



An Exploratory Study of Woolworths Consumer's Post-Covid Food Waste Behaviour

by

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Abstract

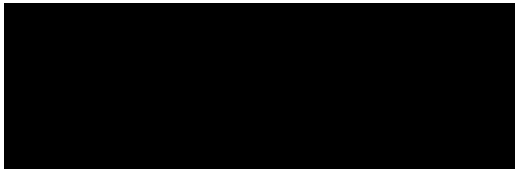
Food waste is a widespread global issue that negatively impacts people, economies, the environment and society (Liljestrand, 2017). In order for modern brands to remain relevant, they are expected to become more responsible, so as to be seen as meaningful and as brands with purpose (Wieland, 2017). These brands need to be committed to the integration of the needs of their stakeholders, their well-being, sustainability and the creation of shared value (Cook, Erwin, Carmody & Enslin, 2010). Thus, using an interpretivist paradigm which took a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the study aimed to explore post-covid food waste behaviours from the perspective of eight Woolworths consumers based in Johannesburg, South Africa. A thematic analysis was used to identify four primary themes, namely, consumer brand preference, post-covid food waste behaviours, Woolworth's food waste strategies and Woolworth's brand impact and purpose.

The findings of the study indicated that although food waste was viewed as negative and irresponsible, many of Woolworths' consumers believed that Covid-19 resulted in a dramatic increase, with the sweeping behavioural changes on both a consumer and retailer level being identified as the cause. Furthermore, most consumers felt that Woolworths helped to minimise food waste both at home and in-store through a variety of strategies and initiatives, as outlined in the waste hierarchy framework. These findings suggested that Woolworths is seen as a positive, meaningful and purposeful brand which stands for more than just profit, especially within a post-covid context. Moreover, the findings suggested that Woolworths should focus on educating consumers on the brand's contributions to local communities and how Woolworths works to reduce food waste through their various strategies and initiatives. Additionally, the findings implied there is a lack of knowledge surrounding the topic and indicates that it is important for further large-scale and culturally-specific research to be conducted in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic, to raise consumer awareness and to uncover the best ways to avoid food waste.

Keywords: food waste, post-covid food waste, Woolworths, South Africa, food waste behaviours, meaningful brands, brands with purpose.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the Postgraduate Diploma in Brand Building to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.



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1. Introduction & Context of the Study

Around 1.3 billion tonnes of food which accounts for one-third of all food produced globally is wasted each year (Berners-Lee, 2019). Galanakis (2020) and Luu (2020) both argue that this creates a major sustainability challenge for the entire food supply chain which can affect all sectors and stakeholders involved. Food waste can be seen as food which is discarded at any stage of the supply chain that is fit for human consumption, whether it is due to spoilage or it not meeting standards of retailers or consumers (Liljestrand, 2017; The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2019).

Food waste can be seen as a complex global issue that is detrimental to energy consumption, resource use and economic activities such as costing and procurement (Liljestrand, 2017). Therefore, this affects not only the environment and society as a whole but also businesses and brands who operate within the food supply chain. Rundle-Thiele, Kim and Knox (2019) argues that food waste is a systemic issue, with wastage occurring throughout all stages of food production and consumption; including the post-harvest phases, processing, packaging, transportation, retail and at the consumer level. However, the highest levels of waste can be seen occurring at the retail and consumer levels (FAO, 2019). The co-chair of the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA), Ackerman (2019) expresses that at least 30% of all local agriculture in South Africa (SA), equating to 10 million tonnes of food production is wasted annually. According to the Daily Maverick (2020), in SA, the country produces enough food to feed all of its citizens, however this is in stark contrast to the 20 million people who are seen as food insecure within country.

Furthermore, since the Covid-19 pandemic began in early 2020, the issue of food waste has only grown more severe (Norris, Taylor & Taylor, 2021). Pappalardo, Cerroni, Nayga and Yang (2020) assert that Covid-19 and the subsequent global lockdowns greatly affected consumer's food purchasing and consumption habits. The pandemic created a sense of uncertainty and increased fears of food supply disruptions, which in turn caused consumers to over purchase perishable food products; leading to an increase in food waste and pressure on food supply chains (Pappalardo, *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, according to Wiese, Zielke and Toporowski (2015), branding with purpose, especially in the context of food waste management is becoming an increasingly important factor for consumers when they consider purchasing from or engaging with brands and retail chains like Woolworths. Cook *et al.*, (2010) believes that brands are powerful assets which if used correctly can make meaningful changes in the lives of consumers. However, brands which neglect to align with consumer values and expectations for meaningful brands, risk damaging their bottom-line and reputation among consumers (Wieland, 2017).

Thus, as stated by Fiore (2020), Woolworths (2021), Ellison and Kalaitzandonakes (2020), this leaves a gap for research to explore post Covid-19 consumer behaviours in terms of their food waste practices; as gaining an in-depth understanding of this topic is vital for brands to continue their successes in preventing retail and consumer level food waste and can help to ensure correct strategies are implemented which effectively reduce food waste through education and awareness.

Additionally, although studies around similar topics have been conducted before by authors like Ackerman (2019) and Fiore (2020) the topic has received insufficient academic attention to-date. Specifically, within developing countries and research dealing with the consumer and retailer perspectives being rare, especially through an interpretivist's lens in terms of an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviours, within a South African and post Covid-19 context. This further indicates a need for a study such as this and showcasing it could be useful in reducing food scarcity and improving brands like Woolworths' overall sustainability (Parker, Sikobi & Jones, 2020).

2. Problem Statement

Food waste is a problem which affects people on a global scale and has a large impact on food security, energy consumption, resource use and economic activities such as costing and procurement (Liljestrand, 2017). SA produces enough food to feed all of its citizens, however this statement is in stark contrast with the estimated 20 million South African's who do not have food security (Daily Maverick, 2020). Although food waste occurs at all stages of the supply chain, at the final stage private households and consumers are one of the largest contributors to the problem (Schanes, Dobernig & Gozet, 2018).

Additionally, authors Norris *et al.*, (2021) and Ellison and Kalaitzandonakes (2020) argue that the Covid-19 pandemic has had both long and short-term negative effects on consumer behaviours that have resulted in an increase in food waste. Due to the sweeping changes brought about by the virus, much of the previous food waste literature and research may no longer be relevant in a post-covid society. This is especially evident in South Africa, with retail chains such as Woolworths who have expressed that there is now a gap in understanding of how Covid-19 has increased consumer level food waste and how their food waste management strategies need to change or be adapted to combat the problem (Woolworths, 2021). Woolworths (2021) and The Africa Report (2020) agree that by not understanding consumer behaviour changes during and after the pandemic, the effectiveness of the current food waste management practices may be threatened, leading to increases in food waste, loss in revenue and increased food insecurity within the country.

Thus, the primary research objective is to gain a thorough understanding of the extent to which Woolworths can be consider a "meaningful" brand or a brand "with purpose" in context of food waste management. By reviewing the documented food waste practices of Woolworths and gaining an in-depth understanding of Woolworths' consumers post-covid food waste behaviour, the researcher will conclude by identifying the extent to which Woolworths can be considered a meaningful brand.

Furthermore, this problem can be seen directly relating to the interpretivist paradigm as authors Ackerman (2019), Horos and Ruppenthal (2021) express, understanding the retail sector, how they operate and the individual behaviours

of consumers is not only rare in current research but also most important for truly understanding food waste management, specifically in a South African and post Covid-19 context.

