

Describing the Customers' Perception of Unilever's Dualithic Approach has had on its Sub-Brands' Brand Equity

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DECLARATION

I, Jayd Lynne Twiddy declare that this dissertation is of my own original work. Any secondary research material that has been used throughout this dissertation is peer reviewed, either a print source or from the Internet. I understand plagiarism is the use of another person's work, ideas, and words without appropriate acknowledgement and I am aware of the department's policy in this regard. All sources are acknowledged and referenced using the required Harvard reference style.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Brand Equity: Brand equity is viewed as the inherent or perceived value of a brand, which depends on the customer's' interaction over time with the brand and the perception consumers build based on their positive or negative experiences. Brand equity depends on the brand being trusted, which results in loyalty and as a consequence a brand image is created. This gives a brand either strong or weak brand equity (Study.com, 2017).

Brand Image: A brand image is a perception held by an individual, that is created through either positive or negative experiences with a brand. Ideally a brand image is what resides in the minds of consumers, what a brand stands for and what it promises (MSG, 2017).

Brand Loyalty: Brand loyalty is the commitment of repurchasing a preferred brand and recommending it to others (Study.com, 2017).

Brand Relationship Spectrum: The brand relationship spectrum is an organisational tool used to evaluate how each sub-brand relates to the parent-brand. There are four main structures an organisation can follow, which ultimately determines the strategic structure and operations for the entire organisation (Klopper, 2014, p.124).

Dualithic Structure: An organisational structure where the parent-brand endorses each sub-brand. Each sub-brand hold its own visual identity and market share. However, the endorsement allows the parent-brand's brand equity to be transferred to the sub-brands, impacting the purchasing decisions (Klopper, 2014, p.129).

FMCG Products: Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) or consumer packaged goods (CPG) are frequently purchased essential or non-essential goods. Such as packaged foods, beverages, toiletries, home cleaning products, etc. (Business Dictionary, 2017)

Parent-Brand: A parent-brand is a separate brand that houses or manufactures a number of individual sub-brands. It is purposely created to stand alone and be independent from the sub-brands within the portfolio. It is often unseen (Distility, 2011).

Multilithic Structure: An organisational structure where the parent-brand has not influential associations with its sub-brands. Each sub-brand holds its own visual identity and stands independent to the parent-brand (Klopper, 2014, p.136).

Sub-Brand: A sub-brand is a product or service that is related to a parent brand (owner/manufacture), but has its own brand name and identity (Troy, 2010).

ABSTRACT

This was a small-scale qualitative research study, which analysed the impact an organisational strategy and structural shift has had on both the parent-brand and its sub-brands' brand image, brand loyalty and brand equity elements as perceived by consumers.

Unilever is a world-wide Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) organisation that has recently shifted its strategy shift, from a silent parent-brand to an endorsed parent-brand. The aim of this study was to analyse the general consumer's perception towards both parent-brand and sub-brand, in relation to Unilever's brand strategy shift from a Multilithic Approach to a Dualithic Approach. While determining whether the shift has had a positive influence on both parent and sub brands; thus encouraging other Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) organisations, such as Pioneer Foods, Tiger Brands, etc. to implement and shift towards the same strategy.

Information was gathered through 15 face-to-face interviews, and emails with general consumers within the greater Durban area. Due to the descriptive qualitative nature of the study, the samples were not generalised to the total population, but rather develop an in-depth study of the main phenomenon. The insights provided by the study lead to meaningful key findings.

It was clear that participants were aware of many parent-brands within the South African Market, however many were unable to identify the products of each parent-brand. The participants purchase particular FMCG products based on their perception of value (quality vs price), however these products can be seen as price dependent. It was also determined that products and/or brands that communicate elements of be environmentally friendly, transparent and accountable, this can impact the participants purchasing decisions.

From the key findings, recommendations for Unilever and other FMCG organisations within the South African market were made.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

A brand is more than its trademark, symbol, or design; it is the perception consumers hold towards a particular brand based on their knowledge and experience (Lake, 2017). A strong brand, can be more effective than an actual product or service; as a brand itself is an idea perceived within the minds of the consumer, created through consistent experiences building long term consumer-brand relationships, power and profit (Robertson, 2015). The market place holds a profusion of customer brand offerings. Creating relevant brand connections is the most effective way to create differentiation, build credibility and cut through the clutter – an overwhelming volume of brand messages (Kessler SF, 2008). These brand connections relate to the brand's ability to balance the connections between consumer experience with satisfying the consumer's needs, while fulfilling a market or category gap (Appendix A). Therefore, a brand needs to evolve with consumer's behaviours as a purchase decision is based on the experiences, loyalty and perceptions each consumer has with a brand. This brand image creates a unique personality for every brand, ultimately allowing consumers to connect with the brand on a personal level, thus in turn building brand equity (Babba, 2017) (BlackCoffee. 2017).

A Multilithic Approach or 'House of Brands' is an organisation that owns multiple individual sub-brands, mainly consumer product based brands (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p.97-128). Unilever prior to 2014, was seen as a 'House of Brands' organisation using a Shadow Endorsement strategy, where many consumers may have been aware of the connection between Unilever and its sub-brands, but the connection was not visually represented to the consumer. Unilever shifted its strategy to a Dualithic Approach, where Unilever now uses two brand names, the organisation's and the individual brand name of the product. Within a Dualithic Approach there are multiple endorsement methods. Based on Unilever's advertising campaigns (Appendix B), the brand has implemented the Token Endorsement strategy; this provides the individual brands with the endorsers credibility while allowing the endorsed brand maximum freedom to create their own associations (Klopper, 2014, p.134-137). The Unilever logo is now displayed alongside its sub-brands logos within advertising elements, visually expressing the brand's endorsement.

1.2 RATIONALE

The proposed study explores the effects an endorsed strategy shift within a Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) organisation has on its customers perceived image of the brand and its sub-brands, thus determining to what extent the customers purchasing behaviours are influenced, if at all. This study looked at the brand strategy shift Unilever adopted, and how it impacted its current consumers and potential consumers buying patterns due to their perceptions towards Unilever as well as Unilever's individual sub-brands.

Based on the researcher's preliminary observation and research into this topic, there was almost no theory or studies proving or disproving the effects of the strategy shift Unilever adopted within a FMCG market. This study was relevant as it has analysed the brand architecture theory set by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), and determined whether their theory towards a strategy shift between a Multilithic structure to a Dualithic structure is true within the South African marketplace. It is important for FMCG organisations to understand how customers perceive each of their individual sub-brand as well as their own brand, to ensure the implementation of the endorsement strategy has a positive effect on both brands brand equity. The researcher has always had an interest in brand building within the FMCG market, and believed this topic would interest any individual or organisation operating within the marketplace.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main purpose of a Multilithic structure is to create one stand-alone brand, the parent brand, that houses and manufactures numerous independent sub-brands, each with their own identity and advertising flexibility. However, this approach required significant resources and can create brand confusion within the marketplace when consumers become aware of the link between each sub-brand and the parent brand (Klopper, 2014, p. 243-247). Unilever as a brand, prior to the strategic shift, was a parent brand to 1000's individual sub-brands from multiple product categories, such as packaged foods, beverages, toiletries, home cleaning products, etc (O'Donnell, 2012). Unilever did not rely on its own brand image or loyalty to sell its products but rather the brand equity and brand image of its individual sub-brands (Distilley, 2011).

In 2010 Unilever launched its Sustainable Living Plan strategy internally and by 2014 this strategy was launched externally (Voight, 2015). The Sustainable Living Plan is structured around a purpose-driven strategy, not only for the parent-brand Unilever, but for its sub-brands and stakeholders. The strategy is designed to improve the health and wellbeing of

all stakeholders, reduce the brands environmental impact and enhance livelihoods of international communities (Unilever SA, 2014).

Chief marketing and communication officer (CMO) of Unilever, Keith Weed (Cited In: Voight, 2015) stated, that Unilever's strategy shift was due to the brand "wanting the world to know the Unilever name as well as those of its goods", while expressing the sustainable change the brand has taken. This strategy shift was seen through the Unilever's "U" logo placement within advertising campaigns, which ultimately allows the brand to harness the existing brand equity of Unilever, while leveraging off its sub-brands strong brand equity. The main purpose of an endorsed strategy, allows the brand to achieve a higher level of transparency and accountability, while stimulating trust, credibility and acceptance within its customers (Klopper, 2014, p. 243-247).

Therefore, the research problem statement, is to explore whether or not the endorsed Dualithic approach has had an influential effect on the consumer's loyalty and perception towards Unilever and its sub-brands. Thus, determining if Unilever has achieved their strategy shift goal, stated above by Keith Weed, CMO.

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this proposed study is to determine whether FMCG organisations should implement the token endorsement, Dualithic Approach based on the impact this approach had on both Unilever as a brand as well as its sub-brands brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity elements.

This study's core purpose was to conduct an in-depth descriptive qualitative study on consumer perceptions within the South African market, in relation to Unilever's strategy shift, from a Multilithic Approach to a Dualithic Approach. Determining whether the shift has had a positive influence on both Unilever as a brand and its sub-brands' brand image, brand loyalty and brand equity elements. Thus, determining if Unilever has achieved their strategy shift goal, stated above by Keith Weed (CEO), and ultimately determining whether more FMCG organisations, such as Pioneer Foods, Tiger Brands, etc. should shift towards the same strategy, based on the study outcomes.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine if the perception of the sub-brands changed after the endorsement shift, thus has stronger brand equity been created through an increase in brand association with both brand names?
- To determine whether consumer purchase decisions has been positively impacted through the endorsement of the manufacturer (Unilever).
- To determine whether consumers are aware, which 'house-of-brands' (Unilever/RCL Foods) house their products.
- To evaluate whether brand loyalty lies in the customer's brand image of the manufacturer or the individual sub-brands. Thus should FMCG organisations endorse their sub-brands to increase their customer brand loyalty and brand equity?

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.6.1 Main Research Question

To what extent, if any, has Unilever's brand strategy shift, from a shadow endorser to a token endorser, had on their sub-brands brand equity?

1.6.2 Sub-Questions

- Has this shift influenced the customer's perception of Unilever's individual products?
- Are customers aware of their products main manufacturer/ "house of brands"? (Tiger Brands, RCL Foods, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Pioneer Foods)
- Are customers brand loyal to product manufactures, such as Unilever, or individual products such as Knorr, Dove or Surf?
- What brand perception or brand image do customers have on Unilever, and would this affect their purchasing decisions?

1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study was conducted based on a small-scale descriptive qualitative study within the greater Durban area.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One: Introduction & Research Overview

The first chapter introduces the field of study, while highlighting the research questions and objectives, with a basic overview of the research design, approach, and limitations.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The second chapter consists of relevant and current (e.g. no older than 5 years unless it is a seminal source) literature specific to the field of study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The third chapter introduces the research methodology and the adopted research approach and design. While discussing the target population, sampling size and method, data collection methods.

Chapter Four: Presentation & Discussion of Findings

The fourth chapter discusses the data analyses and findings of this research study. Where all research findings are presented in narrative and/or statistical format.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The last chapter discusses and links the findings to each objective set in chapter one. The evaluation of the study's success and suggestions for further research have been mentioned.

1.9 SUMMARY

The researcher explores the effects an endorsement strategy shift has on the customer's image, loyalty and perceptions towards a brand and its sub-brands. This study has been designed to assess Unilever's strategy shift and the impact it has had on the brand image, brand loyalty and brand equity elements, for both Unilever as a brand and its sub-brands. This chapter has presented the problem, suitable research objectives with relevant research questions, while stating the purpose for the study. Chapter two contains recent and relevant theorists, theories, and academic articles relating to each of the research objectives.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review evaluates and discusses relevant existing literature; such as theorists and theories as well as local and international articles, in relation to Unilever's strategy shift from a Multilithic structure to a Dualithic structure. The researcher has analysed concepts, such as a brand architecture and brand relationship spectrum theory, brand identity analysis, brand building, brand equity, as well as consumer behaviours and perceptions, which built the foundation for the researcher to explore whether or not the endorsed Dualithic structure has had an influential effect on the consumer's loyalty and perception towards Unilever and its sub-brands.

The following literature review has examined Unilever's strategic reasoning behind its shift, as well as exploring concepts and methods that were developed and used to analyse the customer's awareness, perceptions, purchasing decisions and loyalty in relation to the strategy shift. The framework of chapter two, has looked at specific components within the brand relationship spectrum as well as brand equity models and customer purchasing behaviours in relation to Unilever's brand strategy shift, within the South African market. The literature review contains relevant and recent sources, however there were a few sources exceeding five years, they were relevant to the outcome of this study, and all older sources have been validated with recent sources.

2.2 UNILEVER: STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Unilever has been cited as one of the most sophisticated organisation with adjusting to the latest 'sustainable' global trend within the global market (Lingard, 2012). Since the 1990's this global trend has been placed in motion, not only within individual lives but within the business world, where companies are required to adapt and change to better their internal and external environments. With this global business trend, Unilever aims to become more than a Marketing company, by implementing a new strategy to becoming a sustainable company (Sinem, 2015).

Unilever's sustainable shift began in 2004, where the brand in partnership with a London-based organisation redesigned the internal and external strategy to symbolise Unilever's new strategic theme of vitality. 'Adding vitality to life' began internally by redesigning the workspaces, recruitment processes, employee training as well as inventing new products. And secondarily, by condensing the Unilever portfolio of sub-brands and offerings, from 1,600 to 400 brands (Wolff Olins, 2010).

The external approach took place through the redesign of the visual identity. The deconstructive “U” consists of twenty-six different icons, representing an element of the brands offerings, see Figure 2.1 below. The new identity expresses the benefits the brand wishes to deliver to its consumers, “adding vitality to life” (Wolff Olins, 2010).



