental need not only be done, but done so in a voluntary manner that displays their willingness to care for the space they operate in (Goworek et al, 2012). Consumer perspectives on sustainable trade have been examined in another study, as well as ways in which this information could influence retailers' policies. The findings were that a limited awareness of the sustainability impacts exists in that particular sample. In the event where participants displayed pro-environmental behaviour, this was not necessarily intentional, but was largely a response to other influences (Goworek et al, 2012).

Woolworths' race to being the most sustainable retailer has only begun. Woolworths will need to conduct their own research and waste audits further, restructuring their business practises, packaging, product offerings and even the sourcing of materials they need are to be reformed. Nonetheless, Woolworths is well on their way, and was a finalist in the Responsible Retailer of the Year award at the World Retail awards 2017 (GBJ, 2017). Strategies are to be continually devised and executed in a sincere manner, one that aligns them with their brand personality, as they have since their inception since 1931 (Woolworths, 2018).

The success of a well-established brand's continuity has been found to rely on their strategy's adaptation to adversity in the environment they find themselves in, especially amidst the world's commitment to put legislation in place as a means of assurance that companies worldwide take active steps to change previous negligent behaviour on producer's part (Paetz, 2018). Moreover, this theory supports companies to optimise their branding, which results in increasing profits. Since only a handful of recent studies have tackled this important research area, the study investigates the personality traits of sustainable consumers and aims to come to a conclusion on the relevant brand personality strategies for the sustainable brand, Woolworths (Paetz, 2018).

2.2 Conclusion

In light of the above, it can be deduced that many manufacturers, suppliers and businesses may be facing a forced reform and restructuring of their operations to conduct more sustainably. This forced reform that is reinforced by legislature in Europe, and subsequently South Africa following suit, is to be done in a manner that is cohesive with the four applicable elements of the Brand Personality Model that they have outlined. Woolworths South Africa has begun various initiatives that will ensure that they keep up with this new external change in environmental policy. Nonetheless, a large discrepancy may possibly still exist in their conduct in terms of what they are doing and what could still be done with regards to solving this global ethical issue. An education of their consumers on what they can do as individuals, as well as what the company is doing is lacking, as well as their alleged profit maximizing on their sustainable product offerings.

Section C: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is essentially methods and structures that will go on to conduct research and address issues (Kawulich, 2012). The process of research is known to contain three core research traditions, namely: positivism, interpretivism and critical realism which can be discussed in terms of ontological, epistemological, metatheoretical, methodological and axiological positions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:23-24). For this study, the epistemological interpretive paradigm will be discussed as they were found to have underpinned the nature of this study well. The interpretive theory is defined as accepting of free will, and views human behaviour as an outcome of the subjective interpretation of the environment (Cohen & Manion, 1994: p36) and is suitable to the study as consumer's feelings and perceptions towards Woolworths are of focus.

The interpretivism paradigm illustrates a story from research, which will then look in-depth at individuals' beliefs, opinions, values and life experiences (Salmapatel, 2015). With this paradigm, the approach is subjective, thus qualitative research forms insights (Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm will be most fitting for this research to gain insight into whether there is an influence of

consumers' perceptions and expectations of Woolworths as a result of the worldwide legislature changes and movements to address the four key risk areas in retail business trade (GBJ, 2017).

Consumers' actions influence the progress of major retailers as a result of having been pressured by those who hold ultimate buying power to make more sustainable choices (Wigley et al, 2013). The interpretive paradigm is appropriate for the researcher as the in-depth interviews will be analysed, allowing for the researcher's interpretation, they do not involve a financial cost, as well as this process being easily obtainable and sufficient in quantity.

The researcher was required to understand both the context and circumstances to be able to detect and account for misrepresentations that may arise in data (Catanzaro, 1988). The researcher made sure to investigate in-depth on the topic of sustainability as well as retail trade in South Africa to ensure that their understanding was solid. Research that is of a qualitative nature deals with a certain degree of interpretation on the researcher's part. However, these interpretations naturally vary in depth depending on the analysis method chosen and the researcher's ability to remain objective throughout the study (Patton, 2002, Silverman, 2001).

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of a subject nature, and whether this constitutes a subjective or objective view on the matter (Forster, 2010). The belief that stands is one that worldwide many have faced the reality that has existed for decades: that climate change and global warming is real, with effects manifesting in all countries around the world. According to Lofgren, (2013) this belief is that reality exists regardless of human observers, and in this study, specifically consumers.

Horkheimer (1972) states that the critical theory's definition is adequate only if it meets set criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative in nature, simultaneously. He goes on to say that it must explain what is at fault with the existing social reality, identifying agents to change it and provide clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Horkheimer, 1972). This relates to the current task Woolworths has at hand; the sustainable re-

strategizing they are doing as a result of a clearly defined social problem. However, it falls short according to Waja (2013) in the sense of businesses that only identified and implemented limited practises in order to rectify social issues, are not sufficient to some sustainably conscious people who wish for all aspects of their consumables to be non-waste. The researcher believes that due to the faults in literature, and the fact that all three criteria were not fully met, with the changes on Woolworths part are not yet fulfilled and are in some cases impractical, the critical theory will not be discussed further in the study.

3.1.2 Epistemological Interpretive paradigm

Epistemology refers to the nature, status, and production of knowledge (Harding, 1987). The changes that Woolworths are putting into motion are comprehensive of a number of steps that impact their entire operations from the back-end manufacturing to the products that consumers buy in-store. Following their promise to become a responsible retailer with minimal packaging made in 2018. Some of these changes can already be seen in their physical stores, as well as formal statements made in their Annual Integrated Report of 2018. In the report, evidence of the brands' changes was shown in an effort to be more sustainable whilst remaining aligned to their brand personality that has been established for years. Besides physical evidence as confirmation of their doings to align themselves with updated legislature and their established brand personality, Woolworths is doing a substantial amount of branding such as product labelling and press releases to illustrate these changes to their consumers.

3.2 Nature of the research design

A cross sectional study will be conducted as this study will be conducted at only one point in time (Cherry, 2019). This method is effective and inexpensive in nature, allows the researcher to look at numerous characteristics of the respondents, such as their age, gender and consumer perceptions all at once and fits the time constraint on the student with the study's due date being on 25 October 2019.

There are two main types of approaches in terms of research design, with them being namely: inductive and deductive approach. Deductive reasoning is used to test the hypotheses, and one holds a theory and based on it, one could make a prediction of its consequences, (Parrish, 2019) however this was not found to be a fitting research design and will be disregarded. Inductive inference proved to be the most suitable means to supplement the study, as it will proceed from the specific to the general (Wassertheil-Smoller, 2017). With the inductive method, one can make observations, discern patterns, make generalizations, and infer an explanation or a theory," Wassertheil-Smoller has said (2017).

The researcher worked in an inductive fashion by first collecting the relevant information on sustainability from a global perspective. Next, the researcher established where the respondent's awareness level was at, whether they actively took actions to reduce their global footprint, then analysed their correspondence and formulating a suitable theory (Davis, 2016). Thus, allowing themes to emerge from the data (Maree, 2016). Elo and Kyngas (2007) states that content analysis is used for the purpose of providing knowledge and insights, a representation of facts and an applied guide to action, relevant to the study.

The research conducted will be exploratory in nature for the topic which was not well researched before, demands priorities, generates operational definitions and eventually aims to provide a better-researched model (Yousaf, 2018). It is in fact a type of research design that focuses on explaining the aspects of your study in a more detailed manner (Yousaf, 2018). The researcher started with the general idea of what sustainable trade and consumption means to the consumer, and then zoned into their experience with Woolworths in particular by using research as a tool which

could lead to valuable topics that would be dealt with in the incoming future regarding sustainable retail trade.