Therefore, it can be surmised that these thoughts would best align with the fundamental ideas of interpretivism and the subjectivist epistemological position, as it will help to generate an in-depth understanding of Woolworths' consumer behaviours and food waste practices from multiple individual perspectives, which are based on consumer's unique interpretations, behaviours, cross-cultural differences, context and realities, as is highly common within South Africa (Davis, 2014; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Pham, 2018). Additionally, as interpretivism uses a relativist ontology, the unique experiences, thoughts and realities of individual consumers can be understood through a subjective lens that will help retailers and brand managers develop a better understanding of food waste management and its relation to meaningful brands and adding value (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

3. Research Questions

The primary research objective is to gain a thorough understanding of the extent to which Woolworths can be described as a “meaningful” brand **or** a brand “with purpose” in context of food waste management.

3.1 Primary Research Question:

What are the food waste management behaviours of Woolworths’ South African consumers based in Johannesburg and what contribution does this have towards Woolworths being seen as a meaningful brand within a post Covid-19 context?

3.2 Secondary Research Questions:

This research will directly follow the primary research question and take an exploratory qualitative approach. Thus, the specific secondary questions will be as follows:

- 3.2.1 What are the post-covid food waste practices of Woolworths’ consumers?
- 3.2.2 What are the strategies used by Woolworths’ to minimise food waste and loss?
- 3.2.3 Do Woolworths food waste strategies contribute towards the brand being considered a meaningful brand?

4. Literature Review

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the food waste practices implemented by Woolworths, as well as the post-covid food waste behaviours of Woolworths' consumers and how these contribute towards the brand being considered meaningful, the waste hierarchy theoretical framework along with a discussion on meaningful brands, and the previous food waste management literature of retailers, consumers and Woolworths will be presented.

4.1 The Waste Hierarchy Theoretical Framework

The waste hierarchy framework also known as the Ladder of Lansink was first proposed in the Netherlands during 1979 by Dutch politician Ad Lansink, from which it grew in popularity globally and found its way into South African legislation (Hussain, 2020). Van Ewijk and Stegemann (2016) state that the waste hierarchy was developed as a tool to help reduce waste in all its forms and guide management practices to assist with combating the problem.

The aim of the waste management hierarchy, according to Lansink (2018) and Van Ewijk *et al.*, (2017) is to provide a guideline and preferential order of waste treatment that helps to reduce the environmental, social and economic impact caused by waste. Beginning from most to least preferred, the theory starts at waste avoidance and reduction; then moves on to preparation for re-use; recycling; recovery; treatment and finally disposal.

It is clear the waste hierarchy is useful for the issue of food waste through its education and encouragement of individuals to adhere to the reduction and prevention of waste, which are seen as key steps to helping solve the issue (FAO, 2019). Authors such as Wansink (2018), Närvänen, Mesiranta, Mattila and Heikkinen (2020) believe that to successfully reduce food waste at the retailer or consumer level, the attitudes and behaviours of individuals needs to be shifted through education and awareness.

However, some authors such as van Ewijk and Stegemann (2016) feel that the framework should be used only as a generalised and flexible tool, as what is environmentally the best option is not always the best solution, when social or

economic factors are considered, which is especially relevant for SA and its complex social and economic dependencies (Parker *et al.*, 2020). Strict overuse of the framework can lead to a loss in job security or increased material procurement and packaging production costs, making it more time consuming and costly for farmers, retailers and vulnerable consumers (Hamelin, Teigiserova & Thomsen, 2020).

4.2 The Management of Food Waste

Author Fiore (2020) believes that to fully grasp the issue of food waste, one must examine how food waste management practices play a role in combating the complex global problem. The topic of food waste management and regulation has been increasingly debated over the last 20 years (Fiore, 2020; Hussain, 2020). Since 2015 the United Nations (UN) has put in place a number of interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are hoped to be achieved by the year 2030 through the cooperation of global governments, industries and individual consumers (United Nations (UN), 2020).

The 12th SDG according to the UN (2020), is to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, which directly includes and relates to the issue of food waste and its management. In the SDG Report for 2020, the secretary general of the UN, António Guterres stated that from 2017 to 2019, the European Union along with 79 other countries reported on at least one national policy change that contributes towards achieving the 12th SDG (UN, 2020). The food waste hierarchy includes elements like its guidelines and order for waste treatment which are similar to these SDG policies which provide a clear guideline for governments, producers, distributors and retailers to prevent and manage food waste (Brebba & Itoh, 2016; Van Ewijk *et al.*, 2017).

However, according to Filimonau and De Coteau (2019) and Fiore (2020) little measurable evidence is available to see if any progress is being made on the SDG or food waste, and the impact any of these policies and regulations are potentially having. In 2018, a conference of experts in the field of sustainable development was held to discuss progress on SDG 12. In the conference, the United Nations (2018) argued that one of the best ways to understand and

analyse the impact of food waste is to examine it through a holistic approach that makes sure to take into account retailers, individual consumers, their behaviours and market trends.

4.3 Food Waste Management in the Retail Sector

On the global scale, food waste has been extensively studied and made available in the form of literature and discussions. However, food waste research on the retail sector, specifically in terms of customers behaviours and their effect on food waste is a debated issue with contested opinions (Horos & Ruppenthal, 2021; WWF-SA, 2017).

In the South African retail sector, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPRs) are implemented and refer to the mandatory frameworks businesses must use in SA, these EPRs use the waste hierarchy framework as a base to describe how waste streams should be managed effectively (Parker *et al.*, 2020; South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 2011). Even with these strategies and regulations in place, the WWF-SA (2017) argues that not enough is currently being done as food waste in the retail sector contributes 4.6 million tonnes of the total 10 million tonnes of all food wasted per annum in SA.

According to Silbernagl (2011), as cited in Mathee (2020), of food purchased at a retail level, in the North West province in the City of Rustenburg, 27% was wasted by low-income areas, 13% by middle-income areas and 17% in high-income areas. Additional studies in the Western Cape indicated that while low-income groups may consume less food, more food is wasted in these areas than in higher-income areas, due to factors such as improper storage and a lack of food planning (Silbernagl, 2011; WWF-SA, 2017). Based on this scant information, it is evident that Ackerman's (2019) belief is that food waste literatures and research in SA is limited. Additionally, much of this literature and studies may now be outdated due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and the large sweeping changes food waste and its management is undergoing due to the impact of the virus (Norris, Taylor & Taylor, 2021). Although literature on the impact the pandemic has had and will have is still scarce, Ellison and

Kalaitzandonakes (2020) believes that changes to the way consumers behave are important to study.

4.4 Attitude of SA Consumers Towards Food Waste

On a consumer level, food waste occurs when too much food is purchased, too much food is cooked and there is no meal or shopping plan (Fiore, 2020). This can be attributed to a lack of education on the consumers side, their perceptions or a sense of apathy that has developed due to consumers not being aware of the negative impacts food waste can have at an environmental, social and economic level (Vittuari, De Menna & Pagani, 2016; Fiore, 2020). Additionally, as Battersby, Marshak and Mngqibisa (2017) argue, retailers who endorse and promotes compulsive buying practices generate the largest amount of consumer level food waste.

An example of this can be seen through research conducted by Horos and Ruppenthal (2021), which found retailers and their reluctance to accept food products which contain visual impairments or imperfections, as this is known to evoke negative consumer reactions.