Figure 2.1: Redesigned Unilever Logo

‘Adding vitality to life’ was a simple and strategic idea designed to inform consumers on what to expect from any Unilever product. While creating an opportunity for Unilever to move out of the shadows and into the consumer's lives, through a simple process of adding its new logo design to every product. This was the start of the brands strategy shift, and proved successful for four consecutive years, increasing operating profits at an average rate of 15% (Wolff Olins, 2010).

Due to the success of the brands ‘adding vitality to life’ strategy, Unilever launched a new business model implementing a sustainable approach to conducting business, called *Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan*, in 2010. This business model is designed to “double the size of our business at the same time as reducing our overall impact on the environment and improving our positive social impact” (Lingard, 2012). The Sustainable Living Plan has three primary goals: improving the health and wellbeing of one billion individuals by 2020, to halve the environmental footprint of the making and consumption of Unilever products on the globe by 2030, and enhance the livelihood of one million individuals by 2020 as Unilever grows their business (Lingard, 2012).

Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan was a decision to become a sustainable business within the global market, however this strategy shift had to be implemented at every level within the organisation. By 2014, Unilever furthered their sustainable strategy through their

marketing initiatives. Chief marketing and communication officer of Unilever, Keith Weed stated (Cited in: Voight, 2015), Unilever furthered their strategy shift due to the brand “wanting the world to know the Unilever name as well as those of its goods.” Unilever has managed to implement the change in the business model, throughout the company, from suppliers, operations, to creating value for their customers and improving the environment around them (Sinem, 2015).

Externally, customers are able to identify Unilever’s products and offerings through their unique updated logo design. Unilever’s ‘U’ logo design is placed onto each and every product and now marketing piece, allowing customers to easily identify those products as the most sustainable choice and part of the *Unilever’s Sustainable Living Plan* (Voight, 2015).

The strategy shift was not only implemented within the Unilever brand, but has also been transferred onto individual sub-brands and their marketing strategies. This has been seen throughout most of Unilever’s Beauty brands, such as Dove, and recently AXE has shifted their marketing strategy by adding social purpose to their positioning. According to Weed (In: Voight, 2015), “this strategy shift is paying off. Our brands that most engage with our sustainability and social purpose plan are growing faster.”

2.3 BRAND IDENTITY & BRAND BUILDING

A clear, direct brand identity creates a strong brand within the minds of the consumers. Over the years many models have been developed to guide organisations in building strong brands and ensure synergy between the brands identity and image (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

2.3.1 Aaker’s Brand Identity

Aaker’s brand identity theory, is a tool used to develop, evaluate, and maintain the organisation’s identity. It looks at help a brands can measure as well as develop a distinctive brand personality, while harnessing its value proposition as well as providing credibility to its consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). This model is ideal to analyse how Unilever’s new brand identity has been implemented. The main focus will be directed to the brand identity system; mainly the brand essence, core identity and extended identity, as these were the key elements relative to brand identity and perception.

The brand essence is a single word or phrase that captures the soul of the brand; it is what the brand stands for. Therefore, the brand essence can be seen as a central point in which all of the core identity elements are linked to. Alternatively, the core identity examines the reasons to why a brand exists, it is central to both the meaning and success of the brand. Both, contain key associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand enters new markets and introduces new products (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

The core identity does not hold enough detail to perform all the functions of the brand identity, thus the extended identity is applied to build a full brand identity (Drypen, 2008). These brand identity elements are organised into cohesive and meaningful groupings that adding texture to the identity. Thus, providing directions and portraying key elements for what the brand stands for (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

2.3.2 Brand Building

Brand building is an essential process that involves and considers all aspects within an organisation, while analysing the relationship between the brands identity and brand image (Enslin & Klopper, 2014, p20). A brand identity represents the core components and associations the brand strives to achieve and maintain. These associations should resonate the brands core purpose within the minds of the customers reinforcing the brand image, creating synergy between the brand identity and the brand image. This synergy identifies and develops a core purpose the brand delivers and is experience or perceived by their consumers (MBA Skool, 2017). Brand building is an organisation-wide function, where every element and stakeholder needs to live and express the core identity of the brand throughout every interaction between the brand and the consumers. Thus, reinforcing the consumers brand image and build brand loyalty and brand equity within the marketplace. This ongoing effort establishes long-term relationships with customers, ultimately building brand equity (Gregory, 2016) (Enslin & Klopper, 2014, p2-30).

In relation to Unilever, the strategic shift was implemented both internally and externally, reaching all shareholders within the parent-brand and sub-brands. Creating a systematic approach to building the brand name, Unilever within the minds of the consumers. While creating synergy between the brand identity and the brand image, as well as its sub-brands.

2.4 BRAND RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM

Within an organisation there is often more than one offering. These sub-brands, product categories or service offerings are organised and managed through an organisational brand portfolio tool (Aaker, 2000, p134-135). A key tool used to evaluate how each sub-

brand relates to the parent-brand, is called the brand relationship spectrum. The brand relationship spectrum includes four main strategies with nine sub-strategies, that are used to evaluate the strategic structure and operations for the entire organisation, as shown in Figure 2.1. (Klopper, 2014, p.124).

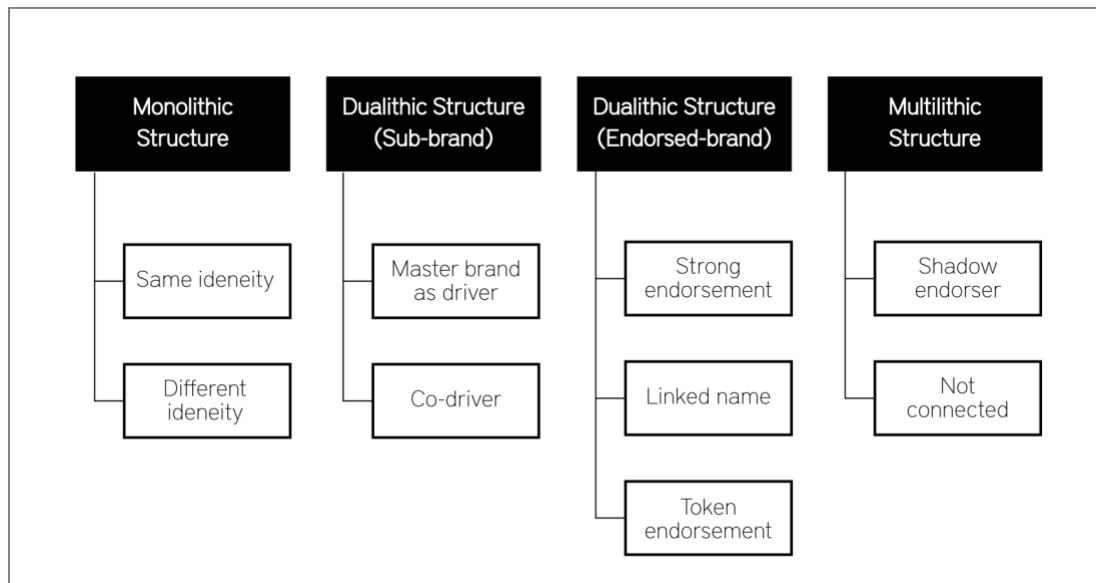


Figure 2.2: Brand Relationship Spectrum Structure

Source: Klopper (2014:124)

A parent-brand, also known as the master-brand or holding company, is the owner and manufacture of all sub-brands within the organisational brand portfolio. Each brand; parent or sub; fulfils a specific consumer need or want within the marketplace. Organisations use sub-brands to further deliver and meet specific customer needs that the parent-brand is unable to. However, each sub-brand still preserves the parent-brand's purpose and mission (Friederichsen, 2016).

The relationship spectrum is a strategical structure that reflects the degree to which the parent-brand and sub-brands are separated. Not only within the organisation but within the minds of the consumers. The relationship between the parent-brand and sub-brands can be determined within the minds of the consumers through the driving role a brand holds. The driver role, is the leading brand within the parent-brand and sub-brand relationship that influences and motivates the purchasing decision. Thus, the brand relationship spectrum, relates to the role each brand plays within the organisational structure. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

2.4.1 The Four Main Strategies

In a *Monolithic Structure* or Branded Houses, the parent-brand holds the driver role. There is one brand name and visual identity that is branded with each sub-brand within the portfolio (Klopper, 2014, p126-129). This structure allows consumers to easily recognise the products within the parent-brand, building brand awareness. However, if there are any negative accusations towards a product or sub-brand, the whole brand can suffer.

The *Endorsed Dualithic Structure*, endorses brands within the organisations brand portfolio. These endorsed brands are still independent brands that hold their own driver roles. However, each independent brand is endorsed by the parent-brand, allowing the independent brand to leverage off the parent-brands brand image and brand equity, which plays on the purchase decisions (Klopper, 2014, p129-135) (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). In the *Sub-Brand Dualithic Structure*, each sub-brand is connected to the parent-brand. The parent-brand holds the driver role or shares the driver role with the sub-brands (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). An advantage towards both Dualithic structures; the parent-brand adds an assurance of quality and credibility, increasing the consumer's perception and confidence towards the sub-brands or endorsed brands. Any crises connected to the sub-brand, endorsed or parent brand, ultimate can impact any connecting brand, as they each hold elements or associations of one another (Klopper, 2014, p129-135).

The *Multilithic Structure* or House of Brands, houses an independent set of stand-alone brands, each holding their own driver roles. The stand-alone brands receiver little to no influential association from the parent-brand, as they hold their own presence within the marketplace, each targeting a specific target audience (Klopper, 2014, p136-139). This structure allows each stand-alone brand to hold its own independent identity, which decreases the parent-brand's risk of being connected to any negative actions made towards any individual brand. However, this structure required large amounts of resources and time from the parent-brand when implementing the stand-alone brands' marketing and other activities.

2.4.2 Unilever's Brand Relationship Spectrum Shift

Aaker's Brand Relationship Spectrum created an acceptable process of systematic thinking, that guides organisations to optimise their brand structure that best links or separates brands within the organisations brand portfolio (Ritson, 2015). This was recently seen in 2015 with Coca-Cola's 'One Brand' strategy shift, moving from a *Dualithic Endorsed* (Linked Name) strategy to a holistic Branded House strategy (On Marketing, 2015), see Appendix C.

Prior to Unilever's strategy shift and approach in 2010, the organisation was previously seen adopting the Multilithic or 'House of Brands' structure using a Shadow Endorsement strategy. Where the connection between the parent-brand and sub-brand are not visually communicated to the consumers through marketing elements, however the link between the two brands can be found on the product offerings packaging, see Appendix D.

With the Launch of *Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan* in November 2010 and full strategy implementation in 2014, the chief marketing and communication officer of Unilever, Keith Weed (Cited in: Voight, 2015) explains, "we wanted the world to know the Unilever name" to the same extent of its sub-brands, by changing the consumer's perception and knowledge around the Unilever name. Ultimately creating a front of mind approach, where consumers subconsciously think of the Unilever's brand name when making any consumer product purchasing decisions. Bringing the Unilever name to the forefront of the customer's mind, changes the organisations brand relationship spectrum structure, from a Multilithic structure to a Dualithic Endorsed-brand structure, as shown in Figure 2.2.

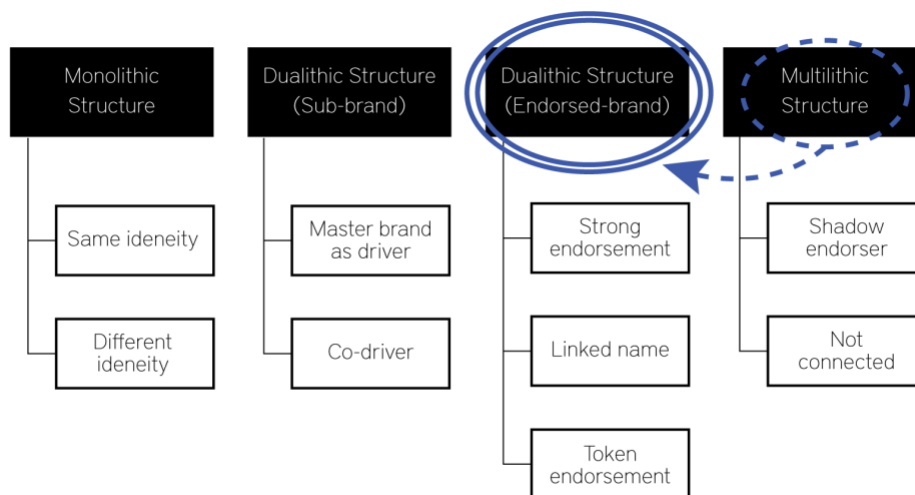


Figure 2.3: Brand Relationship Structure Strategy Shift

Source Adopted: Klopper (2014:124)

Unilever shifted its strategy to a Dualithic Structure, where the use of two brand names are seen, the parent-brands (Unilever) and the sub-brands. The parent-brand's name is used as an endorsement with the sub-brands, however the individual sub-brands or products still develop their own personality (Klopper, 2014, p134-137). Within the Dualithic Endorsed-brand Structure, there are three sub-strategies that the parent-brand can apply to its endorsed strategy. Based on Unilever's current strategy and advertising it have implemented the Token Endorsement strategy, as shown in Figure 2.3.