The qualitative method was made use of, and the research tool used in this study was conducted with one participant at a time, in the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This will be done in the hope of gaining an understanding of human behaviours, opinions, perceptions and experiences regarding sustainability as a lifestyle, as well as Woolworths' brand shift to realign them accordingly. With this tool the researcher can expand on questions with the respondent and receive clarification of the answers provided to them (Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje, 2014).

Section D: Research Methodology

4.1 Population

The definition of population is the people required to engage with a research problem, concept or research question (Pascoe, 2014). There are parameters including characteristics, individuals and the population itself (Pascoe, 2014). In the case of this study, the target population is South African consumers with an existing consumer perception of Woolworths, and who have an existing basic understanding of the concept of sustainability in terms of trade and consumption, and form part of population parameters. The accessible population is zoomed in on, and is the accessible population is the smaller, more specific portion of people used in the research (Pascoe, 2014). Therefore, the accessible population will be males and females aged 18-35 who are aware of Woolworths, have formed consumer perception of the brand and have purchased from Woolworths in Pretoria. This area was chosen as it was convenient as it was within close proximity to the researcher.

4.2 Sample size

The sample size of respondents in the study was a smaller group of members of a population selected to represent the population (Boyd, 2018) with 3 suitable candidates selected for the interviews. The number of respondents specified for the qualitative research (open-ended questions) adhered to the minimum requirements set for a valid study, as well as having the ability to provide different opinions on a broad scale regarding the respondent's emotions and consumer experience with Woolworths regarding their recent sustainability changes.

4.3 Sampling method and recruitment methods

A sample should be established in order to better manage, gather and analyse the information that will be obtained from research (Pascoe, 2014). A sample is intended to represent associations, beliefs and opinions as an insight of the broader population (Pascoe, 2014).

Probability sampling is when an individual from the population that has an equal likelihood of forming a portion of the sample (Pascoe, 2014). The method is predominantly used in quantitative studies for it illustrates a representation of the

population; therefore generalises findings to the rest of the population, thus it is not an applicable method to this research (Pascoe, 2014) as this research study has been determined to be qualitative in nature.

The non-probability method is chosen when access is not possible to an entire population, making it challenging to decide who the entire population will be (Pascoe, 2014). This research will use this method using a small sample size of people to gain insight into consumer perceptions of Woolworths move in their vision to being the most sustainable retailer in the world by 2020 in a qualitative manner. The participant recruitment requirements would be that they must be over 18 years of age, and regularly shop or interact with Woolworths regularly, but at a minimum, at least once in their lives.

Convenience sampling is used in the event of the researcher knowing that the sample elements will be simply accessible (Pascoe, 2014) and best suits this study due to only a minimum of three participants was required. Convenience sampling participants are selected based on availability and willingness to take part (Health Knowledge, 2017). Useful results can be obtained, however may be prone to significant bias, as those who volunteer to take part may be different from those who choose not to, and the sample may not be representative of other variables, such as age or gender – however, specifics such as age and gender are not forecast to be of influence to respondent's answers in this study, and ought not to negatively impact.

It is known that some convenience samples may be more readily accessible than others, with the researcher able to ask friends in the immediate environment to participate. However, even if a sample is convenient in nature, some amount of effort was likely involved in the recruitment of participants from that sample (Higginbottom, 2004, p15). A potential downfall that may occur from the use of this technique is that due to the subject matter or population likely being fairly familiar with the topic (Barton, 2001). However, a degree of familiarity with the topic, sustainability, was required for this study, as a lack of knowledge would have results in misinformed answers in the interviews.

4.4 Data Collection Method

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje (2014), there are many available tools that are available for researchers to make use of, with the correct procedure of collection and administration of data paramount to the validity and accuracy of one's results. Furthermore, data collection is defined as the manner in which research is obtained from the sample size (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2018).

Interviews were conducted with applicable candidates using semi-structured, in-depth questions in order to elicit responses of their assessment of sustainability practices at Woolworths in Gauteng, Pretoria according to Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997). Open-ended questions in the interviews will be of particular value to the study as the outcomes will be of an emotive, personal nature which will provide the desired insight into consumer perceptions and their experiences with the brand.

The interview entailed a conversational format between interviewer and the chosen interviewee (Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje, 2014). The interviews will be conducted at the researcher's private residence. A thematic analysis strives to identify patterns of themes found to be prevalent in the interview data (Mortensen, 2019). The research study has a focus on consumer perceptions, and since the nature of the study is of an inductive then it is fitting to say that there are not any themes in particular expected to be identified as of yet. The researcher maintained a neutral stance during the interview process, as well as during the question-asking process to ensure there is no influence exerted on the participants answering.

The discussion points stemmed from prior research which aimed to explore consumer perceptions of Woolworths' shoppers of their sustainable changes and operational improvements to business to this point in time (Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje, 2014). The questions chosen for use in the interview concerned the consumers interactions in the store, on the Woolworths' website, as well as their attitudes and actions towards living a sustainable lifestyle. The questions were based on prior studies conducted on topics of similar nature regarding businesses making sustainability adaptations to their model; as well as academics who have made use of Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997). These measures will be taken to enable

the insights obtained to be of assistance in exploring the impact Woolworths' sustainability aims and claims made have on their consumer perceptions, if any at all.

4.5 Data Analysis Method

The main aim of performing research is to analyse the information gathered to create understanding and clarity. In quantitative data analysis, a hypothesis can also be formulated which is a manner to accept or reject a prediction when evaluating findings of research (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). Therefore, quantitative data analysis will not be used as a hypothesis would not be necessary for the study as in-depth emotions and opinions are the desired outcome as opposed to rankings.

On the other hand, qualitative data analysis is done from a subjective view gathered from the participants (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). Chosen as an analysis tool for this study was semi-structured interviews: thematic analysis.

Reflexive thematic analysis is an approach deemed appropriate for this study, with the purpose of thematic analysis being to identify patterns of meaning and commonalities across a dataset that provides an answer to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Patterns are then identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision (University of Auckland, 2018). This qualitative data would then be sorted and analysed on an Excel spreadsheet to be translated into data via means of a tally chart to be able to make comparisons with the results of equal value.

After the research interviews have been conducted, the data was captured by means of transcription. Thereafter, an analysis of the data was done according to the set guidelines adhering to ethical standards, as well as the five brand personality models to ensure validity of the study. The findings were then interpreted and coded in a way that particularly applied to the study.

The steps in a Thematic Analysis process are as follows: Familiarizing oneself with the data, assign preliminary codes to your data in order to describe the content, proceeding to search for patterns or themes in your codes across the different interviews, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes. Lastly, the final thematic report is to be produced (Mortensen, 2019).

The aim of exploratory research is to identify key variables in order to gain an understanding of a phenomenon (Maree, 2016). With thematic analysis being commonly linked to broader theoretical and conceptual issues, the method is able to allow the researcher to navigate and code the data in a way that meaningfully addresses the research question pertaining to Woolworths and the way they are addressing the global social issue of reducing their harmful environmental impact, whilst simultaneously enabling the researcher to have a sense of flexibility and accessibility (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The data analysis process followed proceeded as follows: Adapted from (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017)

Step 1: Organising and preparing the data

The in-depth interviews were individually done and voice recorded on the researcher's smartphone for transcriptions to happen.

Step 2: Reading through the data

The respondent's interviews were read multiple times over to be able to understand the context of what was said and with what meaning to the fullest potential. If any facial expressions made were notable, or any other hesitations or occurrences were made and were worth noting, then record was made of this.