In SA in specific, household and retail food waste behaviours mimic developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or France. This is in stark contrast with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa who tend to waste much less edible food (Godfrey & Oelofse, 2017). This can be seen occurring as food products are cheaper to purchase within SA and because the average South African consumer may not be overly wealthy, although still views food as more disposable and is exposed to larger amounts of marketing and branding from large supermarket chains and corporations who encourage the wasteful behaviour (Parker *et al.*, 2020).

4.5 Food Waste Management Practices in Woolworths

Woolworths is a popular multinational retail chain that operates in countries such as, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Australia (Mail & Guardian, 2019). As a retailer, Woolworths focuses on middle to upper income target audiences, who

are more conscious of brands and their impact on society, the environment and the economy (Trotman & Carson, 2018). Woolworths can be seen trying to live up to the highest standards of sustainability to become a meaningful brand who creates value for their consumers (Trotman & Carson, 2018; Woolworths, 2021). However, as Woolworths (2021) expresses, the Covid-19 pandemic has forever changed the world and the business landscape; thus, the importance of remaining sustainable and gaining an understanding of how the virus affects the brand's consumers and behaviours is vital to further success.

Woolworths (2021: 1) states that, "Our vision is to be one of the world's most responsible retailers". The Woolworths brand takes this commitment seriously through the numerous programs and strategies put in place by the retailer to help improve communities and become more sustainable throughout all their dealings. Since 2007, Woolworths has created and carried out a comprehensive strategic plan titled the Good Business Journey which helps align them with initiatives and partnerships that have a meaningful impact on their consumers and society (Trialogue, 2019).

In Woolworths' latest report, the brand has donated over 643 million Rands worth of food to 1500 charities, that would have otherwise been wasted (Woolworths, 2020). Additionally, since 2017, Woolworths has developed systems to track their waste streams to better understand their impact from farm to store in real time, and conducted in-depth waste audits and research studies in association with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA) (WWF-SA, 2017; Woolworths, 2020). Through the development of the Farming for the Future and EduPlant initiatives, Woolworths aims to improve relevant suppliers, such as Fresh to Go's environmental impact through education and regulation, while still maintaining the high quality the brand is known for (Coetzee & Hoffman, 2018).

4.6 Food Waste and Meaningful Brands

According to literature written by Trotman and Carson (2018) and Luu (2020), modern brands are known to have a major impact on people, economies, societies and the natural environment. Cook *et al.*, (2010: 12) states that,

“Brand-led consumption places enormous pressure on our already precarious ecological state, and can drive production techniques that exploit both current and future generations”. However, consumers are increasingly expecting brands to become more responsible and demand a shift to practices which allows them to be seen as brands with purpose (Wieland, 2017).

According to Cook *et al.*, (2010) brands who are committed to integrating the needs and well-being of all their stakeholders are seen as meaningful brands, who have the potential to make meaningful changes to society through sustainable practices which benefit not only people and the environment but also the brand itself. Additionally, Porter and Kramer (2011), along with Wieland (2017) believe that brands can create shared value through the connection of societal and economic progress, thus making a brand more meaningful in the minds of consumers. Within the context of food waste management and consumer behaviour there is a clear gap in literature on the topic, with majority of the research focusing on sustainability and environmentally conscious practices (Cook *et al.*, 2010; Lenssen & Smith, 2018).

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

A research paradigm, can be seen as a set of beliefs that researchers align to which reflects the researcher's way of understanding the reality of the world, how it should be studied and how it should be interpreted (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Each paradigm consists of five components namely, the epistemology, ontology, methodology, metatheory and the axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For the purpose of this research an interpretivist research paradigm following a qualitative approach was used and deemed most appropriate for the study.

Interpretivism explores the idea that people and objects are separate and differ from one another (Cooksey & McDonald, 2017). The interpretivist paradigm is most often used in the social sciences field and looks to gain an understanding of human behaviour and social action by using the researcher as the primary research instrument (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Interpretivists engage in the historical-hermeneutic or the hermeneutic-phenomenological sciences, with the main goal being to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena and their interactions (Dibley, Dickerson, Duffy & Vandermause, 2020). Interpretivism wants to understand human reasoning, behaviour and human interpretations of reality at an empathetic and in-depth level, through the eyes of the subject (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

The epistemology of a paradigm refers to how researchers come to understand what knowledge is within the world and how they are able to differentiate between truth and reality (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that interpretivism follows a subjectivist epistemological position which views reality, knowledge and truth as being subjective, fluid and rooted in meaning systems (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Furthermore, the ontology of a paradigm refers to the assumptions and beliefs researchers hold about the nature of existence and reality (Biedenback & Muller, 2011; Dibley *et al.*, 2020). Thus, interpretivism assumes a relativist view that no one person can experience reality in the same way and that social construction happens in the mind of each individual, allowing for multiple unique realities and subjective, fluid experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Additionally, it can be

said that interpretivists and their relativist ontology are influenced heavily by the intellectual traditions of phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), the methodology of a paradigm refers to the study, analysis, process and final design of data production techniques which guides the researcher. Thus, it can be said that interpretive methodology is naturalist and requires a qualitative strategy which collects, analyses and records data using a verbal or conversational approach that is subjective, context sensitive and inductive (Chowdhury, 2014).

Additionally, the metatheoretical position of a paradigm refers to the exploration of the theories, structures and foundations which help researchers to better clarify their thinking through the understanding of unseen assumptions of certain theories and phenomena (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2017). Alvesson and Skoldberg (2017) believe that the metatheoretical position of interpretivism aims through inductive approaches, to understand how people live their day-to-day lives and how they interpret their realities within the framework of context and storytelling. Interpretivists can be seen making use of an inductive approach by collecting information, analysing it and only then formulating a theory which can be tested against reality (Azungah, 2018).

The axiological position of a paradigm refers to the role of values within research and aids the decision-making process by informing researchers whether certain values are imperative to the particular study or not; this relates to the nature of ethics (Azungah, 2018). Interpretivism can be seen as having a balanced axiology which assumes that the values of the researcher, the research outcome and the participants will reflect one another and through an empathetic and inductive approach, will identify patterns thematically and be able to report back balanced key findings (Kivunja & Kuyuni, 2017; Chowdhury, 2014).

Therefore, authors Ackerman (2019), Horos and Ruppenthal (2021) believe that understanding the retail sector, how they operate and the individual attitudes and behaviours of consumers is not only rare in current research but also most important for truly understanding food waste management, specifically in a South African context. Therefore, it can be surmised that these thoughts would

best align with the fundamental ideas of interpretivism, the subjectivist epistemological position and the overall aim of the study, as it assisted in generating an in-depth understanding of food waste management, its relation to meaningful brands and adding value from multiple individual perspectives which are based on people's interpretation, context and unique realities (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

Moreover, interpretivism allows for a greater amount of depth and flexibility for the qualitative research needed for the study, while also allowing for the cross-cultural differences, human reasoning or unique behaviours to be investigated that are vital within the context of South Africa, branding and food waste (Pham, 2018; Ackerman, 2019).

5.2 Research Design

Research design is a methodical plan which is used by researchers to ensure a bridge is formed between answering research questions and the execution of the research in a feasible, economic and accurate way (Vagle, 2018). For the purpose of this research a phenomenological research design was deemed most appropriate. According to Beck (2019), a phenomenological research design explores the individual lived experiences of the sample, and is focused on gathering information and perceptions through inductive methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation; thus, aligning with the interpretivist paradigm of the research (Azungah, 2018). Phenomenology guides researchers using a qualitative approach so that they can gain in-depth understandings of specific phenomena through a subjective lens (Qutoshi, 2018).