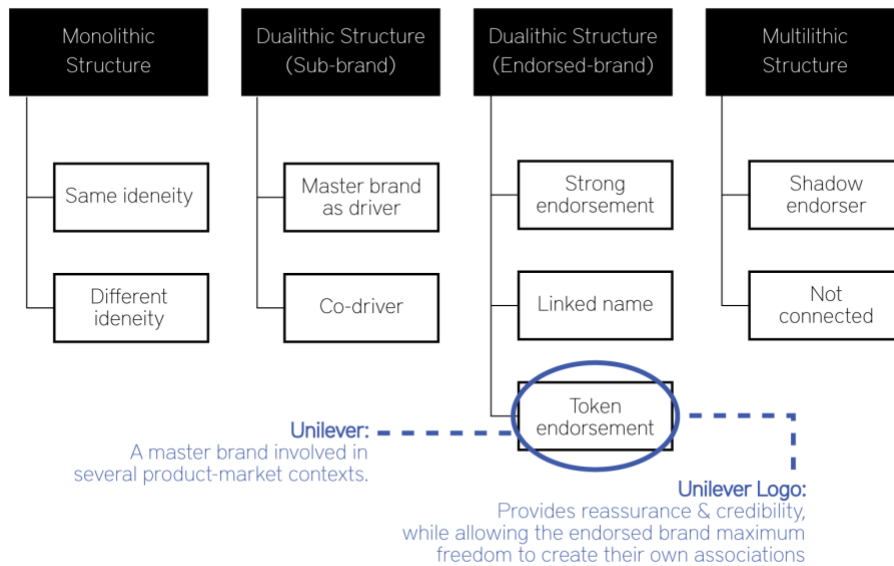


Figure 2.4: Brand Relationship Structure Token Endorsement

Source Adopted: Klopper (2014:124)

The Dualithic Token Endorsement provides the individual sub-brands with the endorsers credibility, while allowing the endorsed brand maximum freedom to create their own associations (Klopper, 2014, p.134-137). According to Keith Weed (Cited in: Voight, 2015), putting the Unilever 'U' logo into each product offering and marketing elements, allows the customers to identify those products as sustainable FMCG products and part of the Unilever family. The Token Endorsement allows the sub-brands to maintain the driver role, while harnessing the parent-brand's (Unilever) strong brand name and brand equity.

Therefore, an effective brand strategy is developed when an organisation understands and adopts the appropriate strategy that will enhance and grow the overall organisation (Savić, 2013). The movement from independent brand strategy to a more holistic and linked strategy has been an enormous shift within the modern brand management landscape. As brands are striving to be known within a cluttered marketplace. The current strategy implemented by Unilever, was not solely an external shift designed to increase the parent-brand's brand awareness, and meet consumers demands for sustainable living, but an internal shift too. Where Unilever has altered its operations, from where raw materials are sourced, the environmental impact of the brand, to the internal employees and stakeholder engagements (Lingard, 2012).

The strategy shift within Unilever (parent-brand) completely shifted the role and position of the parent-brand to endorsed sub-brands within the relationship spectrum. Throughout this

study the researcher will identify whether or not there was a position shift within the minds of the consumers, in relation the Unilever and their sub-brands.

2.5 BRAND EQUITY

Brand equity is a valuable element linked to the success of a brand, it is an intangible asset or liability to an organisation, therefore hard to measure. Aaker (1997, In: Bick, 2014) states, brand equity is linked to a brand's name and symbol which adds to or subtracts from the value the products or services provide the brand and their customers. Thus, brand equity is an asset that adds value to the brand and its customers, however when a brand fails to deliver within the consumer's expectations of the brand, a negative brand equity can occur becoming a liability (Aaker 2000). Alternatively, according to Keller (2013), brand equity is derived from the customer's perception of the brand, which is based off the brands ability to understand the needs of its customers while delivering products and services that satisfies those needs. is the core to successful marketing and strong brand equity. Therefore, brand equity is "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand" (Keller, 2013).

According to Keller (2008, In Bick, 2014) the benefits of building strong brand equity aids two sides, the consumers and the organisation. For the consumers, it enhances the evaluation and purchasing of products, which leads to value added to the consumer's experience with the brand. For the organisation it strengthens their competitive advantage, therefore providing added financial value to the brand.

Brand equity is constructed with several components or elements, and as a result various theorists have developed models to identify and explain brand equity. There are two main models within the brand equity field of study, Aaker's (1996, In Bick, 2014) Model of Brand Equity, and Keller's (1998, In Bick, 2014) Customer Brand Equity Model.

With regard to this study, the main model that will be focused on is Keller's Customer Brand Equity Model, as Keller's model focus on the customer benefits and customer perceptions towards a brand. Whereas, Aaker's model focus on the organisations benefits and perceptions of the brand. Keller's model is most applicable to this study as the researcher is looking to discover whether or not Unilever's strategy shift to a Dualithic Endorsement structure has influences the customer perception and customer brand equity towards the endorser brand, Unilever, and its sub-brands.

2.5.1 Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

Brand equity is the added value or strength endowed onto a product, service or the entire brand itself. According to Keller (2008, In: Bick, 2014), it is the customer's brand knowledge; their perception, preferences and behaviours driven from brand awareness and brand image; that builds brand equity. The strength of a brand within the market, resides in the minds of the customers and through their purchasing decisions, created through positive, distinctive brand interaction (MSG Experts, 2017). Brand equity is an essential asset to building a strong brand.

Keller (2008, In: Bick, 2014) developed a brand equity pyramid that guides brands in building a strong brand, through customer interactions. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model involves three elements, the *Stages of Brand Development* connecting to the rational route to brand building, the six *Brand Building Blocks*, and finally, the *Branding Objectives* connecting to the emotional route to brand building, as shown in the below Figure 5.1.

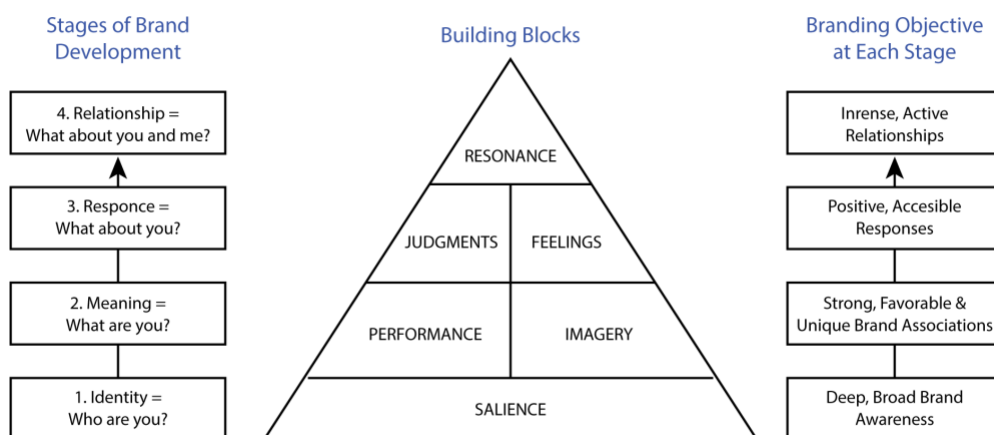


Figure 2.5: Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

Source: Kotler & Keller (2012:248)

Brands can create a significant brand equity when reaching the top of the pyramid and putting into place the right building blocks. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model begins with the enactment of the four brand development stages, which establishes the pyramid of the six brand building blocks (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Brand Identity is the first step to creating brand equity within the Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model and creates the first building block, *Brand Salience*. (Kotler & Keller, 2012). This step occurs through brand awareness, linking to the strength of the brand name within the customer's mind and the degree to which the customer actively associates the brand with a specific product or service. (MSG Experts, 2017). Brand

awareness is measured according to, *brand recognition* which occurs before the customer is exposed to the brand, which reflects a knowledge or liking towards the brand, and *brand recall* relating to the customer's recollection of their experience with the brand (Bick, 2014).

This building onto, *Brand Meaning* achieved through the performance of the brand, which affect the customer's interactions and experiences with the brand. These experiences links to the *Brand Performance*, how a product or service meets the functional needs of the customer, and *Brand Imagery*, creating associations that meet the psychological or social needs of the consumer (Kotler & Keller, 2012). These brand associations are positive or negative relations a customer holds on a specific brand name, through their past interactions and experiences with the brand (MSG Experts, 2017).

Brand Response is the next step in the Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model, which links to the customer's reaction and evaluation towards a brand based on their experiences and brand associations. These responses are evaluated through *Brand Judgment*, the customer's personal opinions on the brand and its offerings, and *Brand Feelings*, the customer's emotional responses on the brand and its offerings (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

The final step in building Customer-Based Brand Equity is, *Brand Relationships* which involves the evaluation of the customer-brand relationship. The relationship analysis between the brand and the customer is based on the *Brand Resonance*, which looks at the nature, intensity and extent of the bond between the brand and customer. A strong customer-brand relationship builds brand loyalty and strengthens a brand's brand equity. (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Brand Loyalty is a key element to building brand equity. Loyal consumers are committed to the brand based on the above building blocks; they are not concerned with paying higher prices, as they believe in the brand and its values over the brands competitors (MSG Experts, 2017).

2.5.2 Impact of Endorsements on Brand Equity

Building a strong brand can provide significant benefits to a brand's financial returns and competitive advantage within the marketplace. As stated previously, a strong brand is built through the customer's positive interactions with the brand and its offerings, as the consumer's evaluation of a brand is based on the information they have access to (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003, Cited In: Claudiu-Cătălin & Dorian-Laurențiu, 2014).

Unilever's brand strategy shift was placed in motion to bring the endorser brand name, Unilever into consideration during the customer's purchasing decision-making process (Voight, 2015). Unilever is striving to be known as a sustainable marketing company, though the placement of the 'trust trademark of sustainability' representing by the 'U' Logo design. This trusted trademark is place on all offerings within the company and marketing pieces, aims is to inform the customer that those products are "right choice for the planet" (Weed, In: Voight, 2015).

Brand endorsements assist in growing brand awareness as well as profits, however these endorsements can also negatively affect these brand elements (Gonzalez, 2016). Brand endorsers are used as they are seen as experts within the marketplace or to the targeted audience. The endorsers perceived qualities, personalities and attributes are transfused to the endorsed brand; which can positively affect the the customers purchasing decisions based on the customer's association of the endorser brand, as it gives the customer a sense of familiarity and added benefits (Roll, 2012). However alternatively, the customer's perception and association of the endorser brand can have a negative effect, as the customer does not want to be associated with the endorsers and therefore rejects the endorsed brand too.

The strength of a brand can be determined by the brand equity it has created through significant influences, such as the impact an endorsement brand (parent-brand) can have over the customer's interaction with the endorsed brand (sub-brand).

Therefore, brand equity can be measured based on the customer's brand knowledge, awareness and perception of the brand based on quality and price, which leads to brand loyalty and repurchasing behaviours. This brand loyalty can be positively enhanced or negatively affect though an endorsement strategy shifts. Thus, the challenge brands face is ensuring that every customer has the right type of experiences with both, endorser and endorsee brand's, offerings and marketing pieces to create positive and desirable brand knowledge (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

2.6 CONSUMER BEHAVIOURS & BUYING DECISION PROCESS

2.6.1 Consumer Behaviours

Consumer behaviour is determined and influenced through the customer's psychological aspects; their motivation, awareness, knowledge, and attitude. These aspects play a significant role in understanding how the customer's decision process takes place and how they influence the customer's purchasing process (Solomon, Russell-Bennett & Previte, 2013). Analysing the customer behaviour in relation to the purchasing decision process, involves the understanding to what extent the customer's brand awareness, brand image and brand equity influences their purchasing decision.

Brand awareness is a key component, as it brings a brand to the forefront of the customer mind when purchasing products. The marketplace is cluttered with multiple brand offerings, however imprinting the brand's image (who the brand is and what the brand stands for) within the minds of the customer, can increase sales, particularly in areas where few obvious differences are apparent among competitors. (Berman, 2013)

Brand image, is the way in which the consumer views the brand based on brand knowledge, experience, and brand association. This element, brand image, has a strong progressive control on customer purchasing behaviour, through positive interactions and reinforcements. Alternatively, negative experiences and communication elements can impact the customer's purchasing decision. Therefore, it is important for brands to build positive and consistent brand communication elements and experience. That strengthens the customer's brand awareness, image and knowledge, and ultimately influencing their purchase decisions (Malik, et al., 2013).

A customer's behaviour can be analysed and understood through the use of the consumer behaviour model and within this model, the psychological processes combined with consumer characteristics results in a purchase decision process. However, with regard to the study only the five-stage Buying Decision Process will be focused on, as shown below in Figure 8.1.

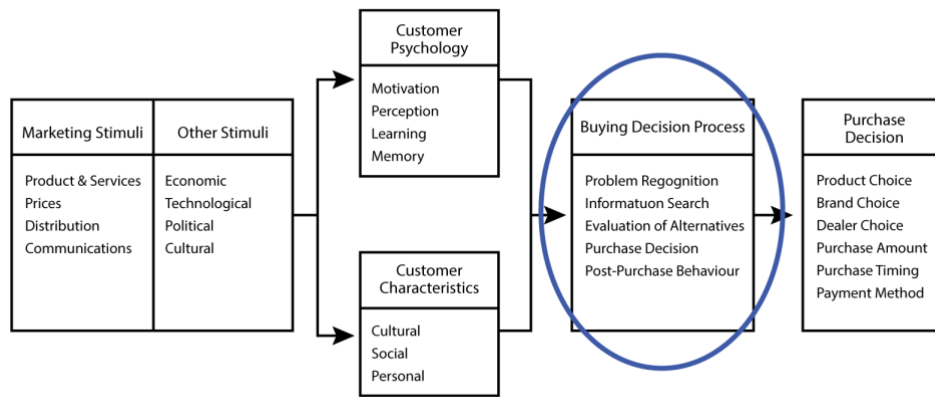


Figure 2.6: Model of Consumer Behaviour

Source: Kotler & Keller (2012:161)

2.6.2 Consumer Buying Decision Process

The consumer decision process identifies the stages consumers take, based on their personal needs and preferences when making different decisions. Analysing this process is complex as it is depended on the consumer's opinion about a brand and its offerings, evaluating and comparing, and finally selecting and purchasing the brand over its competitors (Dudovskiy, 2013). There are five stages to the Buying Decision Process; problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternative, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour, as shown below in Figure 8.2.