Step 3: Coding the transcribed material

The interview transcripts were first individually and then collectively scrutinized by the researcher in order to allow for the organisation and deduction of the main themes from a more focussed data set. Open coding was made use of as there were no pre-set codes imposed on the study, but rather the researcher's own codes were established and modified as was seen fit throughout the entire process of coding. 4

Step 4: An identification of the themes

The codes that were found to be relational to one another were combined and then labelled to create preliminary themes which were reviewed, modified and furthermore collated into four main themes.

Step 5: A discussion of the themes

The identified themes were then defined for a full understanding of what they entail, and then discussed by the researcher in terms of the study's findings and were supported by verbatim quotes from participants as evidence as well as for referral purposes.

Step 6: An interpretation of the findings

The study's focussed findings were interpreted, and then related to theory and/ or literature; with the researcher having evaluated this in alignment with the context of the primary and secondary research questions were specified.

Braun and Clarke (2006) established two levels of themes: semantic and latent. Semantic themes '...within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written.' (p.84). On the other hand, the second, deeper level, looks beyond what has been said by the respondent and '...starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations - that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (p.84). The researcher will ensure that both levels will be addressed in-depth in the study to enable the most accurate unfolding of results possible as result from the six-step process.

Section E: Findings and Interpretation

Table 1: Summary of Themes

Theme	Interview Question	Objective
Theme 1: Consumer's awareness of sustainable conduct	Question 5 & 6	Objective 1
Theme 2: Woolworths as a brand	Question 7 & 10	Objective 2 & 4
Theme 3: Identification of Woolworths' sustainability actions as a retailer (if any)	Question 8 & 9	Objective 2 & 3
Theme 4: Transparency and honesty from Woolworths' part	Question 11 & 12	Objective 1 & 2

The predominant themes that came to light from the three in-depth interviews were conducted among selected Woolworths customers in the Pretoria area were as follows: Level of interest, knowledge and care for the environment, Consumer perceptions of Woolworths as a brand, Woolworth's shift (if any) to become a more sustainable retailer and lastly, the level of transparency and honesty from Woolworths towards consumers experienced. (See Appendix)

Each one of these themes will be discussed as well as interpreted by the researcher, which includes what the finding was defined as in terms of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.6 Findings and Interpretation of Themes

Theme 1: Consumer's awareness of sustainable conduct

This theme entailed the participants to introspect and provide honest truths about their own perceived awareness of the issue of sustainability as a whole after having answered what they believe the term means to them in the previous question. It was a prerequisite for the researcher to interview individuals who have a basic understanding of the term, as well as them conducting their lives in somewhat one or another sustainably conscious manner.

The feeling of there being a sense of importance and value attached to living sustainably was strong in all three responses. Two of the three respondents made use of emotive language in their responses, with strong negative words such as "very guilty when I buy things that are not sustainable or eco-friendly and recyclable," and it was identified that all three of the respondents made use of words that are strongly inclined to convey a sense of pride and ownership pertaining to the activity that they do engage in to play their part to lead a more sustainable lifestyle.

Nonetheless, the respondent noted that they only shopped at Woolworths once a week for groceries, and due to the store's convenience. Thus, the negative emotions they feel on a frequent basis are either not strong enough to repel her from shopping at Woolworths altogether due to them having noted that "the range is good," or the convenience factor or even the lack of alternative grocery or fresh produce stores in the area that conduct more sustainable practises than Woolworths on the whole.

The above mentioned findings confirm theory discussed in the literature review whereby sustainable business conduct on the part of major manufacturers and retailers has become paramount and a minimum expectation in order to elicit positive feelings among participants towards the brand in order to retain their competitive advantage. In this way, Woolworths will contribute and remaining aligned with the brand's overall brand personality in a favourable manner from the consumer's perspective as is stated in Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997)

Theme 1: Consumer's awareness of sustainable conduct

In response to the question posed asking what respondents feel are the main causes of environmental problems in the world today. Two respondents displayed an in-depth awareness regarding overgrazing and the impact of farming with animals, hormone induction and their harmful emissions impact being greater than that of cars' on the environment being in line with major sustainable leaders statements, however remaining hidden due to the media and farmer's control of this. In conclusion, there is sufficient awareness on respondents end that they are aware of farming malpractice and that this has a direct impact on what they receive at retailers, and ultimately, what ends up on their plate.

Interpretation

One of the three respondents stated that there is not enough legislation, like rules and taxing in terms of packaging. This shows that there is an existing belief that there should be a larger degree of pressure exerted on South African manufacturers and retailers from government and organisations, as they went on to note that people don't really care unless it affects them personally, which aligns itself with one of the reasons the changes have been slow-moving in their implementation. This finding confirms evidence provided in the literature that a call for legislature implemented with consequences for individuals or corporate bodies violating these rules, as it was found that would be most effective for the environmental rectification changes to come about as swiftly as possible.

All three respondent's findings are in agreement with their stance on the main causes of global sustainable damage, and it can be confirmed that all participants have a sufficient, and even more so, in-depth and up-to-date awareness level of the main happens in the world today, validating their responses furthermore. All respondents revealed thought provoked having taken some time to think before providing answering, and making use of words such as "Um" and "I think" portraying care taken to answer as accurately as possible.

Two of the three respondents displayed evidence of themselves being appropriate candidates with an in-depth knowledge of major threats to the environment, with

answers including that overgrazing and land usage is one of the lesser known factors that contribute to damaging fuel emissions to the ozone layer (Steinfeld, de Haan & Blackburn, 1998).

Theme 2: Woolworths as a brand

This theme encompasses consumer's perceptions of the Woolworths brand as a whole. It was decided that the best way to uncover this, would be to briefly name or describe the first five words or phrases that came to their minds upon finding out more about what their deeply ingrained, long-lasting, subconscious impressions of one of their most frequently visited retailers is. This theme about gaining insight into consumers brand perceptions of Woolworths, runs parallel to Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997).

Conclusions were drawn from similar words that convey the dimensions of the model. Respondents will likely not be familiar with the model, neither was it necessary for them to be, and thus the researcher will join the dots by grouping words into the five pillars that make up the model. This will enable the research to be able to configure the brand personality that Woolworths has established for themselves since their inception in 1931, but that still exists today, with them being namely: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness (Aaker, 1997).

Interpretation

All three respondents quoted the word "Quality" when asked which four words encapsulate the brand. In Woolworths' 2018 Integrated Report, they stated that their vision is: "exceptional quality in every product we sell and every experience we deliver to our customers and our people." Quality was also listed as one of their main values in the Integrated Report. All three respondents agreeing that this was prevalent to them, displays the brand's firm commitment to successfully conveying this attribute across in all that they do, which translates to the Competence element of the Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997).

Two of the three respondents claimed that "Fresh" and "Variety" were words that came to mind when thinking of the Woolworths brand. This forms part of the

describing words that are used when linking a brand's personality to being one that is exciting and competent, according to Aaker (1997).

"Reliable/ consistency" was noted two out of the three times by participants. With the last respondent making use of the word "long-lasting" which would be placed in the same category, as Woolworths is in the fresh produce and food business. This word "long-lasting" is of positive connotation and directly links to the retailer successfully fitting the competent aspect of the Brand Personality Model (1997).

"Upper...or high end/ upper class," "Imported products," "Premium brand and expensive" were three words used by the three respondents respectively. This indicates that positioning of the brand in the consumer's mind to be one of a high level that they value and regard highly. This fulfils the element of "Sophistication" from the Brand Personality Model (1997) as consumers revealed that they find the communication that Woolworths makes with their consumers reliable and believable, and being a value for money brand. The participants revealed that they believed that Woolworths did maintain a price tag that was above that of their competitors, however, they believe that the brand provides them with a consistent product offering and is one that is earnest in their approach.