For this research, a phenomenological research design assisted in identifying, interpreting and describing individual consumer experiences so as to gain a thorough understanding to the extent in which Woolworths can be considered a meaningful brand or a brand with purpose in context of food waste management (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Thus, as an in-depth and detailed, subjective understanding of specific behaviours and the unique realities of each consumer was required for the study, a phenomenological approach can be seen as most appropriate (Pham, 2018).

Moreover, this information could not be quantified and therefore required a qualitative phenomenological approach, so an understanding could be gained into how Woolworths' consumers perceive meaningful brands and food waste management (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Additionally, phenomenology assisted in creating recommendations for food waste management strategies and brands being seen as meaningful by consumers (Beck, 2019).

5.3 Research Method

According to Williamson and Johanson (2017), research methods are the tools which allow for the collection and analysis of data for the study; comprising of either qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. For this research a qualitative research method was deemed most appropriate. A qualitative research method refers to the process of collecting and analysing non-numerical information so as to gain in-depth insight into problems or to generate new ideas (Lobe, Morgan, & Hoffman, 2020).

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) state that qualitative research looks to gain an understanding of how individuals experience the world, their behaviours and social action by using the researcher as the primary research instrument; aligning directly to the interpretivist paradigm used in this research. Thus, for this research which focused on the lived experiences and behaviours of Woolworths' consumers so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the extent in which Woolworths can be considered a meaningful brand in context of food waste management, a qualitative research method was seen as highly useful due to its high level of flexibility and generation of rich meaning (Lobe *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, a qualitative approach assisted with the overall exploratory approach, effectively extending knowledge, understanding and generating unique interpretations and recommendations in the field of food waste and branding with purpose within South Africa specifically (Pham, 2018; Ackerman, 2019).

5.4 Population

The population of research refers to the entire distinct group or collection of individuals, objects or elements that is the primary focus of the research, from which analysis or conclusions are drawn (Allen, 2017).

For this research the target population included individual Woolworths consumers who are geographically located within Johannesburg, South Africa, who have purchased from the brand and included eight participants. This enabled the study to remain practical and ensured that the researcher could establish an emotional connection with each participant, allowing for deeper understanding to be gained in terms of what motivates specific behaviours or the discovery of nuances, while also allowing for more flexibility in terms of interactions where tone and body language was analysed (Rahman, 2016).

Moreover, the accessible population which refers to the subset of the target population from which analysis can be conducted and conclusions drawn, was selected to be Woolworths' consumers who reside in the Honeydew, Randpark Ridge, Bryanston and Randburg suburbs of Johannesburg; ensuring that these individuals could be reached even during Covid-19 restrictions (Dodds & Hess, 2021).

5.5 Sampling Method

According to Hanif, Shahbaz and Ahmad (2018) a sampling method refers to the techniques used by researchers to select and infer information and estimate characteristics about a full population based on results collected from only a subset of the entire population. This means that researchers do not have to study a whole population as long as the sample is representative of the whole population, improving practicality, saving costs and providing reliable information (Rahman, 2016).

For this research, a non-probability, purposive, snowball sampling method was selected and deemed most appropriate. A non-probability, purposive sampling technique allows researchers to use their own judgement in selecting the sample and is seen as appropriate for use with exploratory qualitative studies where the findings do not need to be generalised (Pascoe, 2014). Therefore, for this

research the method helped ensure that the study remained practical as it would otherwise have been too difficult and expensive to gain access to the entire population of Woolworths' consumers (Sharma, 2017).

Additionally, according to Pascoe (2014) and Sharma (2017), utilising this sampling method is most effective when there is only a limited number of individuals who could serve as primary data sources for the study, as it allows the researcher to purposefully select who is to be included in the sample, based on specific selected characteristics. Thus, this makes it relevant as the sample for this study was limited due to there only being a single researcher who could access a small limited amount of Woolworths' consumers who lived within Johannesburg and who shopped for food-based products (Schreier, 2017). Moreover, due to the low budget and short deadlines for the research, non-probability purposive sampling resulted in both time and money saving as only those who could assist with the research were selected and if they could not, they were easily disregarded (Pascoe, 2014).

Additionally, snowball sampling was utilised which involved selecting a few known subjects who are Woolworths' consumers within the Johannesburg area, these subjects then nominated further subjects who they knew to be Woolworths' consumers and who they felt would be willing and appropriate for the research (Schreier, 2017). This method was used as it assisted in gaining subjects for the research even when they were difficult to trace or hard-to-reach (Schreier, 2017). This can be said as finding Woolworths' consumers within the Johannesburg area proved difficult during further restrictions and fears brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic; thus, using a snowball sampling method helped alleviate this difficulty and allowed for the specific and relevant Woolworths consumers to be found (Dodds & Hess, 2021).

5.6 Data Collection

Data collection refers to the systemic process used by a researcher to gather, measure and analyse information on variables or phenomena so as to answer, test or evaluate research (Mkandawire, 2019). Thus, as this research utilised a qualitative, phenomenological research design that was used to ascertain and analyse information gathered on consumer behaviour and Woolworths being

seen as a brand with purpose, this required require face-to-face interaction with the sample through in-depth standardised, open-ended digital interviews (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). These in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to learn more about the lived experiences, behaviours, opinions or beliefs of participants surrounding phenomena, such as, food waste management and to what extent Woolworths could be considered meaningful or a brand with purpose (Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Mkandawire, 2019).

Furthermore, these in-depth, open-ended interviews aligned with the interpretivist paradigm utilised within the research. This can be said as the method seeks to interpret and describe participant's lived experiences and is seen as subjective, linking directly to the goals of interpretivism (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Additionally, the interviews were standardised, structured and open-ended in nature, ensuring each participant was asked the same open-ended questions adhering to a script; this was done so that the derived information could be easily and effectively analysed though the inherent organised nature of the method, while still allowing for varied responses (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). According to (Moser & Korstjens, 2017) this method ensured a good rapport was established with the researcher and the participants, thus, allowing for the effective collection and analysis of verbal or non-verbal data to be gathered in the form of responses, facial expressions, tone or body language. In addition, this method allows a researcher control and flexibility through further elaboration and participants can be asked to clarify responses, revealing honest opinions, motivations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). During the interviews, this flexibility allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions and effectively clarify both questions and answers when needed.

In using this method, participants were purposively contacted via a telephone call and permission granted beforehand, a digital platform and time which was convenient and safe for both the researcher and participant was arranged. During the interview, participants were informed of the academic research use in obtaining a degree qualification and recording permission was asked for and given in the form of a signed consent document. Both the researcher and participants were required to remain Covid-19 compliant, therefore, interviews were conducted entirely online using Zoom. Additionally, the interviews were recorded via audio and video software, transcribed and stored securely in a

digital format. This helped ensure that the research and data collection method remained ethical and that anonymity was preserved, while still allowing the researcher in-depth access and analysis opportunities (Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017).

5.7 Data Analysis

According to (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014), data analysis refers to the process of gathering, modelling and analysing data to generate insights and provide answers for the primary research objective. Thus, to effectively interpret the qualitative data gathered in this study, thematic coding, also known as thematic analysis was utilised. Thematic analysis refers to a methodology used to analyse qualitative data that involves the researcher examining the data set to identify, organise and describe common themes that are comprised of either ideas, experiences or patterns that reoccur (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The authors Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) likens thematic analysis to a translator which allows researchers to communicate with each other in a trustworthy and insightful way even if they are using a different method or paradigm. However, as this research utilised an interpretivist, exploratory approach, was conducted by an inexperienced researcher and was looking to examine multiple consumer perspectives, Nowell *et al.*, (2017) believes thematic analysis is the most appropriate due to its high level of flexibility and ability to generate a rich and detailed account of data which is more accessible and allows for unanticipated insights to be gained.