Figure 2.7: Model of Buying Decision Process

Problem/Need Recognition this the first stage in the Buying Decision Process, where the consumers realise there is a problem or a need within their life that need to be corrected or fulfilled (Kotler and Keller,2012). This realisation occurs when the consumer compares the difference between their personal situation to their desired state, which results in the creation of a purchasing idea. According to Tyagi (2004, In Dudovskiy, 2013), the Need Recognition stage often only occurs during the consumer's interaction with the brand or its offerings, as consumers are often unaware of the specific gap in their life until they encounter and engage with the brand.

Information Search, the second stage, is the process of conducting and gathering product-related information before directly making a purchase decision, that may solve the problem or need identified in the first stage. This process differs for every consumer, depending on their brand knowledge, past experiences and purchases. Oliver (2011, In Dudovskiy, 2013) suggest that this stage can be divided into two parts, *Internal Search* and *External Search*. In internal search, the consumers compare the alternative options based on their own opinions and brand association developed through past experiences and knowledge. Alternatively, external search is the process of gathering opinions from other consumers based on their experiences and associations, as well as in depth research into the brand and their offerings.

Evaluation of Alternatives, is the third stage, where consumers analyses all the information obtained through the second stage, evaluating and comparing various alternative brands, products and services that can meet the identified problem or need (Dudovskiy, 2013) This evaluation process is driven by the consumer's personal feelings, motives and perception of a brand (Kotler & Keller 2012). Often the process of evaluation of alternatives is based on quality, price, size and brand. Consumers can find this process difficult and time consuming due to the high volume of offerings within the marketplace. However, it is considered as the most important stage during the decision making process as it leads the consumer to a purchase decision. Celebrity and Brand endorsements can have a positive influential impact on the evaluation of alternatives stage of consumer decision making process, as the endorsers personality, attributes and image are often transferred to the endorsed brand offering (Dudovskiy, 2013) (Klopper, 2014).

Purchase Decision, the fourth stage in the Buying Decision Process, is based off the findings within the above stages where the consumer has come to the final decision point and makes the decision to purchase the brand offering. However, there are often unforeseen factors that can influence the final purchase decision (Dudovskiy, 2013).

Post-Purchase Behaviour, is the last stage in the Buying Decision Process. This stage involves the consumer's evaluation after the purchase has been made and the experience they encountered. According to Brink & Berndt (2009, In: Dudovskiy, 2013), the consumer may either find satisfaction or dissatisfaction depending on their expectations and evaluation of the purchase. This evaluation has a direct link to the consumers next purchasing decision process.

2.7 MEANINGFUL BRANDS

Brands have developed and grown over the years; they no longer merely exist as driving forces for consumption and pure profit, their existence relies on their ability to satisfy consumer needs through added value. According to Enslin and de Beer (2015), today's realists believe brands exist for the pursuit of brand building principles that serve society. Thus, building brands that matter - holding a unique distinctive purpose that adds value to the lives of both consumers and employees - are brands that succeed.

Stated in the World Economic Forum's reflection (2013, Cited in: Enslin & de Beer, 2015), today's consumers believe strongly in creating a better world, and look towards brands that add value to society. They have noted a dramatic shift within the marketplace, where brands are moving towards "more transparency, more collaboration, more democracy, and ultimately delivering more value" (Enslin & de Beer, 2015). These meaningful brands invest in community engagement, technology has allowed brands to communicate and engage with their consumers more effectively building stronger relationships, while enhancing their brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity. According to Weed's statements (Cited in: Voight, 2015), Unilever has implemented the strategic shift driven by sustainable operations for both internal and external stakeholders.

A meaningful brand is more than its unique added value, it needs to be internally committed towards its employees, ensuring the brand purpose is communicated and delivered through every interaction the consumer has with the brand. Thus, building cohesive, truthful experience that grow into long-term meaningful relationships (Enslin & de Beer, 2015). A meaningful brand has mindful leadership where all stakeholders are valued during decisions. They build brands with purpose while creating 'people-centric' environments, which in turn makes the brand reciprocal. Meaningful brands are not focused on profits; it is merely a consequence of good business. They create value through sustainable means that cares for the environment, all consumers and the businesses wellbeing. Every business decision and action should deliver the brands unique reason for existing (Enslin & de Beer, 2015).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The above literature review was conducted in relation to the proposed topic and objectives of this study. Understanding the reasons behind Unilever's strategy shift of building a more meaningful, sustainable, transparent brand, allows the researcher to guide the proposed study towards answering the research questions stated in Chapter one. The concepts discussed within this chapter, guides the researcher on measuring whether or not Unilever has built its brand equity, through understanding consumer purchasing decisions, based on the effect the brand relationship spectrum adopted by Unilever has had on the consumer's perception of the brand, Unilever and its sub-brands. These literature components are critical to developing the necessary knowledge foundation that will guide and create a framework for the next chapters within this study. Chapter three presents the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To reiterate, the aim of this study was to determine what effect the Unilever strategy shift - from a Multilithic structure to a Dualithic structure - has had on its consumer's perceptions towards Unilever as a brand and its sub-brands. While determining the impact of the endorsed Dualithic structure has had on both Unilever and its sub-brands brand image, brand loyalty and brand equity elements.

This chapter has provided an in-depth discussion on the research methodologies that were used to achieve the set objectives. Followed by the research design, the research approach, as well as a detailed description of the desired target population, sample size, sample methods, data collection method, and data analysis method that were utilised. The construction of the interview schedule, a pilot study, validity, reliability and trustworthiness as well as the ethical considerations were also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The actions and objects that occur around us that can be analysed, observed and experienced are known as a phenomenon. The phenomena that are worth investigating are approached by researchers in different methods or means; known as paradigms. These paradigms guide the researcher throughout their study of the particular phenomenon by determining the necessary research questions and selecting the appropriate data collection and analysis methods that will ensure valuable findings are reported (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2016).

With regard to the research study, looking at customer's perception towards Unilever's strategic shift and the effect it has had on its sub-brands' brand equity, interpretivism would be the appropriate paradigm to adopt. Interpretivism looks at the phenomenon in a way that guides the researcher to "understand and describe the meaningful social actions and experiences" (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2016). Whereas, Positivism looks at the causal relationship that predicts and controls experience within the phenomenon. Interpretivism does not control or predict actions or behaviours within a particular experience, but rather gives meaning and understanding to how and why these actions or behaviours occur within a particular experience (Edirisingha, 2012).

There are five components to each paradigm, which guided the research. Firstly, ontology is the study of reality or existence. In relation to the interpretivist study, it looked at the internal and subjective interaction each participant had experience with Unilever and its sub-brands after the strategy shift. Secondly, epistemological is the study of knowledge or common sense. Which allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the participant's unique perspectives towards the brands based on past interactions, personal interests and existing knowledge of the main topic. (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2016). The third component, metatheory looks at the theory that informs and guides the researcher through the study of the phenomenon. This was achieved through the use of a descriptive analysis of the participant's perceptions representing to the set objects. The last two components, axiology and reason, which is the study of values and methodology as well as meaningful interactions. This guided the researcher through specific qualitative methods, which lead to trustworthy in-depth findings, based on participant's subjective opinions and perceptions towards the proposed study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2016) (Edirisingha, 2012).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are three main research designs a researcher can utilise for a research study, qualitative research methodology, quantitative research methodology, and a mixed method research design (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Once the researcher has developed a greater understanding for each methodology, the most appropriate research method, philosophy, design, and approach can be selected.

A qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions ('what,' 'why,' and 'how'); which broaden the researcher's understandings and gains subjective in-depth insights into consumer perceptions, buying patterns, and brand loyalty (Creswell, 2014). The advantage of qualitative research is that, the collected data identifies each individual experience and opinion, creating an in-depth understanding on the topic. However, the disadvantage of qualitative research is the time consuming methods to obtain the in-depth data and the possibility of the researcher influencing the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

A quantitative research methodology allows the researcher to gather quantifiable, objective information about consumer interactions, buying patterns, and brand choices. This approach allows the researcher to compare and measure variables against each other, which can be generalised (Creswell, 2014). The advantage of quantitative research is that; the collected numerical data is completely independent of the researcher. While, the disadvantage of numerical data, is that it is not in-depth or enriched with the reasons behind the data (Maree and Pietersen, 2016).

Mixed research methodology utilises aspects from both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach allows the researchers to collect both in-depth enriched data and numerical data. The advantage of a mixed methodology is that it provides a more complete understanding of the research topic. However, the disadvantage of a mixed methodology is that the approach is very complex, it is time consuming and requires more resources to obtain the data (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

The study is descriptive in nature. Descriptive research explores an individual, group or situation through analysing and describing aspects of a current phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2016). This research approach identifies, determines and explains the characteristics and behaviours of the sample population, through either qualitative or quantitative descriptions, ultimately confirming or rejecting the existing theory. Whereas, Exploratory research provides insights and an understanding into the research problem for further investigation, through the discovery of the sample population's, qualitative or quantitative, thoughts and behaviours (Surbhi, 2016).

Having discussed the nature of the research, deductive reasoning was used to further the research study; as deductive reasoning either validates or disproves any existing theory through the process of exploring and testing the theory within the given phenomenon (Crossman, 2017). Whereas, with inductive reasoning the researcher begins the study with no theory relating to the topic, these theories or patterns will be identified and develop based on the research conducted (Crossman, 2017). Descriptive research and deductive reasoning work hand-in-hand, both based on the analysis of a current phenomenon - exploring the consumers' perceptions towards Unilever and its sub-brands after the Endorsed Dualithic strategy shift - through both existing theory and primary findings. The existing theory was discussed within chapter two: the literature review. The study aims to either confirm or reject the theory behind Unilever's strategy shift; from a Multilithic shadow endorser to a Dualithic token endorser.

Answering the research objectives and questions, stated in Chapter One, the study was conducted through a qualitative research design, identify each individual consumer perception held towards Unilever's strategy shift and the effect it has had on the image, loyalty and brand equity. A qualitative research methodology allows for subjective open ended questions, gaining insight into the consumer's behaviours, buying patterns and their perceptions on the brands. A qualitative research design was effective as it gathered in-

depth knowledgeable data, that builds onto each research objective and research question, while capturing quality findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Due to the nature of this study, a descriptive qualitative research approach explored and enabled an in-depth understanding towards the current phenomenon of Unilever's strategy shift and the extent to which this endorsed Dualithic strategy shift has impacted its consumer perceptions of Unilever as a brand and its individual sub-brands (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Based on the constraints and qualities of this descriptive qualitative study, a cross-sectional study structure was applied (Edades, 2016). A cross-sectional study captures and compares different population groups or variables at a single moment in time, while removing all assumptions and gathering viable data during the cross-sectional study process (Rivers, 2017).

3.5 TARGET POPULATION

The population refers to a total number of individuals and elements that hold certain characteristics and meet the requirements of a study (Pascoe, 2014). The target population for this proposed study includes all general customers of the Fast-Moving Consumer Good (FMCG) environment, within the South African market. However, the specific size of the target population is difficult to define, as the researcher does not have access to consumer records, therefore the exact number of the total population considered for the study is unknown to the researcher.

Accessible Population

For the proposed study, target population will be narrowed down to the accessible population, who are identified as the general consumers aged from 18 and up living within three selected areas of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Hillcrest, Westville and Umhlanga, were considered as participants. No participants of the age of 17 and under will be considered due to ethical issues. The scope of the proposed study, is of a small-scale qualitative study, therefore the restricted access to the size of the total population is not as critical as it would be for a quantitative study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Participants will be known as General Consumers.

3.6 SAMPLING METHODS AND SAMPLE SIZE

The sampling methods and sample size looks at a particular segment of the population, that is selected to participate within the proposed study (Pascoe, 2014). Ideally, the sample should represent the total population, as stated above, the exact number of the total population is unknown to the researcher, therefore the sample methods and sample size will represent the assessable population known as the general consumers.

Quantitative sampling realises on random selection; through probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods; that represents the population, it is extremely time and resources dependent. This allows the results to be validated and generalised to the total population, however the researcher needs to be aware of bias sampling (Maree and Pietersen, 2016, p.192). Whereas, qualitative research uses purposeful sampling is a process that selects participants based on their characteristics and knowledge and does not hold the same sampling criteria as quantitative sampling methods.

The qualitative study, used purposeful sampling as its requires rich in-depth data based on the participant's perceptions and reasoning. Therefore, the samples were not generalised to the total population, but rather develop an in-depth study of the main phenomenon. However, the researcher needs to stay objective while being aware of personal persuasion towards the participants and their results (Creswell, 2012, p.206).

3.6.1 Sample Method

Purposeful sampling holds several strategies that can be adopted when selecting the ideal sample of individuals or sites that are enriched with information relating to the main research phenomenon. (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p.85-87). After extensive research into each strategy, two main sampling methods were selected; Stratified Purposive Sampling and Homogeneous Sampling; that were used throughout this study.