This question sought to gain information from consumers regarding their perception of the business changes that Woolworths may have made, and their opinion of Woolworths' attitude that has accompanied this shift, or lack thereof, towards more sustainable conduct. This question was asked with the aim of evaluating whether there was a successful integration of Woolworths brand personality from the consumer's perspective, with their intention and progress to become a more sustainable brand; keeping in mind their vision to become the world's most responsible retailer in the world. (GBJ Report, 2017)

The research question was intended to evaluate whether there was an alignment of these two concepts to the consumer, as opposed to just internal operations being changed and updated within Woolworths itself. One of the respondents stated that they think there's a shift globally and nationally in terms of saying a lot because that's what consumers want. They went on to say that they're saying a lot in

advertising that its locally produced and they've got ethical farming and stuff like that, but in terms of packaging, I wouldn't say I've seen a change.

All three respondents stated that they have not seen a notable shift in Woolworths regarding their sustainability actions, with them stating that they have seen communication from Woolworths yet little action to follow up on this as of yet. They went on to recommend ways that Woolworths' could practically improve on this, including more organic and local produce, better farming practises and more evidence and communication of this roll out in their stores for them as the consumer, to witness.

Theme 3: Identification of Woolworths' sustainability actions as a retailer (if any)

There was an underwhelming response from participants when asked what they have experienced in terms of Woolworths' sustainability changes when they have encountered the brand in-store and online, with two of the three respondents stating that from the consumers end, it does not appear that they have made as many changes as they truly have in their back-end operations, or either they have not made this known to consumers. This would be advantageous to the brand, but would need to be done in the correct manner in order to not come across in the wrong way, but communicated sincerely and in an environmentally-conscious manner that comes across true to the brand.

Interpretation

One of the responses revealed that not only did the participant consider Woolworths to not be currently making any sustainably conscious advances, but that they are in fact conducting themselves in a way that is actively harmful and negligent toward the state of the environment, with excessive, unnecessary packaging with their retail counterparts would not have done the same, or there are alternative means to package their produce. Another respondent acknowledged the degree to which Woolworth's values quality in their products and suppliers, but also the element of sophistication that exists in the standards and operations they have established to ensure this takes place.

This substantiates the strong validation that consumers feel a great sense of quality and individual care for their products from the Woolworths brand according to Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997). The respondent conveyed the value within the human connection, and the enabling of an income for local farmer that the brand has enabled by writing up short descriptions of the source, story and quality verifications on their items.

Woolworths' focus as a brand

The aim from this section of the theme was to determine whether consumers perceived Woolworths as a brand that made a concerted effort of making holistic sustainable changes, or rather whether there was an emphasis placed on a certain type of operations or aspect of their business. It would be of interest to the researcher whether respondents found Woolworths to have realigned their sustainability efforts recently since the brand made the commitment to state the update of their company vision, whether they have remained the same as they have previously, or possibly consumers may not have even noticed at all.

Two of the three respondents stated they were unclear on Woolworths' focus or that they thought they did not have one. The other respondent went on to say that from the on-item and in-store communication that Woolworths does, they believe that their focus is community. This was said of their numerous outreach programs, their excess food being donated to the less fortunate and the farmer's stories being put on their products.

Interpretation

There was a lack of consensus amongst consumers as to what they perceived Woolworths' sustainability focus to be, with all three respondents providing different answers to each other. Moreover, two of the three respondents stated directly that they did not perceive a focus at all, going on to say: "I really just don't think they've focussed on anything that I've seen" and "What's their main focus? I'm not sure."

The researcher deducted from the statements provided that there is not an overall focussed effort on Woolworths part that is being conducted nor portrayed towards the public in terms of their sustainability efforts. There was an acknowledgement from one of the respondents that they are aware that Woolworths does care for their

community, but it is not noted that this aligns with their vision to become the world's most sustainable retailer by 2020, and does not necessarily exceed their means.

Theme 4: Transparency and honesty from Woolworths' part

This theme aimed to comprehend the level of involvement and effort Woolworths consumer's feel from Woolworths side to inform them as they progress on their journey to become a more sustainable business. It was determined vital not to neglect this aspect from the consumer's perspective, as regardless of the changes any company may be making, big or small, these ought to be communicated to the consumer or else their impact may be downplayed or failed to be recognisable. One of the elements of Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997) is Sincerity, which Woolworths has established to have attained as one of the five traits that make up their brand.

This theme sought to evaluate the level of transparency and honesty from Woolworths' end towards the consumer about their incremental changes made to become more sustainable; proving that they are indeed not making empty claims. The analysis of this theme ultimately aimed to determine whether Woolworths was/ is currently able to successfully integrate these two aspects of operations: being running a profitable, quality-driven retail store and incorporating sustainable operations changes whilst remaining true to their brand personality.

Interpretation

There was a full agreement from participant's responses swaying in a negative direction upon being asked whether they believed that Woolworth's has implemented enough avenues to communicate and engage with their consumers to be able to meet the global sustainability standards, as well as their local customers.

A respondent made particular reference to a direct fresh produce competitor of Woolworths', Food Lover's Market, who has found a way to packaging things better than the way Woolworths does. The fact that South African consumers readily have access to competitor retailers that are promoting and selling their items in more sustainable packaging or even none at all, makes Woolworths' failure to compete adequately in this regard come across as even more dissatisfactory since

consumers are aware that it is indeed possible for retailers to conduct themselves in this way.

Respondent 1 explained that they didn't feel that there's a lot of education regarding those things, and that it felt to them as if Woolworths kind of brushes over those things because they have to. This attitude which conveys a lack of willingness to bring about sustainable changes to their business with a sense of sense to minimize their environmental damage as much as possible, translates as contrasting their claims to care for the environment and the conduct they engage in.

Once more, this alludes to claims and the overall impression that Woolworths has cultivated and in turn, that their consumers encounter, that the brand is profit-orientated, as well as highly-focussed on achieving their high quality standards at all costs, as established earlier according to Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997). Nonetheless, the seamless integration of quality and sustainability has come across as flawed towards the consumer throughout this process on Woolworths' part.

There was a notable acknowledgement from Respondent 3 that they know as much as they do as a result of the stories displayed on screen whilst queueing to pay, as well as online and the sourcing of item's information is oftentimes stated on the packaging itself. It is important to take note of the marketing efforts that Woolworths' has been making to make the company translate as relatable and ethical in their sourcing by enlisting local farmers. The participant goes on to elaborate that the issue of sustainable consumption is a topic of interest for them, claiming: "As far as me and my circle of friends, I know Woolworths is terrible with recycling. A lot of the single-use packaging for the fresh fruit and vegetables, we can't recycle at our house. That's a big deal for my fiancé." The complete neglect on Woolworths' part to address certain matters such as the lack of logical reasoning for wrapping single-use packaging on individual fresh produce leaves a resounding impression on their sustainable consumers as one of being irresponsible and uncaring.

All three of the three participants replied that they do trust Woolworths' voice and the statements that they make online and in-store. They did clarify that they are of the belief that they believe that Woolworths has a sound consumer-retailer trust established. Nonetheless, they went on to acknowledge that they did feel

Woolworths does a lot more than other brands, because they place the stories on the labels and because I know what's local or what's imported."

This statement allowed for the insight that consumers are understanding, as well as aware of the extensive process of assembling and maintaining a well-functioning retail business such as Woolworths Holdings across South Africa that sources individual providers of each and every item in their store, and sometimes then take this produce and create their own product in-factory.

Nonetheless, the consumer still expects a minimum standard of communication and ethical, sustainable conduct, especially from an established retailer such as Woolworths that is known for being the retailer that is most profitable in the South African landscape, as well as the one with the highest price premium attached (Woolworths, 2018). There is an established willingness to pay this price premium, but with the addition of a higher expectation of the brand's care for the business they are involved in; as well as their environmental impact to be as minimal as possible, as individual consumers do not account for the majority of the environmental global impact, but rather large manufacturers and retailers do.