The thematic analysis was conducted using a six-stage method that is iterative, reflective and makes use of an inductive coding methodology which looks at raw textual data and works to develop themes and commonalities through a series of back-and-forth analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

In the first stage, familiarisation with the data was gained, the researcher gathered, read, transcribed and developed a holistic understanding of the Woolworths consumer's lived experiences, the meaning behind those experiences and notes were made about ideas for coding that can be returned too (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). In the second stage, codes which are a brief description of what was said within the interview was preliminarily assigned to

the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In the third stage, themes from the data were identified using an iterative back-and-forth approach of collating and combining codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In the fourth stage, the generated themes were reviewed and refined until a final set of distinctive and coherent themes were left (Braun & Clarke, 2008). In the fifth stage, each identified theme was named and described in-depth so as to determine what aspect of the data it captured, what was of interest and why they were of interest (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Lastly, in the sixth stage, the final report detailing the themes, the processes by which findings were developed and the full analysis was created in a concise, nonrepetitive and accurate way which utilised quotes from the participants, coding and observations (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

5.8 Feasibility of the Study

Feasibility of the study in terms of research refers to the practicality of implementing the research study and looks to justify and ensure the study can be conducted realistically with the available resources, budget and time constraints (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014; Frey, 2018).

In terms of the study's sample feasibility, Mesly (2017) argues that whether or not the researcher can access the study's population is one of the most important feasibility considerations. Thus, for this study the population of individual Woolworths' consumers who are located within Johannesburg was selected as they would be able to accurately assist in answering the research questions but also because they were accessible, specifically to the researcher based on geographic location and even during restricted periods brought about by Covid-19 (Dodds & Hess, 2021). Additionally, this sample which was collected using purposive, snowball sampling to ensure that the issues of accessibility, participant reluctance and unreliability of data would be avoided as they would have the correct characteristics for the study (Mesly, 2017).

Additionally, in terms of time feasibility, the period of time it takes to complete the study must be taken into account to ensure it can be completed within certain deadlines and with the available resources (Frey, 2018). Thus, given the final project deadline of December 2021, the interviews were completed and data analysis begun towards the end of July, ensuring enough time was given to

complete the analysis and create recommendations for the final research report which will be carried out during October and November of 2021. Thus, each step of the process was given specific timelines, to ensure adequate time was available and that the final deadline could be met and remain feasible.

In terms of the study's size, Frey (2018) states that the scope of the study and ensuring the researcher can practically carry out each aspect of the research is another important feasibility consideration. For this study, it was ensured that only eight participants, who required no special access and who were based nearby to the researcher was to be included in the study, making it practical for a single researcher to gather data from them all participants in a timely and affordable manner.

Furthermore, in terms of methodology, Frey (2018) states that utilising the correct methodology is another key consideration when examining if a study will be feasible or not. Thus, a phenomenological research design was selected along with qualitative data collection methods in the form of in-depth, open-ended interviews. This methodology ensured that a single researcher could gain credible and practical data from each individual participant without spending any money or extra resources during the acquisition or analysis processes (Mesly, 2017).

In terms of budget, how much different aspects of the research would cost in terms of monetary value and resources should be realistic and justifiable to ensure the research is feasible (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Therefore, for this study a low budget was set, as it was a small-scale academic research report that only required minimal paid resources to successfully answer the research questions and objective. Participants were therefore purposively selected based on geographical location to save any travel or accommodation costs, no incentives were provided for participation and as there is only one researcher available to collect and analyse data, only eight participants were selected and no assistance acquired to ensure low costs would be incurred and enough time available (Frey, 2018).

6. Analysis of Data and Findings

For this research a thematic analysis was carried out as described within the data analysis section. Thus, codes were generated and organised into relevant themes which were developed from eight participants through in-depth standardised, open-ended interviews. The data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Word by first transcribing each interview verbatim. These transcripts were then read over and any codes relating to the topic highlighted and taken note of. Further notation and iterative coding were conducted until main themes emerged that were deemed to be most relevant. Furthermore, each participant's experiences were analysed individually, so as to remain in line with the qualitative, phenomenological research design. From this analysis, four relevant main themes were identified with each being analysed and discussed further.

Table 1 depicts the identified themes and related codes of each:

Table 1: Thematic Analysis – Codes & Themes	
Themes:	Related Codes:
Consumer Brand Preference	Quality Variety Convenience Extended Product Life Sustainability Brand Reputation
Post-Covid Food Waste Behaviours	Overbuying Covid-19 Behaviour Decreased Covid-19 Food Waste Increased Home Cooking Increased Plastic Waste No Covid Impact Negative Perceptions of Food Waste Importance of Reuse Waste Avoidance Behaviour

Woolworths Food Waste Strategies	Food Donation Initiatives Long Life Packaging Initiatives Effective Labelling Initiatives Expiration Placement Strategy Responsible Sourcing Strategy Extended Product Life Waste Reduction Influence Personal Minimisation Strategy
Woolworths Brand Impact and Purpose	Food Donation Initiatives Monetary Donation Initiatives Supporting Local Suppliers Educational Programs Environmentally-conscious Profit Driven Social Responsibility Dedication to Quality

6.1 Theme 1: Consumer Brand Preference

The first theme relates to Woolworths consumer's brand preference, referring to the extent to which a consumer chooses to use a brand's offerings instead of a competitor's (Aaker, 2011). This theme was selected as the first theme due to its prominence within the lived experiences of the participants and relates directly to the post-covid food waste practices of Woolworths and their consumers. Within the context of this study, the theme of consumer brand preference is based off of what consumers value about the Woolworths brand and what behaviours encourage them to select the brand over competitors, such as, Pick n Pay or Checkers; which may be relevant to food waste management (Aaker, 2011).

Participants experienced and expressed different reasons why they felt Woolworths created value over that which a competitor could offer, as was

suggested by Wiese *et al.*, (2015) is becoming increasingly important for modern brands to consider. Most participants indicated that '*variety*' was a major motivator for why they chose to shop at Woolworths over other brands, indicating a clear positive sentiment towards Woolworths' large selection of offerings. Within the context of this study, variety was uncovered through participants' preference of being able to purchase a multitude of product types from Woolworths such as, '*fresh produce*', '*dairy products*', '*desserts*', '*ready-made meals*', '*baked goods*', '*pantry staples*' or even unique products such as, '*locally sourced pots*'. Thus, it can be surmised that increased variety and unique product offerings can be seen increasing customer preference for the brand. However, half of the participants mentioned that Woolworths was '*more expensive*' when compared to Pick n Pay and Checkers. However, participants also indicated that other factors like quality and value often made Woolworths worth the extra cost, although this indicates that within a post Covid-19 context, consumers are highly price conscious.

Furthermore, participants overwhelmingly mentioned that '*quality*' was a key factor which influenced their preference for the Woolworths brand. During the interpretation of the text, participants indicated that Woolworths' commitment to creating quality products which are fresher, taste better and have an extended shelf life are vital to why they prefer the brand and find value in their offerings. For example, one participant excitedly stated that, "*I think one of the reasons we like Woolworths is it's just better quality*" (KS07). The participant linked this with the price charged by Woolworths, "*They are a little bit expensive but you are paying for the quality. I would say their food probably lasts a bit longer as well umm but there's certain products at Woolworths that you know the quality is a bit better than other retailers*" (KS07).