According to Patton (2002, Cited in: Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p86), Stratified Purposive Sampling is a mixed approach where fairly homogeneous groups within the accessible population were selected, allowing all data collected from each group to be compared. The groups were selected based on specific elements relating to the phenomenon being researched. In relation to the research study, this purposeful sampling method was used to select 15 participants for the scheduled interviews. The homogeneous groups represent the general consumers within the following Durban areas; Hillcrest, Westville and Umhlanga. Due to the limitations of selecting willing participants within a public domain, the participants from each area are not equal in number.

Homogeneous Sampling is a process where individuals who hold same characteristics and behaviours or similar opinions are selected. They are chosen based on these elements that will allow the researcher to build a more detailed understanding on the phenomenon being researched (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, Cited in: Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p86). In relation to the study, this sampling method was chosen to select participants for the focus groups, based on their general consumer characteristics. However, due to timing constraints and gathering willing participant to partake, the focus groups did not take place.

3.6.2 Sample Size

The study is a small scale qualitative study; had the study been quantitative, the sample size would need to be large enough to be statistically sound while representing the total population of general consumers within South Africa (Pascoe, 2014). However, a smaller sample size is only necessary for qualitative research, as the intention is to gather an understanding into the general consumer perceptions and opinions on the impact Unilever's strategy shift has had on the brand itself and its sub-brands brand equity, brand image and brand loyalty. A qualitative sample size is determined by the allocation and restrictions of the study's resources and time (Lani, 2014). Although, the smaller sample size is not statistically sound, the researcher ensured the study is conducted logically by gathering relevant, reliable and trustworthy information (Pascoe, 2014).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The use of personal and email interviews as well as focus groups were designed to collect the necessary data for the research study.

The personal and email interviews were designed to be implemented first, as this would allow the researcher to gather all relevant data, efficiently and effectively. Through the analysis of the interview data, the researcher would be able to conduct focus groups that will either confirm or disprove the interview data as well as add further data to any missing gaps. In relation to the study, crystallisation of the two findings would allow the researcher to identify credible data readings by identifying emerging patterns and adding elements of trustworthiness to the study.

3.7.1 Interview Schedule

An interview schedule was developed with open-ended questions linking to the research objectives and questions set in Chapter 1 (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This semi-structured

interview schedule allowed for subjective general consumer perceptions and opinions based on the impact Unilever's strategy shift has had on the brand itself and its sub-brands brand equity, brand image and brand loyalty, see Appendix E. The interview schedule were narrative based, where in-depth, rich perceptions on the current phenomenon being studied were obtained (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Narrative studies allowed the researcher to collect data based on themes and patterns that emerged from the study via consumers sharing their opinions and experiences.

This interviews were conducted within the public domain; where all data was gathered within spaces available to the public as a whole, and were not subject to copyright or other legal restrictions. The email interviews will be sent to participants who want to contribute to the study, but are unable to partake in personal interviews. All interviews were digitally record through an online platform allowing for ease of identifying of common themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

3.7.2 Focus Group

The focus group was designed to collection and determine the behaviours, attitudes, experiences and perceptions of 6-10 participants who would be interviewed, while gathering in-depth data in a controlled environment and within a convenient time frame (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The researcher, being the facilitator during the focus-group would identify broad questions from the face-to-face interviews that need more focus and use these questions as guidelines to encourage the participants to exchange and discuss their perceptions, experiences and opinions relating to the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). At the beginning of the focus-group, the researcher would obtain permission of each participant to digitally voice record the discussion. Key insights would be documented by the researcher during the discussion, which will all later be transcribed and used for further data analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). However, as stated before, the focus group was not achieved do to the researcher's time constraints and gathering participants to partake within the focus group on a particular day at a particular public domain area.

3.7.3 Interview Schedule Construction

The constructed open-ended interview questions was developed in line with the research objectives and research questions, as seen in Appendix E. Therefore, the participant's subjective opinions and perceptions were gathered and directed towards Unilever's endorsed Dualithic strategy shift and the impacted it has had on their perceptions of Unilever as a brand and its individual sub-brands, brand equity, brand image, and brand loyalty. All participants, before any data collection occurs, was presented with a consent form to ensure the study is ethical conducted (see Appendix F).

3.7.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study assesses whether the methods are feasible and acceptable for the intended sample population, it is not used to gather data or test the hypotheses of the study (Mudd, 2017). A pilot study not only increased the researcher confidence and experience with participants, but also assessed the researcher's ability to execute the data collection methods and capturing insights needed for later analysis.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

For the study, content analysis is the chosen data analysis method. This method allowed the researcher to discover and describe the current phenomenon through the interpretation of textual data compressed into specific categories, based on explicit rules of coding (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p111). Content analysis is the process of interpreting all textual content through objective, systematic and quantifiable rules, into categories of similar themes or patterns that can be compared (Astuti, 2016).

Objectivity relates to the categorisation of textual data, where any person familiar with the data analysis method, content analysis, will be able to replicate the categories based on the same content. Systematic refers to something being done according to a fixed system. Thus, the content analysis is designed to test the research problem through analysing all the content collected. This data analysis is quantifiable as the researcher compresses and categorises similar textual data into numerical frequencies (Astuti, 2016).

Content analysis and thematic analysis are similar in nature, as they both analyse the data to identify patterns and themes. Content analysis focuses on the frequency of various categories within the data, whereas thematic analysis, identifies patterns within the data, allowing the researcher to gather descriptive data that will answer the proposed research problem (Dawson, 2016).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, cited in Wigdorowitz, 2016) there are six steps to conducting a thematic analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating codes
3. Searching for themes and patterns
4. Defining and naming themes
5. Producing a report

For the study, both analysis methods were considered as they build onto each other, allowing for all textual data to be analysed into categories, that were easily interpreted into descriptive findings.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Although the study was conducted through a qualitative methodology, both key quantitative measures; validity and reliability; can be applied (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p123).

Validity, more specifically face validity is used to ensure the research instruments measures what is intended to measure (Pietersen & Maree, 2016, p240). Thus, face validity was established during the pilot study. Reliability links to the studies professional and scientific actions of the researcher; to the extent, should the research study be replicated, in the same context, similar findings will be obtained (Pietersen & Maree, 2016, p238).

3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

As discussed by Guba (1981, Cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016), there are four criteria a researcher needs to considered for a qualitative research, being credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These were applied by the researcher throughout the study.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the measurement of the content and data within the study, by establishing whether the results are believable and trustworthy. The researcher should consistently engage in debriefing sessions, analysing notes with a supervisor. Credibility is also achieved by conforming all insights and transcripts with participants. This ensures the researcher has understood the participant's perceptions, gathering credible in-depth results (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p123).

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability, ensures the study can be duplicated, resulting in similar findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p123-124). There are two main strategies a researcher can apply to ensure transferability is achieved. Firstly, the researcher will produce a 'thick description' of the context, participants, and research design, allowing the reader to determine whether the findings are trustworthy and can be transferred to their study or phenomenon. Secondly, through 'purposeful sampling', participants representing the population of the phenomenon were selected (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p123-124).

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability, like reliability in quantitative research, looks at the stability of the collected data over time. Therefore, dependability evaluates the quality of the researcher's implementation of the research design, with aid of their supervisor, and providing a well-documented data analysis. Dependability ensures the reader is able to see the decision process taken by the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p124).

3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the researcher objectivity towards the study. In other words, it looks at the extent to which the research study's findings will be shaped by the participant's subjective perceptions, and not by the researcher's bias (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p125).

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure appropriate ethical actions were taken throughout the study. Ethical concerns were practiced by the researcher when approaching all participants as well as during data capturing and data analysis. All participants were presented with an ethical form of consent, informing each participant on the nature of the study as well as their participation. The researcher further explained the value and credibility of the participants results to ensure honest responses and correct findings (Maree, 2016, p44).

Below are all ethical concerns the researcher will implement throughout the study:

- The researcher informed all participants on the nature and purpose of the study before the data collection process commences. This was achieved through a brief background into the study attached to the consent form. (See Appendix F).
- All participants were given a consent form to sign,
 - stating the participants give the researcher permission to use their responses throughout the proposed study.
 - informing participants that their responses are anonymous and their individual names will not be linked to any findings.
 - informing participants that at any time during the proposed study, they are able to withdraw.
- No participants under the age of 18 years old will be considered due to ethical issues.
- The researcher followed to all four criteria (Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability) of key qualitative measurement to ensure the proposed studies trustworthiness.

- The researcher did not use incentives, such as gifts or money, to attract participants as it would affect the transferability and trustworthiness of the study. However, refreshments were offered to the participants.
- The researcher communicated the responses and findings to each participant, through verbal or email feedback when necessary, to ensure no captured data was misinterpreted.
- Ethical clearance was obtained from the researcher's supervisor as per the IIE guidelines. (See Appendix G)
- The researcher submitted all necessary documents of the study through 'Safe a Sign', an online tool used to prevent plagiarism, ensuring the authenticity of the study.

3.12 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION

The purpose of the study is to explore and determine the extent to which Unilever's strategy shift from a Multilithic approach to a Dualithic approach, has impacted its consumer perceptions towards Unilever as a brand and its sub-brands brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity elements. Descriptive research, will allow the study to provide a platform for future decision-making and market predictions based on the findings relating to the current phenomenon (Edades, 2016). Therefore, a descriptive qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to predict future outcomes for other Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) organisations within the South African market, who adopt this same strategy shift seen within Unilever.

This study would likely be published within; *The African Journal of Business Management* (AJBM), as this proposed journal, publishes peer reviewed full length research documents, short communications, case studies, and reviews. South African organisations are able to access academic reviewed documents that are relevant to their personal market situations, while providing trustworthy recommendations (Vasilescu, 2017).

3.13 DELIMITATION

The delimitation that were most prominent to this study was time, as an honours student, the research process is limited to eight months. Unilever is a worldwide brand with multiple sub-brands therefore; the scope of the research was narrowed down to selected sub-brands. Research was limited to and conducted within Durban, South Africa and its surrounding areas; due to the geographical constraints and population reach based on the researcher's resources and time frame. As well as the willingness of the participants to partake within the study.

3.14 SUMMARY

Chapter three has presented the appropriate research design, data collection methods and analysis methods that was utilised. The phenomenological study was conducted through a descriptive qualitative approach, allowing consumer perceptions towards Unilever as a brand and its sub-brands, after the Endorsed Dualithic strategy shift; in relation to brand equity, brand image, and brand loyalty to be described. In the next two chapter, the data collections methods were conducted, findings were presented and discussed. Thereafter, in-depth recommendations and conclusions were drawn from the results of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an in-depth presentation and discussion of the data collected through all 15 open ended interviews. The data was discussed and represented in both visual and textual format for ease of interpretation. The analysis of all data was conducted as per the research methodology discussed within Chapter Three.

Throughout the data collection process, the interview questions were designed to identify whether or not general consumers have changed their perception towards any sub-brand within the Unilever portfolio, as a result of Unilever's Dualithic strategy shift. Due to the wide range of sub-brands offered by Unilever, the researcher selected three main sub-brands within the South African portfolio that were used throughout the study; Axe, Knorr and Vaseline.

It is important to mention that this was a small-scale qualitative study and as such, it is not statistically sound and therefore the results are not generalised to the total population. Being a qualitative study, valuable insightful data was gathered from selected general consumers within the Durban, KwaZulu-Natal area.

4.2 THE OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS MATRIX

The table below represents the research objective of this study in relation to the specific interview questions. (See Appendix E).

Table 4.1: Objective Question Matrix

OBJECTIVES	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1. To determine if the perception of the sub-brands changed after the endorsement shift, thus has stronger brand equity been created through an increase in brand association with both brand names?	# 6, 7, 9
2. To determine whether consumer purchase decisions has been positively impacted through the endorsement of the manufacturer (Unilever).	# 6, 7, 8
3. To determine whether consumers are aware, which 'house-of-brands' (Unilever/RCL Foods) house their products.	# 4, 5
4. To evaluate whether brand loyalty lies in the customer's brand image of the manufacturer or the individual sub-brands. Thus should FMCG organisations endorse their sub-brands to increase their customer brand loyalty and brand equity?	# 2, 3, 7, 10

4.3 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

During the interview data collection period of 7 days, 15 personal and email interviews were conducted. All data was collected through an online platform allowing for ease of thematic analysis and tabulations of results. Visual diagrams, tables and figures were developed based on the research findings. Although, the presentation of data is quantitative in nature (numeral), the diagrams, tables and figures have a qualitative approach as these instruments were implemented to shorten the length of the interview and most importantly to identify themes and patterns that developed. All qualitative findings have been analysed thematically and where appropriate word clouds have been generated. The findings are presented in order of the questions asked.

4.3.1 General Information of Interviewees

Demographic questions were included within the interview for the purpose of identifying whether themes or patterns would develop given the qualitative open-ended questions that followed.

Demographics of Respondents

15 Respondents were interviewed by the researcher,
8 of which were female and 7 of which were male.

Of all the respondents, the following percentages
represent their particular age group
are residential area.

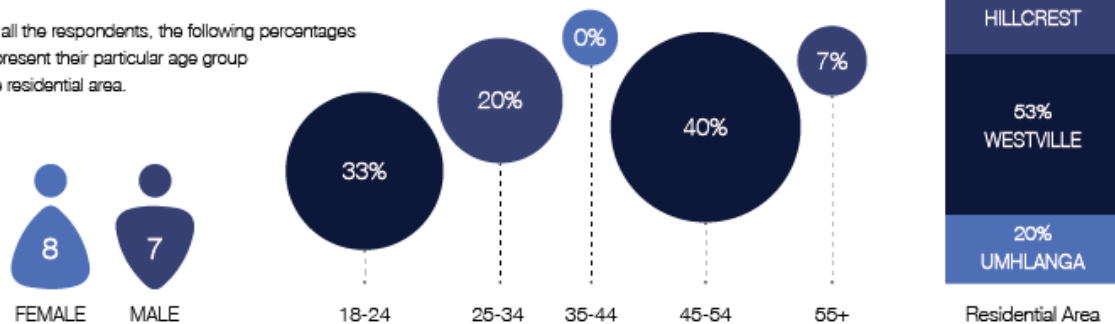


Figure 4.1: Demographics of Respondents

Above, is a visual diagram provided of the gender, age and residential area of all respondents who participated in this study. From the 15 respondents, 8 were female and 7 were male. It can be seen that there was a fairly balanced ratio of young adult and mature adults. However, the residential stats were slightly unbalanced due to limitations the researcher faced when conducting the research, as mentioned in chapter three.