4.7 Trustworthiness, transferability and validity

Trustworthiness

The degree of trustworthiness and vigour of the researcher's qualitative study will come about as a result of adherence to processes in the data collection and analysis, transparency and a recording of all findings in the event of discrepancies, as well as all ethical obligations adhered to with permission for record keeping (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:304). The researcher has made sure to the best of their ability to adhere to all steps as honestly and accurately as possible.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which results of a qualitative research could be generalized or transferred to other contexts (Trochim, 2006). This study is transferable to any brand other than Woolworths, and pertains to sustainability and

brand personality across all spheres. This topic is also believed to be relevant to many stakeholders: the government, retail management, consumers and farmers.

Validity

Validity is defined as the appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data used in one's research study (Leung, 2015). It evaluates whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the data analysis is appropriate, and conclusions drawn are valid for the set context (Leung, 2015). The researcher ensured to continually link the interpretation of the findings to previous literature and established models. This makes the study valid as it was based on previous findings and adds to the body of academic knowledge.

Credibility

The credibility criterion involves establishing the results of qualitative research are credible/ believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Trochim, 2006). In doing so, the research pertaining to consumer perceptions about Woolworths' sustainability efforts will qualify as academic research as a result of the data being transformed into a reliable, focussed report. Only honest responses and feelings were asked of the respondents, with no repercussions or rewards for any biased responses.

Dependability

Despite the fact that the stipulated minimum sample of respondents was 3 as adequate for the purpose of this study, it cannot be considered as a representation of the entire South African population. As a result, this limits the dependability of the results, and an element of bias may arise from the research. Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.8 Anticipated Contribution

The most important contribution will be a larger degree of insight into the consumer perceptions of Woolworths' and their sustainable conduct in alignment with their established brand personality, in South Africa in particular. The phenomenon of consumers becoming more educated with studies released on food, manufacturer waste along with years of malpractice, resulting in global warming has a direct impact on retailers and manufacturers being pushed to conduct themselves in a more sustainable, responsible manner.

The purpose of the study seeks to provide greater insight into what consumers deem as appropriate action Woolworths should be taking to remain their retailer of choice, the time they perceive as appropriate in making the changes to becoming the worlds' leader as the most responsible retailer. The study aims to explore the association in the minds of consumers, if any, in consumers mind that their retailer of choice ought to be instilling ethical and sustainable practises in order for them to be satisfied, and have their consumer expectations met in order to purchase most, if not all, of their groceries from Woolworths.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of this research study spanned the participants' conduct, the researcher's doings and lastly, the involved organisation. The researcher made sure to take adequate care throughout the study in order to adhere to all research and ethical required criteria (Resnik, 2015).

The research topic is not sensitive or of a highly personal nature, and there are no major concerns foreseen in this study. The study does not require interviews or information to be retracted from individuals or corporations that may be difficult to come into contact with, with any Woolworths shopper over the age of 18 able to comply, and recruited by a means of convenience sampling. Moreover, the study is not of a high-risk nature nor is it interested in approaching vulnerable groups for their cooperation. A consumers' opinion of their retailer of choice was considered to be subjective and conversational in nature.

The researcher took care to understand and apply the regulations that the IIE has stipulated are relevant to students, adding to the ethical consideration and validity of

the study. The degree of anonymity of each participant was explained to them before engaging in the interview process; with them being given the option to not partake thereafter if they so choose. The researcher has upheld the name of the organisation the study has been conducted under to the best of their ability, and has guaranteed that the stipulated level of ethical standard was maintained throughout all dealings between participants.

All transcripts of interviews will be kept for record for the duration of the study, and for five years after the end of the study. All due processes were adhered to in the thematic analysis process in order to ensure that the research results from Woolworths' consumer were as accurate as possible.

The researcher has maintained a neutral stance towards the data presented at all stages of the research process and has not falsified or tampered with any of the raw data or results in any form, in attempts to retrieve the most accurate result as possible (Resnik, 2015).

4.10 Limitations

The limitations of a research study are defined as constraints that fall outside of the researcher's control (Enslin, 2016). A limitation of the study is that the entire topic of sustainable and ethical business practices is a worldwide theme that has had far-reaching negative impacts for many years. "The term "global warming" would not appear in a peer-reviewed academic journal until 1975. NASA scientist James Hansen would not testify before Congress that "global warming has begun" for another 20 years" (Wiles, 2018). In order to attempt to rectify poor environmental choices of the past, a huge expense will come to bear.

The back end of operations of large scale manufacturers, factories and retailers pollute the air and environment they operate in to a large degree. However, the full extent of sustainability cannot be determined in this study, and was deliberately not set as a focus, despite its acknowledgement, with the focus rather on sustainability in the retail space and consumer's perceptions of this, in comparison to Aaker's brand personality model is what is under question.

Woolworths' major competitors such as Pick n Pay and Checkers have been deliberately excluded from this study. This was done as a result of Woolworths

stating in their 2018 Integrated Report that their vision is to be the most responsible retailer in the world, making them of particular interest to the study. The main competitor's exclusion from the study was done to gain more in-depth knowledge of Woolworths, however, may result in important findings being completely disregarded from the study.

The time available to gather research and correspond with respondents was a limitation. Despite the issue of living and operating sustainably not being all that new globally, vast changes are only beginning to be seen in South Africa along with a growing awareness on this issue, making the data gathered likely to not be as comprehensive as the event of a larger time frame available to the researcher. The study evaluated Woolworths' sustainability efforts in most recent years, which are to most likely continue into the future, thus a broader time period to evaluate this topic would add to the body of research (Larson, 2010). Lastly, the research process was conducted by the researcher alone, as opposed to a team entailing greater resources which may have been beneficial to the quality of the study produced (Enslin, 2016).

4.11 Scope for further research

Including a larger scope of consumers to interview in-depth will enable a more insight into their perceptions of the brand and their sustainable movements would be beneficial.

Interviewing Woolworths' employees, management and corresponding with upper level management would be most helpful in order to gain a sense of understanding as to what is unfolding and evolving with the brand itself, as well as what Woolworths' has planned for the future, as well as the reasoning underlying their actions to this point.

A direct research comparison between a large-scale, profitable international retailer that has successfully turned the majority of their business operations to become sustainable over recent years to Woolworths would allow for a more effective comparison where discrepancies, gaps, successes and failures will more easily be able to be drawn by the researcher.

This research study was a cross-sectional one, with a time deadline imposed on the researcher to have completed the study. A longer time frame would enable a more holistic view of the study to be achieved, with more comprehensive results.

4.12 Conclusion

The research goal to explore consumer perceptions of Woolworths' consumers on their race to achieving their vision of becoming the world's most sustainable retailer by 2020 was completed, given that the time span allocated to complete their goal has not lapsed as yet. The respondents who were interviewed were insightful and passionate about the research topic.

The research questions were set out in such a way as to meet the stated research objectives, with a strong correlation found between the researcher's main focal points: An evaluation of Woolworths' brand personality, the retailers' ability to maintain their well-established brand and how they have fared in adapting their business model to become a more sustainable one whilst keeping this consistent. Elements of Woolworths' brand personality, according to consumers and Aaker's Brand Personality Model (1997), which were found in their business within this study, were Competence, Sophistication, and Sincerity.

It was concluded that Woolworths' had a degree of difficulty, despite their recognisable efforts, in achieving their vision of becoming the world's most sustainable retailer according to consumers. Woolworths was not found to be successful in achieving their vision nor did the brand find means that made themselves able to communicate their newly implemented sustainability changes in a way that did not jeopardise their brand personality. Further evaluation and exploration on the matter of South African retailers' adaption to becoming more sustainable on a holistic scale is required.