This could indicate that Woolworths incurs less food waste due to their high-quality offerings or that more waste is occurring before it reaches their stores as participants indicate that Woolworth's products are of a higher quality and therefore last longer and are wasted less. These findings are further supported by the previous research conducted by Horos and Ruppenthal (2021), in which majority of consumers and retailers were found to only purchase food that lacked any visual impairments and seemed to be of a high quality. However, one participant stated that price was the main deciding factor and since Woolworths

is more expensive than other retailers the participant would not purchase from Woolworths, *"I think it all comes down to price, so if it's a similar product I would purchase it wherever it's cheaper, I wouldn't purchase it at Woolworths"* (GS03).

Furthermore, participants alluded to 'convenience' being another key factor which positively influenced their preference for Woolworths. This convenience stemmed from Woolworths' ready-made meal products and close proximity to many of the participants homes. This indicates that consumers value convenience highly and this influences their decision to prefer and purchase from Woolworths. For example, one participant stated, *"I usually purchase their ready-made products, something that is quick and easy to heat or quick and easy to make, so that makes making a meal quicker, so that's what I like"* (GS02).

Additionally, half of the respondents stated that they dispose of their food waste in regular bins due to convenience and do not take part in reuse, recycling or composting efforts as outlined in the food waste hierarchy (Van Ewijk *et al.*, 2017) For example, one participant stated that, *"I just throw them in the trashcan, in the bin. I really should [recycle] but I don't"* (KO06).

In addition, two participants alluded to the brand's 'commitment to sustainability' and having a 'deeper meaning behind their products'. For example, one participant stated that, *"...but still like protecting umm animals and ensuring that certain products that they create for vegans and vegetarians for instance it has like a deeper meaning, a better environmental meaning behind their products"* (ND03). This further links to the theme of consumer brand preference and alludes to the brand creating value for consumers by placing import on their purpose and understanding how they impact the communities in which they operate; as mentioned in previous literature by Wieland (2017), is key for modern brands to be seen as purposeful by consumers.

6.2 Theme 2: Post-Covid Food Waste Behaviours

The second theme relates to Woolworths consumer's post-covid food waste behaviours which refers to the way in which consumers purchase, consume or

dispose of their food waste within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (Fiore, 2020). This theme was selected as the second theme due to it building off of the first consumer brand preference theme and due to the fact that it provides insights into how consumers behave in terms of food waste management within a post Covid-19 environment. The importance of which is echoed through previous literature by Fiore (2020) and the scant research she suggests surrounds the topic.

During this research, all participants indicated that they had a negative perception of food waste and found it to be unnecessary, wasteful in terms of money and food, or irresponsible by both people and brands. Half of the participants also indicated that they had learnt this from their parents or upbringing, revealing different motivations for the dislike of food waste. For instance, one participant mentioned that, *"I dislike food waste a lot. Obviously, I think it's a big waste of money and it's pretty bad to be wasting food when other people are going hungry"* (KS07). While on the other hand another participant stated that, *"I really hate food waste just because I grew up in a household where my parents were very strict about wasting food and not wasting food"* (LS08).

Furthermore, two participants alluded to the fact that it was important to reuse food that would otherwise be wasted, as is seen as the second-best step to take in terms of waste reduction within the waste hierarchy framework (Lansink, 2018). This was uncovered through their responses, based on certain behaviours they carry out; for example, *'giving excess food to the less fortunate', 'using near-expiry ingredients in foods like soups or stews or feeding appropriate foods to animals if it would not be used before expiry'*. For instance, one participant explained, *"So if I've cooked a chicken, I would take the chicken bones and actually create a broth from that. So even from the bones of the product, umm we try use every bit of it, so we not even throwing away the bones if that makes sense"* (ND03).

Additionally, in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that it has had both a negative and positive impact at a consumer behavioural level. For instance, at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, half of the participants indicated that they engaged in *'over buying'* or *'panic buying'* behaviour and purchased more

than was necessary, due to fear of shortages. Much of this food was wasted due to their behaviours, which could indicate a need for policy changes from retailers to prevent such from happening in the future; as was suggested by Norris *et al.*, (2021) in previous research. As one participant stated with a disappointed look on her face, indicating shame, *"Umm I think it has altered it quite a bit because initially when we went into lockdown, we, I as many other people bought an excess of food and quite a lot of food went to waste then"* (RS01).

Furthermore, a few participants seemed hesitant, slow to answer or gave contradictory information, which may indicate that they have not yet thought about Covid-19's impact on their personal food waste behaviours. However, five participants stated that they thought Covid-19 had not impacted their behaviours in terms of food waste, although after some thought, most gave an example of it increasing or decreasing their food waste at home. For instance, one participant mentioned that it both did and did not impact their food waste, *"Honestly it hasn't really in my opinion, the only way I can think of is the fact that we stocked up at the beginning of Covid-19 because there was a fear that there might not be food on the shelves so everyone overbought completely and that led to some stuff going off because we bought so much"* (PT05). Whereas another participant mentioned that it increased their home cooking behaviour, resulting in less waste due to more effective meal planning; as was indicated by Fiore (2020) as a primary reason for the occurrence of consumer level food waste. For example, the participant stated, *"So, let's say for instance, now that I have more time at home, I'm more likely to cook a lot more, so whatever food I might buy, let's say on the weekend, it won't go to waste as I would use it up"* (ND03).

6.3 Theme 3: Woolworths Food Waste Strategies

The third theme relates to Woolworths' food waste management strategies and how consumers perceive them in terms of assisting to minimise food waste. This theme was selected as the third theme due to the brand's food waste strategies forming an integral part of identifying if Woolworths is deemed to be a meaningful brand or a brand with purpose in the minds its consumers. Therefore, Woolworths consumer's lived experiences or perceptions of the brand

and its food waste strategies can indicate whether they focus on more than just profit and whether or not they can create shared value through the connection of societal and economic progress as suggested is a key indicator of meaningfulness by Porter and Kramer (2011).

When asked if participants felt that by purchasing at Woolworths, they are minimising their food waste at home, half of the participants alluded to Woolworths helping them to minimise food waste on a personal level. The other half of the participants felt that Woolworth's does not help them minimise food waste at home. For instance, one participant stated, *"I think it does, I think buying from Woolworths does minimize our food waste. Like I said their products tend to be last a bit longer, tend to be a bit more fresh"* (KS07).

From this, participants were asked if they are aware of any of Woolworths' food waste management strategies. One strategy was uncovered in the form of their long-life packaging initiative. Many participants indicated that they are aware that Woolworths makes use of specialised packaging that increases the shelf life of products, in turn minimising food waste in store and at home. For example, one participant stated, *"Umm it was pointed out to me that their packaging was chosen to allow maximum shelf life, so that the minimum of food that goes on the shelf goes off"* (PT05). Another participant shared this sentiment stating, *"I know that they also have specific packaging, I think I've seen that some of their packaging says that umm it's like long lasting"* (KS07). Therefore, these lived experiences showcase that due to Woolworths providing higher quality packaging and products that have an extended life span, it enables the consumer to waste less food at home; creating a positive sentiment towards the brand. This can be seen linking to the first theme, of brand preference, where majority of consumers stated that they prefer Woolworths due to their quality products which have an extended lifespan, especially when compared to competitors like Spar or Pick n Pay.