4.3.2 Results and Discussion of General Consumers

Below is a presentation of the results captured from the respondents who participated in this study. The results have been presented in a table or diagram format with an in-depth discussion of the presented findings. The discussions represent all data collected; only when there was a significant difference in views between certain demographics has it been commented on.



Figure 4.3: Word Cloud of the Common Findings to why Respondents are Loyalty to Particular FMCG Products

Reasons for why general consumers are extremely brand loyal to particular FMCG brands or products:

- “I’ve grown up using these products”
- “Good balance between taste/quality and price”
- “Preferred taste” or quality over competitors
- “I am extremely particular on what brands I support”, “cruelty free, environmentally friendly and I like to support local”
- “It has become a habit”
- “Brands/products meet my needs”

Reasons for why general consumers brand loyalty to particular FMCG brands or products can be switched:

- “Normally buy the same brand, except when there is a massive price premium or opposition brands run attractive promotions”
- “Would switch based on price”

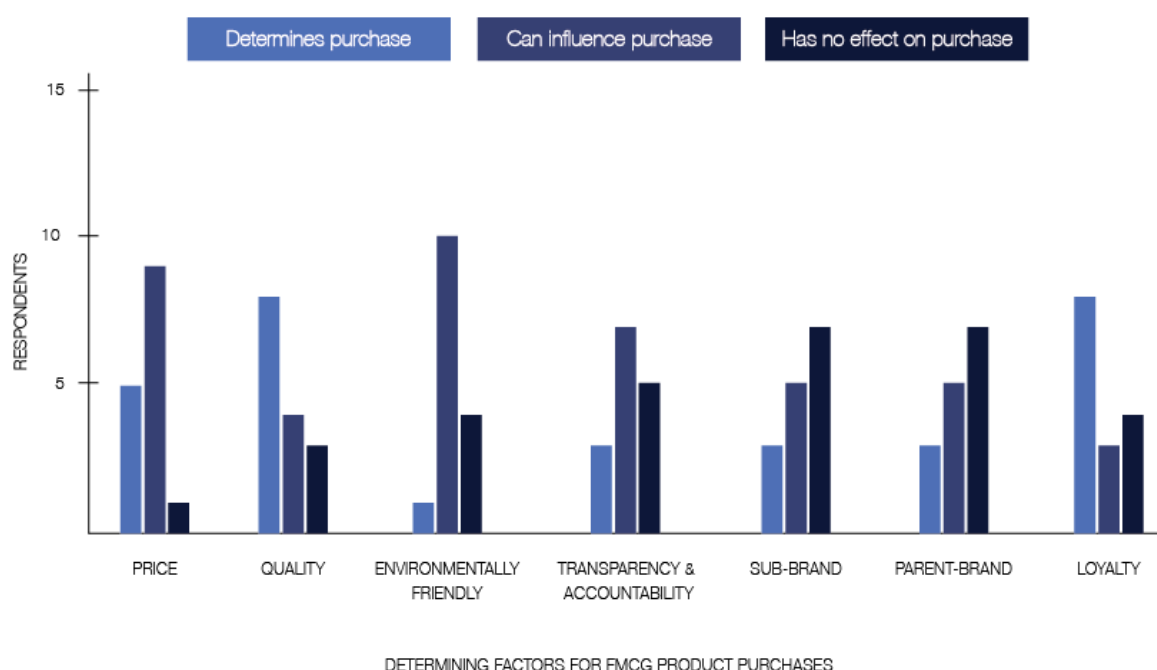
Reasons for why general consumers are not brand loyal to particular brands or products:

- “These items are very price driven”

QUESTION 3: When purchasing FMCG products, which holds more value or is the deciding factor?

Below is a tabulated representation of the data collected for question 3 within the interview schedule. The findings have been further analysed through a narrative approach where themes and patterns were identified.

Table 4.2: Determining Factors for FMCG Product Purchases



Price & Quality:

Through the analysis of the above findings, Table 4.2, a common theme appeared, where respondents based their purchase decisions on the quality of the product vs the price of the product. Most of the respondents felt price was an influential factor when purchasing FMCG products, however the quality held more value within the purchasing process. Thus, purchasing decisions are based on the consumer's perceived value of a product; how much a consumer is willing to pay for the quality received (Investopedia, 2017).

Environmentally Friendly, Transparency & Accountability:

The respondents see these (environmental, transparency and accountability) aspects as determining factors that can ultimately influence their future purchasing decisions, as 'sustainability' has become an increasing trend within the global market, not only within consumer's lives but within the corporate sphere too (Simem, 2015).

Sub-Brand & Parent-Brand:

It was determined that the respondents bought into the physical product itself, and not based on the products connection to its sub-brand and/or parent-brand. However, any negative or positive associations towards the sub-brand or parent-brand can influence the respondents purchasing decisions towards a particular FMCG product.

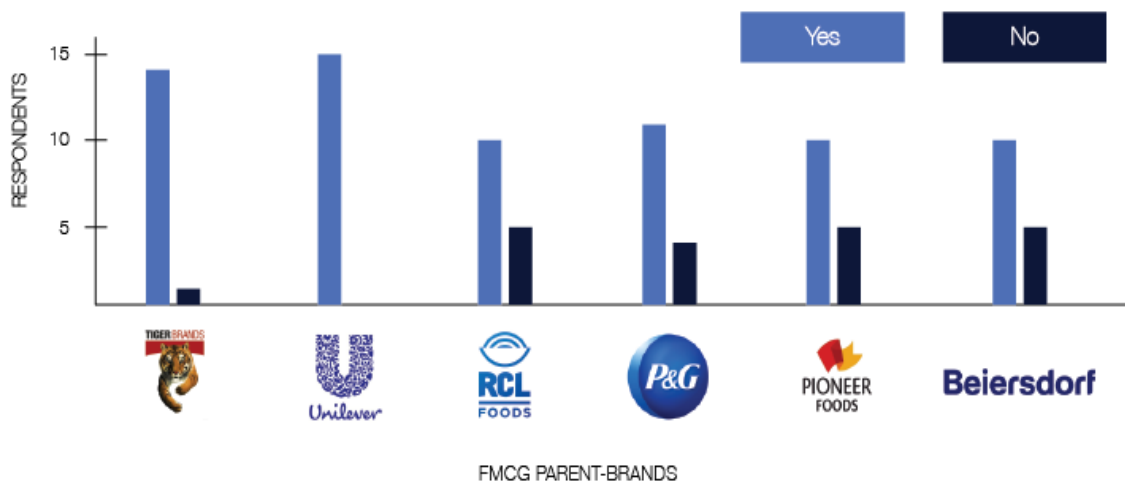
Loyalty:

Most of the respondents are loyal to particular FMCG products, according to the analysis of the above findings, see Table 4.2 above.

QUESTION 4: Have you heard of the following FMCG parent brand's (owner/manufactures)?

Below is a tabulated representation of the data collected for question 4, identifying whether consumers are aware of the selected six FMCG parent-brands. All findings have been further analysed through a narrative approach for further explanation.

Table 4.3: FMCG Parent-Brand Awareness



A common theme was identified through the analysis of the above findings, were consumers are increasingly becoming more aware of the manufactures or Parent-Brands within the FMCG market. It was clearly identified that all respondents are aware of the Unilever brand name and its role as a parent-brand or manufacture for many FMCG products within the South African market.

QUESTION 5: From the FMCG parent brands listed above and your general knowledge, list who owns/manufactures the following FMCG products (please don't Google, honesty is key). If you are unsure, have a guess.

Knowledge of Unilever's Sub-Brands

3 well known and advertised sub-brands within Unilever were selected, along with other FMCG products, such as Old Spice, Ouma and Nivea.



Figure 4.4: Respondents Knowledge of Unilever's Sub-Brands

Above, is a visual diagram representing the respondent's general knowledge towards FMCG parent-brand companies and which sub-brands they manufactured or owned. Through the analysis of question 4, it is clear respondents are aware of the parent-brands within the FMCG market. However, a common thread was found through the analysis of question 5, where the respondents hold little knowledge of which FMCG sub-brands are owned or manufactured by which parent-brand companies.

QUESTION 6: Would knowing who owns/ manufactures the FMCG brands you purchase affect your loyalty towards them? Explain your answer.

A common thread developed throughout the analysis of the findings; where respondents stated knowing who actually owns or manufactures the FMCG brands they purchases would not affect their loyalty towards those brands, or shift their loyalty towards a particular parent-brand's offerings. As the respondents purchase FMCG products based on their associations and loyalty towards selected sub-brands, irrespective of the manufacturer.



Figure 4.5: Word Cloud of the Common Findings to why the Respondents Loyalty Would or Would Not Be Affected by knowing the Manufacture

General consumers who felt that knowing the parent-brand would not affect towards their brand loyalty towards the sub-brands:

- “Many people are only familiar with the brand and not the manufacture”
- “Big corporates with impressive portfolios and networks, does not mean that the tangible product I buy will undergo a better quality control”
- “It’s about what the intrinsic of the product offers not the manufacture”
- “No, I’m loyal to the immediate product not the owners”
- “Irrespective of who manufactures them. If quality is good, then I will buy those products”
- “No, the price and quality of the product are the only influencing factors”

General consumers who felt that knowing the parent-brand would affect their brand loyalty towards the sub-brands:

- “You know you are purchasing a quality manufactured product”
- “Yes, as I do not support brands that test on animals”
- “Yes, if there is a new or unknown brand that I am unsure of, it would help to know it was a ‘Unilever brand’, as I may be inclined to trust and trial the brand”

QUESTION 7: What is your perception of Unilever as a brand? Is it positive or negative, explain your answer.

Through the analysis of the respondent's perception towards Unilever as a brand, it was clear that there was an extremely positive association tied to the brand. A common theme developed, where the respondents view Unilever as a well-established, quality driven brand that has shifted their operational strategies to become a more eco-friendly and sustainable company, not only externally with the products that are manufactured, but internally with employees and surrounding communities.

Although, Unilever has implemented a sustainable operational system that is bettering the environment as well as the lives of humans. A portion of the respondents, view Unilever negatively, where a common theme that founded. The brands lack of transparency, as these respondents believe the brand still focuses on profit driven activities, as well as adopting animal testing approaches within many sub-brands.



Figure 4.6: Word Cloud on the Respondents perception towards Unilever as a Brand

General consumers who view Unilever as a positive brand:

- "Well known company"
- "Manufactures premium quality at a premium price"
- "Appears to be doing good in the communities and being more eco aware"
- "I think corporate governance and eco-friendly products are important"
- "Seem to have major market share with their products"
- "Caring and honest"
- "Large, renowned, quality driven"

General consumers who view Unilever as a negative brand:

- “Another monopoly that sings about saving the planet but still focus on its bottom line over all else”
- “The brand tests on animals and attempts to ‘cover it up’ by doing good for humans. They are not 100% transparent”

QUESTION 8: Have you seen the Unilever logo appear within advertisements of any of the above products? (see examples below) Please be honest.



Figure 4.7: Number of Respondents who have seen the Unilever Endorsement Advertisements

Above, is a visual diagram representing the respondent's physical engagement with the endorsed advertisements, where Unilever displays their logo within the sub-brands advertisement. A common theme that arose, many respondents had not come into contact with advertisement that displayed the Unilever logo; identifying the endorsed connection between the sub-brands and parent-brand.

QUESTION 9: Now knowing which FMCG brands are owned by Unilever, does the attachment or endorsement if the Unilever brand name affect your purchasing decisions towards any of those sub-brands? Has this impacted your perceived brand equity (as defined above) towards these sub-brands? Explain your answer.

Once the respondent were aware of all 37 South African sub-brands within the Unilever portfolio, there were two distinguishing themes that arose. Firstly, many of the respondents felt that the Unilever endorsement would not affect their brand equity towards the individual sub-brands. It can also be said, that the respondents were not discouraged to purchase these sub-brands due to the endorsement. As the respondents purchase with these sub-brands based on the quality and trust they have built with each individual sub-brand, and not based on the parent-brands brand equity. Secondly, through the analysis of the findings the Unilever endorsement enhanced the sub-brands brand equity for some of the respondents. Where their perceived brand equity of Unilever as a brand was transferred to each individual sub-brand once the respondents were aware of the relationship. Reinforcing Unilever's sustainable and quality driven brand image (identified within question 7) within each sub-brand.

Thus, the common themes suggest that the respondents brand equity towards the individual sub-brands within the Unilever portfolio was not negatively affected by the endorsement in any way, their brand equity either increased or remained the same.