Annexure A: Concept Document Table

Annexure A: Concept Document Table

Provisional Title: The race to sustainable retail trade: An exploration of brand personality within the South African context

Research Purpose	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
To gain a deeper understanding of consumers' perceptions of Woolworths in relation to personal data. From the consumers' perspective, the requirements set to meet the recently stated ethical standards and practices are to be identified. This will gain a larger degree of understanding of the ethical perceptions of their retailer of choice.	What is Woolworths' consumer perception of their efforts towards their vision to be the most ethically responsible retailer globally by 2020?	Woolworths aims to be more sustainable according to four namely, waste, water, energy and waste disposal, and natural resource consumption. Consumer perceptions of Woolworths' ethical practices are to be identified. This will gain a larger degree of understanding of the ethical perceptions of their retailer of choice.	Adler's Brand Personality Model (1997).	In the literature review, the following aspects were covered: The sustainable retail brand's origin, elements and its ethical practices that earn a competitive advantage. Which aspects make up the brand personality and an ethical brand? Woolworths' ethical brand is established in consumers' minds evaluated against the Ethical Brand Personality Model. The stricter legislation implemented by the EU that forces retailers to act more ethically and responsibly. Consumer awareness has on shopping habits and expectations of retailers. Analysis of Woolworths' ethical brand personality and its effects will reveal how they communicated this.	Epistemology: Interpretivist theory (Cohen & Manion, 1994: p36)- To gain insight into whether there is an influence of consumers' perceptions and expectations of Woolworths as a worldwide legislature changes and movements to produce less single-use waste and address the four key risk areas in retail business trade	Qualitative approach with in-depth, semi-structured interviews Exploratory in nature Cross-sectional study	Conduct the qualitative research and make conclusions to be able to class and make educated and informed deductions from the results obtaining to consumer perceptions in-depths interviews presented, gathered and presented in ally tables for an easier understanding.	No sensitive persons or information was required from interviewees. All ethical standards were adhered to in this study.	The purpose of the study seeks to provide greater insight into what consumers deem as appropriate action Woolworths should be taking to remain their retailer of choice, the time they perceive as appropriate in making the changes to becoming the wiser, better as the most responsible retailer. The study aims to explore the association in the minds of consumers, if any, in consumers mind that their retailer of choice ought to be instilling ethical and sustainable practices in order for them to be satisfied, and have their consumer expectations met in order to purchase most, if not all, of their groceries from Woolworths.	Please see Bibliography
Research Problem	Secondary Questions OR Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories		Ontology- Critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972)	Sampling	Data Analysis Methods	Limitations	Anticipated Contributions	
Consumers' awareness of manufacturers' environmental demands regarding production, excessive single-use packaging layers will be analysed, as well as a potential manipulation of advertising to sway consumers to believe their goods are more sustainable than they are.	To explore the context of more sustainable, ethical business operations that will enable them to maintain their competitive advantage, and how this move was done in accordance with their brand personality. To identify elements of the brand personality model Woolworths is not adhering to regarding sustainability. To determine operations Woolworths has been perceived to place importance upon make sustainability improvements by the consumer. To explore the level of honesty and transparency that Woolworths consumers have experienced from the brand, and their product offerings, they have been exposed to their communication with them position and content.	Consumer's awareness of sustainable conduct. Woolworths as a brand. Identification of WWS' sustainability actions as a retailer (if any). Transparency and honesty from Woolworths' part.	The Balance Theory (Heide, 1998)			The sample size of respondents in the study was a smaller group of members of a population selected to represent the population (Boyd, 2018) with 3 suitable candidates selected for the interviews.	Reflexive Thematic Analysis Themes were coded, explained, interpreted and linked to the research objectives.	Time constraints Sampling restrictions Woolworths' major retail competitors were not analysed/ discussed SA context analysed, but a global issue is present	The most important contribution would be insight into the consumer perceptions of Woolworths' and their sustainable conduct in alignment with SA. The phenomenon of more educated consumers as a result of studies released on manufacturer waste with years of malpractice, resulting in global warming impacts retailers being pushed to conduct themselves in a more sustainable manner.	

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



August 26, 2019

Student name: Laura Van Der Haer

Student number: 18022022

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,

Laura van Haer

Amalia van Schalkwyk
Supervisor
Coordinator

Name:
Campus Postgraduate

ADVTECH HOUSE

Inanda Greens
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Wierda Valley 2196
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Appendix 2: Consent forms from respondents



ANNEXURE C: EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Laura van der Haer and I am a student at Vega Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Gene van Heerden about consumer perception of Woolworths and their sustainability efforts. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the existing body of knowledge of the sustainability field and the retail space.

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 is vital to supplement its validity. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to answer 11 questions as honestly as you can.

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 experience of the brand and your own lifestyle choices. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?



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

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Laura van der Haer

071 101 1171

Lauravanderhaer21@gmail.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Gene' van Heerden

071 604 6251

Vanheerden.gene@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, Sonia Derrling, agree to participate in the research conducted by (your name) about (insert aim of research/ brief summary of exactly what you are researching)

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

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

4.9.2019

Date



ANNEXURE C: EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Laura van der Haer and I am a student at Vega Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Gene van Heerden about consumer perception of Woolworths and their sustainability efforts. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the existing body of knowledge of the sustainability field and the retail space.

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 is vital to supplement its validity. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to answer 11 questions as honestly as you can.

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 experience of the brand and your own lifestyle choices. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?



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

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Laura van der Haer

071 101 1171

Lauravanderhaer21@gmail.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Gene' van Heerden

071 604 6251

Vanheerden.gene@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, Lucinda van der Haer, agree to participate in the research conducted by Laura van der Haer about consumer perception of Woolworths and their sustainability efforts.

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

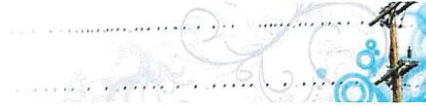
1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to 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

4 September 2019

Date



ANNEXURE C: EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Laura van der Haer and I am a student at Vega Pretoria. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Gene van Heerden about consumer perception of Woolworths and their sustainability efforts. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the existing body of knowledge of the sustainability field and the retail space.

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 is vital to supplement its validity. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to answer 11 questions as honestly as you can.

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.

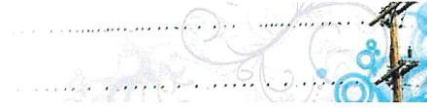
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

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 experience of the brand and your own lifestyle choices. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?



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

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Laura van der Haer

071 101 1171

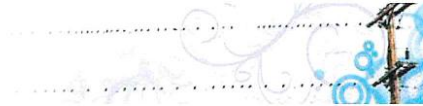
Lauravanderhaer21@gmail.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Gene' van Heerden

071 604 6251

Vanheerden.gene@gmail.com



Consent form for participants

I, Brendan O'Neill, agree to participate in the research conducted by (your name) about (insert aim of research/ brief summary of exactly what you are researching)

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

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

4.9.2019

Date

Appendix 2: Originality Report

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL myvega.iielearn.ac.za/webapps/assignment/uploadAssignment?course_id=_74574_1&content_id=_5121517_1&mode=DEFAULT. The page title is "Review Submission History: Research Report 1". The left sidebar contains navigation links for "RESM8419_2019_HB1_VG PT1", "Module Home Page", "GETTING STARTED:", "MODULE CONTENT:", and "QUICK LINKS:". The main content area shows the "Assignment Instructions" and "Assignment Details". The "Assignment Details" panel on the right indicates a "GRADE" of "/100" and "ATTEMPT 5" with a date of "25/10/19 09:07". It also shows a "SafeAssign" score of "9% overall match". The submission is titled "Safe Assign Submission no appendix Laura.docx". The "Assignment Instructions" panel shows the "Abstract" section of the document.