Furthermore, during the interpretation of the text, participants alluded to the food waste management strategy of effective food product labelling. Two participants explained that in their experience, Woolworths' food products have *'highly effective labelling'*, assisting them in storing it correctly, improving meal planning and portion control. In turn, helping to reduce unnecessary waste and

adding value to consumers through increased savings and brand trust. This further links to research conducted by Fiore (2020), indicating that a lack of all are major factors contributing to food waste. For example, one participant stated, *"...the portion sizes are very clearly marked and indicated and for that reason you actually know how much to buy and you plan your meals accordingly"* (RS01).

Additionally, one participant mentioned a specific example of seeing how Woolworths' employees would place the food products which were closer to expiry at the front of the shelves, so as to encourage consumers to purchase those first, thus reducing the chance of waste. For example, the participant stated, *"Well as far as I know the food, I know the way in which they package the food, they package the food that expires first in front umm in front of the shelves and the food with the later expiration dates they package or pack at the back"* (RS01). This expiration placement strategy, can therefore be seen as a waste management strategy which consumers approve of and improve their overall positive sentiment towards the brand and its behaviours.

Furthermore, most participants indicated that another food waste management strategy Woolworths implemented could be seen in their extensive food donations. Participants revealed lived experiences showcasing that Woolworths actively implements the strategy of donating nearly expired food products to Non-profit Organisations (NPOs) and other charity-based organisations. For instance, one participant who works for an NPO and is a Woolworths consumer explained that, *"Yes, definitely and the reason why I'm saying is that we are actually recipients, I am manager of a welfare organisation and we are recipients, regular recipients of Woolworths donations of food that is close to expiration date"* (RS01). The participant further stated that, *"In actual fact most of our meals are made from donated Woolworths' foods, so, so they really try their best to minimise the waste of food"* (RS01). According to the literature provided by Woolworths (2020), the brand has donated over 643 million Rands worth of food to over 1500 charity organisations, further reinforcing the use of this food waste management strategy and its effectiveness in showcasing the existence and fulfilment of a specific brand purpose (Cook *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, participants further alluded to this helping reduce food waste in

their local communities and helping those who are in need, thus, linking directly to the following theme of Woolworths' brand impact and purpose.

Moreover, the text revealed that half of the participant's believed Woolworths was implementing responsible sourcing and sustainability strategies, both of which encouraged the participants to shop there over competitors. As one participant stated, *"I think I've seen before that they mention that they source food responsibly. So, I would assume somewhere along the production line that they maybe try and reduce their food waste there"* (KS07). This sentiment showcases a clear link to the theme of consumer's brand preference and why the brand is worth paying a higher price for, although due to the slumped body language, lengthy pauses and use of the words 'maybe' and 'I would assume', this could indicate that they were uncertain of exactly how and why this strategy was effective.

In addition, throughout the interpretation of the text, it was uncovered that many participants felt that they undertook their own personal food waste minimisation strategies and suggested that Woolworths did not influence their behaviour. For example, one participant mentioned that, *"I think it's just a personal choice, so with regards to the mechanisms Woolies might put into place, that's their own doing and only my behaviour of buying the product influences whether it works or not"* (ND03). This sentiment showcases that not all consumers feel that Woolworths' food waste management strategies have any influence on the way they behave in term of fulfilling the food waste hierarchy, especially within the context of a post Covid-19 environment.

However, one participant felt that Woolworths does directly influence his decision to implement personal food waste minimisation and expresses that through Woolworths' prioritisation of food waste reduction, reuse and proper discarding methods, this then encourages him to do so also. For instance, the participant stated, *"I know they are so involved in waste reduction, so it makes me feel like I should not waste as well. It makes me feel like I should be helping to not waste food"* (PT05). However, four participants expressed that purchasing from Woolworths does not influence or help them minimise their food waste at home; instead, some suggested that they are entirely unaware of any of Woolworths' food waste management strategies and do not believe that by purchasing from

the brand they are wasting less food, indicating a lack of awareness and a sense of brand distrust. For example, one participant stated, *"I am not aware of any. I don't think they market it very well if they do have some"* (RN04). While another participant when asked if they know of any of Woolworths' strategies stated with a confident tone and body language that they were aware of, *"Hmm, zero"* (KO06).

This reveals that Woolworths could help reduce food waste further by ensuring they implement the above discussed strategies correctly, while also increasing consumer awareness on how the brand carries them out, thus influencing other retailers and consumers to do the same. In doing so, as suggested by Wieland (2017), it could additionally assist the brand in becoming more meaningful in the eyes of consumers by adding value to their lives and local communities; linking directly to the fourth and final theme of Woolworths' brand impact and purpose.

6.4 Theme 4: Woolworths Brand Impact and Purpose

The fourth theme relates to Woolworths' brand impact and purpose, which refers to how Woolworths' consumers perceive the brand in terms of its behaviours and the extent to which Woolworths can be considered a 'meaningful' brand or a brand 'with purpose' in context of food waste management (Cook *et al.*, 2010). This theme was selected as the fourth theme due to the recurring sentiment and ideas presented by participants relating to positive behaviours and 'meaningful' contributions the brand has in terms of value, society and food waste management, all of which showcase the brand's ability to stand for more than just profit and align to a specific purpose.

Overall, all but one participant indicated that they do not know of any ways in which Woolworths contributes to the local community. For example, the participant stated in an unsure tone, wrinkling his face, *"I'm not aware of any ways in which they do affect the local community"* (KO06). This either suggests a lack of awareness on the part of the consumer or a failure by Woolworths to make all of their consumers aware of how they contribute to local communities. This can be especially difficult due to a reduction of in-store foot traffic due to the Covid-19 pandemic, reducing customer exposure to in-store advertising and initiatives, which was suggested in research conducted by Horos

and Ruppenthal (2021). However, when this particular participant was further probed if Woolworths stands for more than just profit, the participant did state that, *"I guess they have developed a brand focused around healthy eating, I believe"* (KO06), which may link back to specific sustainability food waste management strategies implemented by the brand.

Furthermore, the remainder of the participants mentioned positive sentiments towards the brand and mentioned that the brand makes multiple positive community contributions that are not linked to profit making. For example, half of the participants made mention of *'Woolworths' food donation initiatives'* and in some way alluded to its effectiveness as a food waste management tool. For instance, one participant stated, *"I know they do donate a lot of food; I know even the day before the best before date, Woolworths does donate food to children's homes, old age homes"* (LS08). The participant continued in an excited tone, explaining a lived experience of the donation initiative, *"Even out of personal experience we had a charity event and they did donate food that was due to expire in the next day or two. So, I know they do a lot of donating of food"*. From this participant's explanation and other participant's sentiments, it is clear that Woolworths does improve local communities by donating their food to those in need, while also reducing the brands overall food waste. According to Cook *et al.*, (2010) and Porter and Kramer (2011), these consumer experiences can indicate that the brand stands for more than just profit and alludes to Woolworths being seen as a meaningful brand.

Moreover, four participants expressed that they were aware of Woolworths' monetary contributions and initiatives which provide support to a variety of charity organisations. Three of those participants mentioned a specific MySchool card initiative. For instance, one participant stated, *"They [Woolworths] also have that MySchool program that they apply to"* (LS08). While another participant responded in a confident tone that, *"They [Woolworths] also participate in the MySchool outreach programs which you can choose which one you want the money to contribute to, so that's always really nice. So, whenever you shop there, you can swipe your MySchool card"* (RN04). These responses are in line with what Trialogue (2019) and Woolworths (2020) indicates is the brand's "Good Business Journey", helping them have a meaningful impact on their consumers and society through the millions of Rands of donations and

strategic partnerships. Thus, further showcasing that the brand's consumers feel Woolworths is a meaningful brand that stands for more than just profit as suggested by Cook *et al.*, (2010).