Figure 4.8: Word Cloud of the Common Findings to why the Respondents Perceived Brand Quality Would or Would Not Be Affected by the Unilever Endorsement

Reasons for why general consumers believe their perceived brand equity towards the sub-brands has not been affected by the Unilever endorsement:

- “The sub-brand is what carries the quality. People trust the sub-brand even if they are unaware of the manufacture”
- “If the products are good quality, the manufacturer is irrelevant”
- “Each of these brands have their own reputation and standard of quality. The endorsement would only have a swaying factor if the sub-brand was new, building on Unilever's credibility”
- “My preference lies with the products itself and not the manufacture”

Reasons for why general consumers believe their perceived brand equity towards the sub-brands has been affected by the Unilever endorsement:

- “Generally support Unilever brands, knowing which brands they own increases my loyalty towards the sub-brands”
- “Yes, I suppose I big group like Unilever being on the packaging / endorsing a product creates a sense of trust because I know it cannot be a fly by night product and must be of some worth”
- “Unilever represents quality, so they [sub-brands] must be quality products”

QUESTION 10: Do you feel all FMCG parent-brands should publicly state which FMCG sub-brands they own? (This can be achieved through advertising and placement of their logo on each product) Explain your answer.

Through the analysis of the following data, it was identified that many respondents strongly believe all FMCG parent-brands should visually represent its connection with each sub-brand. Two common threads with developed through this analysis, where respondents firstly, believe every consumer has the right to know who own or manufacturers the brands or product they purchase. Secondly, it would create a deeper sense of transparency within the consumer's eyes.

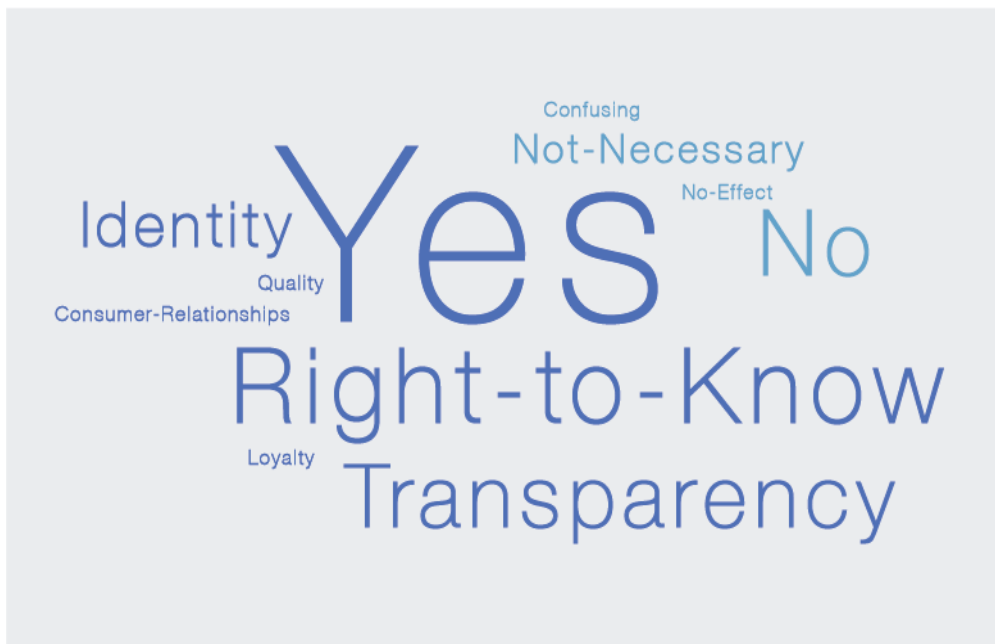


Figure 4.9: Word Cloud on the Respondents view towards FMCG parent-brand's publicly endorsing their sub-brands

General consumers who felt that FMCG parent-brands should publicly advertise which sub-brands they own:

- “Yes, I feel it is the consumer's right to know”
- “Yes, especially if the parent-brand stands for quality, shows more transparency”
- “Global corporate mergers are so large these days that consumers never know who the parent company is”
- “Yes, as it helps me to determine which brands I will support or not”
- “I might be more willing to buy products with their [Unilever] brand on it”
- “Yes, ensures full transparency”
- “Consumers should be fully informed of what they are purchasing”
- “Yes, if they [parent-brand] value transparency. And If their end goal is ultimate brand loyalty and building good customer relationships”

General consumers who felt that FMCG parent-brands don't need to publicly advertise which sub-brands they own:

- “No, can become confusing, as long as the manufacture name is on the label”
- “No, not necessarily, won't change anything for me”
- “No, it does not matter to me”

4.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY OF THE FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter 3, the four criteria's that a researcher needs to considered for a qualitative research, are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981, Cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016). All four criteria were applied by the researcher throughout the entire study, including the data collection and data analysis sections. Credibility and dependability were achieved and ensure by both researcher and supervisor, through consistent communication via email as well as physical appointments. Transferability was implemented by the researcher through the in-depth analysis of the study's purpose, research design as well as the selection of the participants. Confirmability was ensured by the research throughout the study, by engaging in regular communicating with the supervisor and peers.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter focused on qualitative results, all findings were presented, interpreted and discussed. The findings were relevant, interesting and informative. From the findings it was clear, all respondents were loyal to the sub-brands they purchase, and not to the parent-brand. However, they strongly felt that all parent-brands should publicly identify the sub-brands they own, as consumers have the right to know all details relating to the FMCG products they purchase, as well as creating greater transparency and building brand loyalty towards the parent-brand itself. Although this was a small-scale qualitative study, the findings captured were in-depth and well elaborated on, that provided a perspective that can often be missed during quantitative studies. The chapter to follow, Chapter 5, provides recommendations and conclusions drawn from the results of this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The conclusions and recommendations of the research are presented, in relation to each research objective set in Chapter 1. Findings are presented and drawn on literature presented in Chapter 2 and primary research discussed in Chapter 4, followed by a conclusion and recommendation for each research objective. In addition, suggestions for further research have been considered and a closing comment ends the chapter.

5.2 OBJECTIVE ONE

To determine if the perception of the sub-brands changed after the endorsement shift, thus has stronger brand equity been created through an increase in brand association with both brand names.

5.2.1 Findings from Literature

Research shows that the Endorsed Dualithic Structure enables the independent brands to maintain the driving role within the consumer's purchase decisions, while leveraging off the parent-brands brand image and brand equity, which either enhances or lessens the consumers perceived image of the sub-brand (Klopper, 2014, p129-135) (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). This is due to the parent-brand's (endorser) perceived qualities, personalities and attributes being transferred to the sub-brand (endorsed). Brand endorsements assist in growing a brand's awareness as well as profits, due to the positive perception consumers hold towards the endorser brand, however these endorsements can be negatively affect. Especially the brand equity of both parent-brand and sub-brand, as the customer's perception and association of either the endorser brand or endorsed brand can hold negative aspects, resulting in total rejection of both brands (Roll, 2012).

Although Unilever began its sustainable approach in 2004, through the redesign of the brands identity and internal operations. The structural shift within the organisations portfolio launched in 2010, as the brand wanted the "world to know the Unilever name" to the same extent of its sub-brands (Voight, 2015), as well as easily identifying the sustainable when purchasing FMCG products. Ultimately changing the consumer's perception and knowledge towards the Unilever brand name.

5.2.2 Findings from Primary Research

Through the data analysis of the respondent's perception towards Unilever as a brand, it was found that many of the respondents held highly positive associations with the brand, although there were negative associations. The two main associations that were identified, positive and negative. Firstly, Unilever is seen as a quality driven brand that implements sustainable operates, both internally and externally. Secondly, regardless of the 'doing-good' image the brand has built within the minds of the consumers, a few respondents feel Unilever lacks in full transparency throughout many aspects within the organisation.

Although the respondents held mainly positive perceptions and associations towards the parent-brand, Unilever, it was identified that this had little positive effect to no negative effect on the respondent's perceptions and associations towards the individual sub-brands. Firstly, the findings showed that the respondents purchased these sub-brands based on the quality and trust they have accumulated with the sub-brands through positive interactions and experiences, building a strong brand image within the minds of the consumer. Secondly, the findings showed that the positive image and associations the respondents held towards Unilever as a brand were transferred onto the sub-brands. As the respondents were more likely to purchase a Unilever sub-brand due to the sustainable and quality driven equity the brands holds within the minds of the consumer.

5.2.3 Conclusion

Through the qualitative research findings, it became apparent that the respondents had identified Unilever as a sustainable organisation with quality products. However, this brand image and association towards Unilever as a brand has not fully transferred or added to the brand equity of the individual sub-brands within the respondent's minds. Therefore, the perception of the sub-brands has not changed due to the endorsement shift. Resulting in little to no change within the brand equity created between both parent-brand and sub-brand.

5.2.4 Recommendations

A larger scale study is needed to determine whether the endorsement shift has positively impacted the general consumer's perceptions towards the sub-brands, as a small scale qualitative study cannot be generalised to the total population.

Considering the findings are a true reflection, it is recommended that brand focus on building the brand equity of Unilever within each sub-brand, through positive association between both brands. This can be achieved through Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model, building on the third step; brand response. By creating consistent positive

consumer-brand experiences with the Unilever brand name builds trust, and leads to stronger bond between the brand and the consumer. A strong customer-brand relationship builds brand loyalty and strengthens a brand's brand equity. (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Brand Loyalty is a key element to building brand equity. Thus, increasing the consumer's trust and loyalty within the Unilever brand name, results in stronger brand equity between both parent and sub brands.

5.3 OBJECTIVE TWO

To determine whether consumer purchase decisions have been positively impacted through the endorsement of the manufacturer (Unilever).

5.3.1 Findings from Literature

According to the research, Unilever's strategy shift began with the redesign of the logo and visual identity in 2004. However, it wasn't until 2010 that the parent-brand publicly endorsed its sub-brands through marketing pieces, previously the brand relied on its logo placement on each product offering as a means of communicating the parent-brand and sub-brand connection. The endorsement from Unilever, communicated the brands sustainable direction it has embarked on. According to Wolff Olins (2010), the implementation of the new identity has proven successful for four consecutive years, increasing operating profits at an average rate of 15%. Thus encouraging the endorsement strategic shift, from a Multilithic structure to a Dualithic structure.

From the literature findings, many authors discussed the advantages of implementing an Endorsed Dualithic structure. It was stated that the endorsers perceived qualities, personalities and attributes are transfused to the endorsed brand; which can positively affect the customers purchasing decisions based on the customer's association of the endorser brand, as it gives the customer a sense of familiarity and added benefits (Roll, 2012). Brand endorsements assist in growing brand awareness for the parent-brand as well as creating stronger brand equity between both the endorser and the endorsed.

5.3.2 Findings from Primary Research

Throughout the data collection it was clear that many of the respondents had not come into contact with the selected sub-brand's (Axe, Knorr and Vaseline) advertisements that displayed the Unilever logo, often in the top corners. Therefore, the respondents are not consistently engaging or identifying the connection between the sub-brand and parent-brand. This finding can be supported by the fact the respondents purchase many of their FMCG products based on their associations and loyalty towards individual sub-brands

within the market, irrespective of the manufacturer. Although, the consumer's brand awareness around the Unilever brand name is well-known, the consumer's loyalty and trust within the sub-brand out weights the impact the parent-brand endorsement has over the consumers purchased decision.

5.3.3 Conclusion

Through literature and field study it was clear, the findings were not aligned, as the consumers purchasing decisions have not been positively impacted though the endorsement of the parent-brand, Unilever. As the consumers purchasing decisions are not made based on the manufacture or parent-brand of the FMCG product, but on the actual quality, trust and loyalty the consumer hold with the sub-brand.

5.3.4 Recommendations

From the literature, it is clear that the strategy shift had not negatively impacted the success of either parent-brand or sub-brand. Due to the new identity and strategy shift, the Unilever has not only increased its operations ever year, but the sub-brands have grown in market share. Therefore, there has been a positive impact within the marketplace with regards to the consumer purchases decisions. However, with Unilever being an international brand, these results are due to a worldwide impact. It is recommended that the study is investigated further not only within the entire South African Market but also within the international market.

5.4 OBJECTIVE THREE

To determine whether consumers are aware, which 'house-of-brands' (Unilever/RCL Foods) house their products.

5.4.1 Findings from Literature

From 2004, Unilever began its strategic shift through the development of a new visual identity as well as a new internal organisational structure based on sustainable marketing. By 2014, Unilever furthered its sustainable strategy through its marketing initiatives, by implementing the Unilever "U" logo onto every marketing piece for each sub-brand, worldwide. The implementation of the parent-brands identity into each marketing piece allowed the general consumers to identify those products as sustainable FMCG products and part of the Unilever family. According to Weed (CMO) (Cited in: Voight, 2015), Unilever furthered its strategy shift due to the brand "wanting the world to know the Unilever name as well as those of its goods."

5.4.2 Findings from Primary Research

Through primary research it was identified that the respondents were fully aware of the Unilever brand name within the FMCG marketplace, in relation to the other FMCG parent-brands. However, many of respondents were unable to identify from the selected FMCG product which belonged to the Unilever family, as well as those of other FMCG parent-brands.

5.4.3 Conclusion

Although the parent-brand, Unilever has built a strong brand awareness within the market place compared to other FMCG parent-brands. The interaction and connection Unilever holds with each sub-brand is not known to the general consumers. Therefore, it is evident that the general consumers are not aware of who owns or manufactures the FMCG products they purchase on a daily to monthly basis.

5.4.4 Recommendations

A large scaled quantitative study is needed to determine the full extent of whether or not general consumers within the South African market are aware of the FMCG parent-brands that own or house the products they purchase.

5.5 OBJECTIVE FOUR

To evaluate whether brand loyalty lies in the customer's brand image of the manufacturer or the individual sub-brands. Thus, should FMCG organisations endorse their sub-brands to increase their customer brand loyalty and brand equity.