Abstract

Sustainable retail trade is essentially the responsibility on manufacturers' and retailers' part to conduct business operations without compromising future generation's ability to meet their own needs. This is regarded as a sensitive issue of increasing interest due to the reduction of single-use plastic usage and consumers' expectations of their retailers rising. This comes as a result of a global education of what sustainable conduct is. The existing literature exploring consumers' expectations of their retailers to conduct themselves in a more sustainable manner is limited. Woolworths was of particular interest because they have been the most profitable food retailer in South Africa for many years, and was identified as having made the most concerted effort to be more sustainable. Woolworths Holdings was evaluated according to consumer's perceptions as well as Aaker's Brand Personality Model. The brand's stated vision is to be the world's most sustainable retailer by 2020. Ultimately, it was found that Woolworths values providing quality offerings more than they do becoming a more sustainable retailer.

The screenshot shows the "SafeAssign Originality Report" page. The URL is myvega.iielearn.ac.za/webapps/mdb-sa-BBLEARN/originaityReport?attemptId=96861211-47db-4a14-9d71-988b2fd2aa2e&includeDeleted=true&course_id=_74574_1. The page title is "Research Report 1" by Laura Van Der Haer. The report shows a "9% highest match" and a "Word Count: 12,078". The attachment ID is "2263797700". The "Citations (11/11)" section lists the following sources:

- 1 <http://iespace.iie.ac.za/bit...>
- 2 <http://www.passyourpaper...>
- 3 Another student's paper

Appendix 3: Interview Consent form

Research project title: The race to sustainable retail trade: Exploring brand personality within the South African context

Research Investigator: Laura van der Haer

Research Participants name:

The interview will take no longer than 10 minutes of your time and is done for the researcher doing her honours in BA Strategic Brand Management at Vega School. It is not foreseen that there will be risk associated with your involvement in this study. However, you have the right to let the interviewer know of any discomfort/ disagreement at any time and are free to withdraw from the interview at any point.

Thank you in advance for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the research study.

All ethical procedures for the academic research will be undertaken with this consent form allowing permission for the process to continue, with it ensuring that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of doing so. Kindly read the following statements and sign thereunder to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.
- You will be sent the transcript and will be allowed to make any changes you deem appropriate regarding information relayed.
- The transcript will be analysed and interpreted by the researcher, Laura van der Haer.
- Any summaries or even direct quotations, answers or questions included in the research study and shared on academic platforms will be done in an anonymous manner to ensure that the interviewee's identity is not revealed and that your privacy is held most important.
- By signing this consent form, you are agreeing that an appropriate background and insight into the research study has been given to the interviewee, and that at any time any questions may be asked and more information may be given.
- By signing the consent form, you are agreeing that your participation in the interview is completely voluntary based and done according to your own free will.

Researcher signature:Date:

Respondent signature:Date:

Appendix 4: Interview Discussion points:

This interview has been conducted with the consent of the interviewee and is to take place in the interviewer's home. The responses will be transcribed and sent to the respondent for any rectification or clarifications to be made if so necessary.

Recently, there has been a concerted worldwide shift to not only act more sustainably as individuals in our homes, but more importantly, on large-scale manufacturers and retailers who provide us with such consumables. The four main risk areas identified in this study are: waste generation, food waste, waste disposal and natural resource consumption. By partaking in this interview, you are confirming that you are a Woolworths consumer, in particular, in the Pretoria area at least once, and preferably regularly.

1. How old are you?
2. Are you male or female?
3. How often do you purchase from Woolworths and why?
4. Which are your most frequented Woolworths stores and what appeals to you about them?
5. How would you describe your level or knowledge, interest and care for the environment at this point in time as a consumer at Woolworths? (Miller, 2012)
– meets objective 1
6. What do you personally feel are some of the causes of environmental problems in the world today? (O'Brien, J., Thondhlana, G., 2018). – meets objective 1
7. When thinking of Woolworths, which four words come to mind? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). – meets objective 2 and 4
8. Please provide examples of Woolworths' behaviour making environmental business improvements? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3
9. What in your opinion is Woolworths' main sustainable and environmental focus in their retail operations? – meets objective 3

10. If you have noticed a recent shift, which five words would you use to describe Woolworths attitude towards sustainability and ethical conduct? (Aaker, 1997) - meets objective 2 and 3
11. Please describe ways you can recall, if any, that Woolworths has educated their consumers on their implemented sustainability practises and products in-store and online at all? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3 and 4
12. Can you think of ways in which Woolworths is transparent and honest with you, the consumer, regarding the sourcing of products and packaging? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). Please elaborate. – meets objective 1 and 4

Appendix 5: In-depth interviews

Interview 1

1. How old are you?

Twenty eight

2. Are you male or female?

. Female

3. How often do you purchase from Woolworths and why?

. Once a week I would say. For groceries. I would say it's the most convenient.

4. Which are your most frequented Woolworths stores and what appeals to you about them?

. It would probably be the one on Atterbury Road. It's a nice one. It's convenient and it has a good amount of range.

5. How would you describe your level or knowledge, interest and care for the environment at this point in time as a consumer at Woolworths? (Miller, 2012)
– meets objective 1

. Very, very conscious of it. I feel very guilty when I buy things that are not sustainable or eco-friendly and recyclable, and that's a problem at Woolworths. There's a lot of stuff that's not recyclable and that's sometimes quite limiting because I'm forced to buy stuff even if I feel bad about it.

6. What do you personally feel are some of the causes of environmental problems in the world today? (O'Brien, J., Thondhlana, G., 2018). – meets objective 1

. Um, there's not enough legislation, like rules and taxing in terms of packaging. Um, also I think that there's a lot of awareness, but people don't really care unless it affects them personally. But I think there is a big movement now in the younger generation to be more sustainable.

7. When thinking of Woolworths, which four words come to mind? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). – meets objective 2 and 4

. Quality.

a. Um, upper...or high end/ upper class.

b. These are all positive things, but variety.

c. Hmm, consistency/ reliability.

8. Please provide examples of Woolworths' behaviour making environmental business improvements? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3

. Uh, I honestly don't feel like they have made any improvements. Like a lot of the packaging is unnecessary, there is a lot of packaging within packaging. A lot of their stuff says that it's eco-friendly and sustainable, but if you look at the back, it's not recyclable. For example, most the vegan products are in non-recyclable packaging which is counter-productive. I know that they say that they have a 2020 goal, but to me, it feels to me like they're kind of not doing anything until that goal.

9. What in your opinion is Woolworths' main sustainable and environmental focus in their retail operations? – meets objective 3

. I think its community. I think they do a lot with community because I know that they give a lot of their expired groceries away to the communities. As well as training and community upliftment. I think they're quite good with that. Also with locally sourced things, they have a wide range of farms within South Africa, and they have a very high level of quality and standard which is really good. However, I've heard that that's actually quite different for the farmers in South Africa to uphold. Sometimes they'd take away the not-accepted product because it isn't up to their standard. Then the farmer loses that business. I would say that they say a lot about sustainability, but I haven't really seen it. Um, yeah.

10. If you have noticed a recent shift, which five words would you use to describe Woolworths attitude towards sustainability and ethical conduct? (Aaker, 1997) - meets objective 2 and 3

. I think there's a shift globally and nationally in terms of saying a lot because that's what consumers want. So they're saying a lot in advertising that its locally produced and they've got ethical farming and stuff like that, but in terms of packaging, I wouldn't say I've seen a change. Um, I guess like because theyre still selling plastic bags.

a. Now, my words:

b. Advertising

c. Promises

d. Delivery isn't always there

e. It does sound promising, but we'll see the results

11. Please describe ways you can recall, if any, that Woolworths has educated their consumers on their implemented sustainability practises and products in-store and online at all? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3 and 4

. No, I don't think that they educate people enough, at all. Their focus is very much on their products and quality. Their focus isn't on creating sustainability. For example, looking at Food Lover's, they've definitely found a way to packaging things better than the way Woolworths does. I don't feel that there's a lot of education regarding those things, it feels like Woolworths kind of brushes over those things because they have to.