5.5.1 Findings from Literature

An effective brand strategy is developed when an organisation understands and adopts the appropriate strategy that will enhance and grow the overall organisation, both parent-brand and its sub-brands. The movement from an independent brand strategy to a more holistic and linked strategy has been a common trend with in modern brand strategy and management landscape. As brands are striving to be known within a cluttered marketplace (Savić, 2013).

According to Keller (2008, In Bick, 2014) the benefits of building strong brand equity aids two sides, the consumers and the organisation. For the consumers, it enhances the evaluation and purchasing of products, which leads to value added to the consumer's experience with the both brand, Parent and Sub. For the organisation it strengthens its

competitive advantage, therefore providing added financial value to the entire brand. Brand equity is measured based on the customer's brand knowledge, awareness and perception of the brand, based on quality and price, which leads to brand loyalty and repurchasing behaviours. This brand loyalty can be positively enhanced or negatively affect through an endorsement strategy shifts. (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

5.5.2 Findings from Primary Research

From the findings, the Unilever brand name has built a strong brand image within the minds of the general consumers, as the respondents from the brand to be of quality in both its product offerings as well as its operations. The brand was seen as a well-established, quality and sustainable driven organisation, although some found the brand to be lacking in full transparency. A common thread developed, where respondents stated that knowing the parent-brand of FMCG products they purchase would not shift their loyalty towards a particular parent-brand's offerings. As the respondents purchase FMCG products based on their associations and loyalty towards selected sub-brands, irrespective of the manufacturer.

However, it was also identified that many respondents strongly believe all FMCG parent-brands should visually represent its connection with each sub-brand. As it is believed that the general consumers have the right to know who own or manufacturers the brands or product they purchase. While creating a deeper sense of transparency within the consumer's eyes.

5.5.3 Conclusion

Through the qualitative findings, it became apparent that general consumers want more transparency and accountability from all brands within the marketplace. It is also evident that this transparency and endorsement from the parent-brand to the sub-brand won't necessarily impact the consumer's decision process, by selecting a product based on its parent-brand association. However, though consistent consumer-brand interactions between the parent-brand and the general consumer, it is possible to build customer's brand knowledge, awareness and perception towards the parent brand resulting in a strong brand equity. This equity will eventually be transferred to the sub-brand and ultimately influencing the consumer purchasing decisions as discussed by many theorists within Chapter 2.

5.5.4 Recommendations

Again, a wide scale study throughout the South African market is necessary to ensure a true reflection of the entire population loyalty lies with the sub-brand when making FMCG

product purchasing decision. However, through positive interactions and associations between the parent-brand and the consumer, trust towards the parent-brand will be formed. Creating a strong brand equity towards the parent-brand that will ultimately be transferred onto its sub-brands within the consumer's mind.

Due to Unilever's market growth and increasing profits, it is evident the strategic shift was effective for both parent-brand and sub-brands. It has led to a wide spread brand awareness within the marketplace, while building the general consumers trust and loyalty, though more transparent actions and operations. Based on the analysis its evident that a strategic shift from other FMCG parent-brands would only benefit operations and consumer-brand relationships.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are two suggestions for further researcher; firstly, it is suggested that a larger study is conducted through both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This will allow for a more accurate representation of the general consumer's perception towards the Unilever strategy shift and the impact it had created towards the sub-brands within the brand portfolio. Secondly, the study should be analysed from another point of view, determined how the strategy shift has effect the parent-brands image due to negative associations with its sub-brands. Such as the latest Dove scandal, where the brand was accused of racial messages within its advertisings (Buckley, 2017).

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The descriptive qualitative study looked at the effect the strategy shift within Unilever has had on its sub-brands brand equity. Determining whether or not the shift supported the literature studies; building brand equity for both parent-brand and sub-brand though the endorsement of a strong parent-brand image (Klopper, 2014, p129).

The research had proven that although the Unilever brand name is known and holding positive association within the minds of the general consumers - creating synergy between both the brand identity and brand image -, the general consumers rely on their brand loyalty, brand trust and untimely the brand equity they have built with the individual sub-brands, irrespective of the parent-brand, when purchasing FMCG products. Thus, contradicting the literature findings, as an Endorsed Dualithic structure is designed to enhance both brand equities' for the parent-brand and sub-brand. Through adding an assurance of quality and credibility from one brand to the other, increasing the consumer's perception and confidence towards the sub-brands or endorsed brand.

The literature concerning the problem and the objectives was presented and a sound research plan was developed. An interview schedule was composed based on the literature and respondents were canvassed. Appropriate findings were made and suitable conclusions were arrived at, with support from literature. This has ensured sound recommendations have been made that will be of value to Unilever as well as other FMCG parent-companies that look to adjust the strategic portfolio structure, creating a systematic approach to building the parent-brand name, within the minds of the consumers, ensuring the brand equity, brand image and brand loyalty for both parent-brand is transferred to the sub-brand, positively altering the consumers purchasing decisions.

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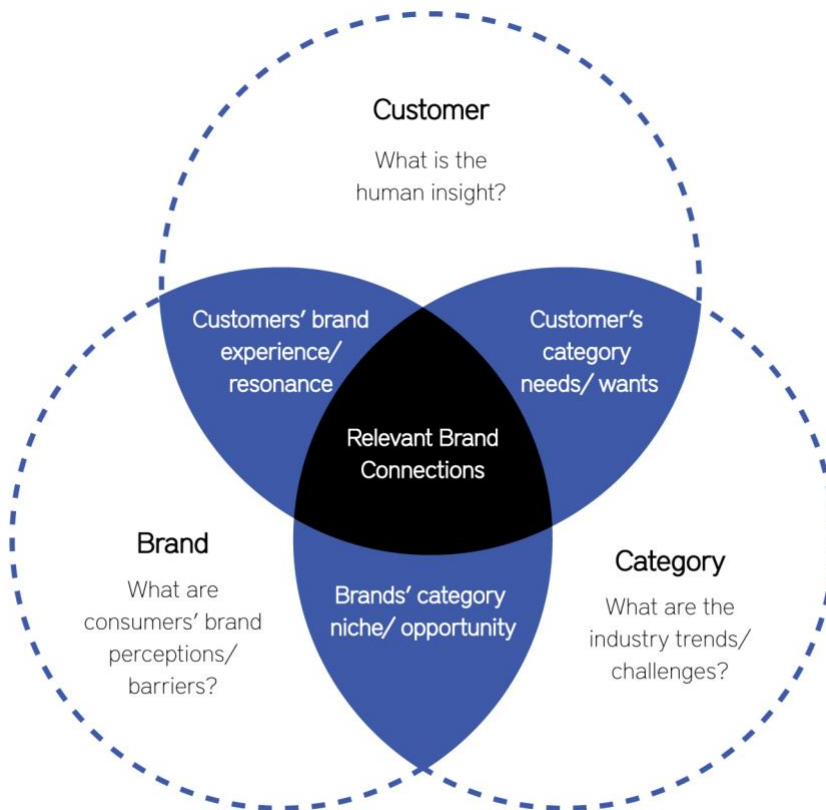
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APPENDIX A: Brand Connections



Relevant Brand Connections

Source: Kessler SF (2008)

APPENDIX B: Unilever Campaign



Dove-Deo (Rankin, 2013)



Axe-Anarchy-Petrol (LeMoigne, 2012)



Omotola-Knorr (Bellanaija, 2015)



Vaseline-Leaf (Gerard & Facade, 2013)

APPENDIX C: Coca-Cola's 'One Brand' strategy shift

**FOUR OPTIONS
SAME GREAT
FEELING**



ENJOY THE FEELING™

Coca-Cola-As-You-Like-It (ShowMe, 2016)



One Brand Coca-Cola Packaging Design. (Coca-Cola Journey, 2016)

APPENDIX D: Unilever Product Logo's



Unilever Product Logo (Wolff Olins, 2010)

APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

Demographic:

Gender

Male	Female
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Age

15 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55+
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The following definitions will guide you concerning the questions asked.

FMCG Products: Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) or consumer packaged goods (CPG) are frequently purchased essential or non-essential goods. Such as packaged foods, beverages, toiletries, home cleaning products, ect.

Parent-Brand: Is a separate brand that houses or manufactures a number of individual sub-brands. It is purposely created to stand alone and be independent from the sub-brands within the portfolio. It is often unseen.

Sub-Brand: Is a product or service that is related to a parent brand (owner/manufacture), but has its own brand name and identity.

Brand Image: A perception held by an individual, that is created through either positive or negative experiences with a brand.

Brand Loyalty: A commitment to repurchasing of a preferred brand and of recommending it to others.

Brand Equity: Viewed as the inherent or perceived value of a brand, which depends on the customers' experiences over time and their perceptions of the brand that are created by positive and negative experiences. Brand equity depends on the brand being trusted, which results in loyalty and as a consequence a brand image is created. This gives a brand either strong or weak brand equity.

Please answer as fully as possible, explaining each answer.

Interview Schedule

1. List your top FMCG brands/products you purchase on a weekly to monthly bases.
2. Are you brand loyal (as defined above), when it comes to purchasing these FMCG products?
Explain your answer.
3. When purchasing FMCG products, which hold more value or is the deciding factor?

	Determines purchase	Can influence purchase	Has no effect on purchase
Price			
Quality			
Transparency & Accountability (sustainable operations)			
Environmentally friendly			
Brand name (of the physical product)			
Manufacture name (who own/manufactures the brands you purchase)			
Loyalty (Its a brand your family has always use)			

4. Are you aware of who owns/manufactures the FMCG brands/products you purchase?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Have you heard of the following FMCG parent brands (owner/manufactures)?

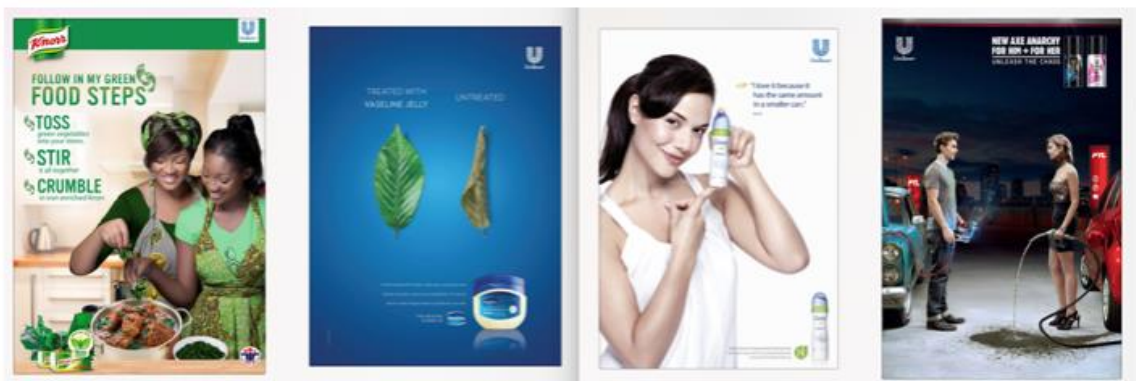
	Yes	No
Tiger brands		
Unilever		
RCL Foods		
P&G (Procter and Gamble)		
pioneer foods		
Biersdorf		

6. From the FMCG parent brands listed above and your general knowledge, list who owns/manufactures the following FMCG products (please don't Google, honestly is key). If you are unsure, have a guess.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
					

	Tiger brands	Unilever	RCL Foods	P&G	Pioneer Foods	Biersdorf
Axe						
Old Spice						
Knorr						
Ouma						
Nivea						
Vaseline						

7. What is your perception of Unilever as a brand? Is it positive or negative, explain your answer.
8. Have you seen the Unilever logo appear within advertisements of any of the above products? (see examples below) Please be honest.
- Yes
 - No





9. Now knowing which FMCG brands are owned by Unilever, has this impacted your perceived brand equity (as defined above) towards these brands? Would you still purchase these brands, or would it encourage you to purchase these brands now? Explain your answer.

10. Do you feel all FMCG parent brands should publicly state which FMCG brands they own? (This can be achieved through advertising and placement of their logo on each product) Explain your answer.

APPENDIX F: Consent Form

VEGA School of Brand Leadership

Honours: Strategic Brand Communication Research Dissertation

Researcher: Jayd Twiddy (083 23 54 100)

Supervisor: Sharon Ballack (072 47 33 499)

Dear Respondent,

My name is Jayd Twiddy. I am an honours student at Vega School of Brand Leadership and in order to complete my qualification, it is essential that I conduct an in-depth research study. I invite you to participate in my research project entitled; ***Exploring the Customer Perception, Unilever's Dualithic Approach has had on its Sub-Brands Brand Equity***. The aim of this study is to analyse consumer perceptions of brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity, in relation to Unilever's brand strategy shift, from a Multilithic approach to a Dualithic approach.

Through your participation I hope to discover whether the strategy shift has had a positive influence on Unilever, as a brand and its sub-brands. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey/focus group.

Confidentiality and anonymity of all records identifying you as a respondent is assured. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact myself or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. My supervisor will ensure that I comply with all the terms of consent and with all ethical requirements. The interview should take you about **20-30 minutes to complete**. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW

I, _____ (Participants Name) have read the information presented to me in a language that I understand. I understand the implications of participating in the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied that they have been adequately addressed. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate and that I can withdraw from the interview at any time. I hereby volunteer to take part in this interview.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name & Surname:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX G: Ethical Clearance



25 July 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and ethical considerations were reviewed by your supervisor and moderated by the campus research panel.

☒ Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns. We hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your research methodology.

OR

☐ Your research proposal posed the following minor concern:
Please mention how your research design will address this issue:

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

Supervisor Name:

Sharon Ballack

Supervisor Signature:

Sharon Ballack

Campus Anchor Name:

Alec Bozas

Campus Anchor Signature:

Alec Bozas

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