12. Can you think of ways in which Woolworths is transparent and honest with you, the consumer, regarding the sourcing of products and packaging? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). Please elaborate. – meets objective 1 and 4

. I do feel there is honesty on their labels when speaking of where their products are from, on labels and in their financial statements. I don't feel that I mistrust what Woolworths tells me regarding that.

Interview 2

1. How old are you?

Fifty

2. Are you male or female?

Female

3. How often do you purchase from Woolworths and why?

I'd say at least five times a week because of the good quality and freshness.

4. Which are your most frequented Woolworths stores and what appeals to you about them?

I go to Woolies at The Club Centre in Pretoria because it's the closest and most convenient. I'd say it appeals to me because it has quite a nice variety.

5. How would you describe your level or knowledge, interest and care for the environment at this point in time as a consumer at Woolworths? (Miller, 2012) – meets objective 1

I'd say I'm quite aware. I do take a reusable bag to remember to not use plastic bags, so I'd say more aware than a lot of people. I do read extra articles, I've subscribed to Greenpeace online and I've familiarised myself with the new sustainability articles on the web.

6. What do you personally feel are some of the causes of environmental problems in the world today? (O'Brien, J., Thondhlana, G., 2018). – meets objective 1

I think the causes are that the overproduction and overgrazing of animals is the main problem.

7. When thinking of Woolworths, which four words come to mind? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). – meets objective 2 and 4

Definitely quality.

Um, their products are really fresh.

Long-lasting

Nice variety, with imported products.

8. Please provide examples of Woolworths' behaviour making environmental business improvements? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3

The only thing I think Woolworths has done is make the bags available to buy. Other than that, actually, I'd say it's really just the reusable bags that they make available.

9. What in your opinion is Woolworths' main sustainable and environmental focus in their retail operations? – meets objective 3

I really just don't think they've focussed on anything that I've seen. They sell the bags I've mentioned which I believe they're making money on. But from a sustainability point of view, I have not noticed anything.

10. If you have noticed a recent shift, which five words would you use to describe Woolworths attitude towards sustainability and ethical conduct? (Aaker, 1997) - meets objective 2 and 3

I really haven't seen much of a shift, so I'd say:

They're more worried about profits: profit-orientated.

They say they're environmentally aware, but I don't know, we'll see. All talk and no action. I've read that some stores have a few small campaigns running, but I don't think they realised that it would cost this much initially. I think maybe they were hoping to make money from that, and then be able to roll it out in other stores. They seem like they don't want it to cost them money or lose market share. I feel that their shift could've been sooner, as I do believe they are a very aware store, more so than others so I do think change may be coming. There's still straws and plastic in store, so there's a lot of talk and we aren't seeing anything done about it. They haven't been assertive and made a firm stance.

11. Please describe ways you can recall, if any, that Woolworths has educated their consumers on their implemented sustainability practises and products in-store and online at all? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3 and 4

They haven't educated us in store in any way that I know of. I haven't actually checked online so I wouldn't know.

12. Can you think of ways in which Woolworths is transparent and honest with you, the consumer, regarding the sourcing of products and packaging? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). Please elaborate. – meets objective 1 and 4

I really don't know because I haven't looked into that, so maybe it's just my ignorance. But if I had to say, I'd say that it would be available to people if they were interested to find out.

Interview 3

1. How old are you?

I am twenty eight years old.

2. Are you male or female?

I am a male.

3. How often do you purchase from Woolworths and why?

I would say actually every day. I buy lunch from Woolworths. I buy groceries from Woolworths. I mean, my fresh veg and meat from Woolies. Woolies is my go-to grocery store.

4. Which are your most frequented Woolworths stores and what appeals to you about them?

The Atterbury one. It has basically everything that I need, and it's close to my home.

5. How would you describe your level or knowledge, interest and care for the environment at this point in time as a consumer at Woolworths? (Miller, 2012) – meets objective 1

I would say I am pretty knowledgeable, but not all that active.

I know a lot about environmental impact and how you should manage your recycling and food waste. I wouldn't say I'm active to the point of someone who goes to the extra effort who would change their diet like Beyonce, but I do my part with the diet that I have.

6. What do you personally feel are some of the causes of environmental problems in the world today? (O'Brien, J., Thondhlana, G., 2018). – meets objective 1

Um, like land usage. Ok so, we have a lot of land that is being used for farming and animals and that type of stuff, which is a lot more threatening than growing food.

Land usage is a huge problem globally.

7. When thinking of Woolworths, which four words come to mind? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). – meets objective 2 and 4

Definitely high-quality.

Premium brand.

Fresh.

Expensive.

Reliable. I know that if I go to Food Lovers or Pick n Pay, then the produce is not always consistent.

8. Please provide examples of Woolworths' behaviour making environmental business improvements? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3

I'm not sure how true this is, but there's a lot of farmer stories on all their products. At least that gives me the impression that they are working with local farmers, that they have a good relationship with those people. But I do know people who have supplied product to Woolworths and they say the minimum standard for your product to be accepted and to be in a Woolies is very high. I guess that's a double edged sword. They are working with local farmers but the standards for them are incredibly high compared to like, Pick n Pay and Spar. It's tricky to stay in a Woolworths if you are a local farmer.

9. What in your opinion is Woolworths' main sustainable and environmental focus in their retail operations? – meets objective 3

Hmm it's definitely not recycling.

What's their main focus? I'm not sure.

10. If you have noticed a recent shift, which five words would you use to describe Woolworths attitude towards sustainability and ethical conduct? (Aaker, 1997) - meets objective 2 and 3

I guess they're pushing for organic stuff. Obviously cuz you can charge more for that I guess. But does that necessarily mean organic food is farmed better? Who knows.

Five words:

Organic

Better farming practises

More local produce

11. Please describe ways you can recall, if any, that Woolworths has educated their consumers on their implemented sustainability practises and products in-store and online at all? (Waja, N. 2013) – meets objective 3 and 4

Ok so I've seen all the stories. When I'm waiting in line to pay, there's a screen showing content and I'm in the film business, and we often get asked what companies we would like to work for, and I would love to get involved in the marketing for Woolworths. Yes, they are doing these things. They can do better, as well as they should be educating their consumers on what they are doing. Because, as far as me and my circle of friends, I know Woolworths is terrible with recycling. A lot of the single-use packaging for the fresh fruit and vegetables, we can't recycle at our house. That's a big deal for my fiancé.

I also do know that a lot of their stuff that's off their expiry date, they give it to people who could benefit from having food that hasn't gone off. So yeah, I do know about some stuff. I know from in-store and on-package messaging.

12. Can you think of ways in which Woolworths is transparent and honest with you, the consumer, regarding the sourcing of products and packaging? (Vahdati, H., Hadi, S., Mousavi, N., 2016). Please elaborate. – meets objective 1 and 4

Yes, I do feel they are quite open and transparent. I do feel that layer like "oh it's still a business." You always watch the documentaries that say it's free-range or organic, it's not necessarily any better. It's still not as if the chickens run free happily in a garden. So I guess there is always that layer between you and the organisation. But I do feel Woolworths does a lot more than other brands, because they place the stories on the labels and because I know what's local or what's imported, they're clear, for example, the grapes we buy state that they are imported from Spain. I still feel like I can't really trust wholeheartedly when it says it's good for you or healthier for you or when it says it's organic.

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