However, two of the participants had a confused facial expression when responding to questions of the brand's community contributions and if Woolworths stand for more than just profit, indicating that they could not recall exactly what the initiatives were about and even doubted if the money actually reaches and assists any local communities, indicating a sense of brand distrust or lack of awareness. For instance, one participant stated, *"Well, I know that they do have some programs like the MySchool card and things like that. Not that I've seen any physical proof of it, but I think that they use those things to help the community"* (GS02). These responses could be another indication that the brand helps create value for consumers and local communities.

When participants were asked about if they thought Woolworths contributes to the local community, three participants made mention of the brands support of local suppliers such as farmers or craftsmen. One participant explained a lived experience of receiving a gift from Woolworths which was handmade by local Venda craftsmen. For example, the participant stated the following with a smile on his face and happy tone, indicating excitement and passion for the brand's behaviours, *"So one way that I know of is that I read on a present that we got, umm they actually stock traditionally crafted Venda pots and they are used to pot different types of plants"* (PT05). The participant further explained how he felt it contributed to local communities, *"This not only helps poorer communities to like rise up, uhh like it gives hope, it encourages art, it encourages entrepreneurship, you know it gives those people hope. It also preserves our culture and it presents it to the consumer on Woolie's shelves in the form of a gift, something they want"* (PT05). This community engagement and support, may uplift local South African communities, creating a clear link between the creation of shared value through the connection of societal and economic progress, enhancing Woolworths' meaningfulness in the minds of consumers as is suggested by Wieland (2017).

Furthermore, one participant made mention of Woolworths running its own educational programs that have had a positive impact. For example, the

participant stated, *"I think they also do some sort of education program as well in local communities"* (KS07). These programs as were highlighted in research conducted by Coetzee and Hoffman (2018), could further showcase Woolworths' commitment to assist in uplifting local communities and standing for more than just profit. In addition, four participants mentioned that Woolworths could be seen as an environmentally conscious brand that does not take more than it gives, an idea which relates to a brands meaningfulness as suggested by Cook *et al.*, (2010). For instance, in an exited tone, one participant stated that, *"Umm, so I think they are also standing for the environment. I see that a lot with Woolies in comparison to other retailers of a similar nature, so a lot of the stores aren't giving out plastic bags anymore. That makes me so happy!"* (ND03). Another participant also stated that, *"So, like I mentioned earlier they have like good plastic waste initiatives, water initiatives, the organic initiatives so that makes their brand look good while they are still making a profit"* (RN04). Therefore, these sentiments and experiences reveals a clear link between Woolworths and environmentally conscious activities which directly relate to food waste management strategies, showcasing a created emotional connection between Woolworths and its consumer; which is both in line with the food waste hierarchy and a meaningful brand that stands for more than just profit (Cook *et al.*, 2010; Van Ewijk & Stegemann, 2016).

Lastly, half of the participants appeared to be price conscious, alluding to Woolworths' higher food product pricing and stating that as a business Woolworths does strive to make a profit. For example, one participant stated, *"I think obviously they are a business so they are profit driven"* (RN04). However, all participants except one expressed that the brand stands for more than just profit and this sentiment along with specific lived experiences showcase that Woolworths is seen as socially responsible and dedicated to providing high-quality, value, a sense of sustainability and community improvement. All of which provide consumers with better value for money, positive brand-consumer relationships and a clear sense of brand purpose (Cook *et al.*, 2010). For instance, one participant stated, *"So yes, I think they really do try to stand out as a premium brand that makes money but also that makes a difference"* (LS08). While another participant stated, *"I suppose they are helping to reduce food waste in that way and it's not like it [is] helping them make a profit"*

(KS07). Therefore, it is evident that Woolworths takes their commitment to becoming one of the world's most responsible retailers seriously through a variety of impactful food waste management strategies and programs which Woolworths (2021) expresses through their communications and behaviours.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

In conclusion, food waste can be seen as a serious issue which affects people, the environment and economies on a global scale (Liljestrand, 2017). In terms of this research, the objectives of the study were addressed; which were to gain an understanding of Woolworths' consumers post-covid food waste practices; to uncover what strategies Woolworths uses to minimise food waste and loss; and to discover how Woolworths' food waste strategies contribute towards the brand being considered a meaningful brand.

7.1.1 What are the post-covid food waste practices of Woolworths' consumers?

Woolworths' consumers all had a negative perception of allowing food waste to occur, finding it irresponsible and morally reprehensible. Furthermore, majority of the consumers seemed hesitant, slow to answer or gave contradictory information, which may indicate that they have not yet thought about Covid-19's impact on their personal food waste behaviours. Additionally, it was uncovered that consumers experienced food waste either increase dramatically or decrease slightly due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the changes it made to their behaviours or that of retailers like Woolworths. These findings which were discussed in depth within the analysis of data and findings section, showed a clear gap in awareness by consumers of how their behaviours impact food waste and highlight the importance of more research being conducted into the topic.

7.1.2 What are the strategies used by Woolworths' to minimise food waste and loss?

Most Woolworths consumers feel that the brand helps to minimise their personal food waste and actively minimises food waste throughout most of their processes. However, it was clear that some consumers lacked awareness of the brand's food waste management strategies. Strategies that help the brand accomplish this could be seen as: food donations; long-life packaging; extended

product life; effective labelling; expiration placement; responsible sourcing and their waste reduction influence. These findings revealed that although many of the strategies are effective, consumers lack awareness surrounding them, leaving a gap for the brand to be seen as more meaningful in the eyes of consumers if awareness is improved.

7.1.3 Do Woolworths food waste strategies contribute towards the brand being considered a meaningful brand?

It was uncovered that almost all consumers believed that Woolworths stands for more than just profit and could provide multiple examples, such as, food donations initiatives, monetary donation initiatives, their dedication to quality, the support of local suppliers, educational programs, social responsibility initiatives and being perceived as a sustainable and environmentally conscious brand.

7.1.4 What are the food waste management behaviours of Woolworths' South African consumers based in Johannesburg and what contribution does this have towards Woolworths being seen as a meaningful brand within a post Covid-19 context?

In relation to the main research aim above, it is clear that overall, this research sample views the Woolworths brand as meaningful and a brand with purpose. This can be concluded due to the samples' overall positive sentiment towards the brand and the multiple examples and lived experiences given by the sample attesting to their practices which involve more than just profit making and showcase a clear purpose.

7.2 Recommendations

With every study, recommendations are necessary to gain further understanding surrounding the topic. Firstly, although Woolworths can be seen as meaningful and a brand with purpose for this particular sample, the findings which showcase not all participants feel this way indicates that the brand could still improve in

this regard. These findings showed a lack of awareness from the consumer. Thus, it is recommended that Woolworths implements a variety of marketing campaigns and techniques on social media, in-store and on their packaging which focus on how the brand contributes to the local community and how they reduce food waste through their various management strategies (Horos & Ruppenthal, 2021).

Furthermore, as was indicated by Cook *et al*, (2010) and Lenssen and Smith (2018), there is a clear gap in literature and in-depth research on the topic of food waste management, especially in terms of its contributions to a brand being seen as meaningful and within a post Covid-19 context. Thus, it is recommended that future studies are conducted on the topic, allowing for an improved understanding to be formed by researchers, brands and consumers. Additionally, it is clear that the sample size of the study was not fully representative of the entire South African population. This is due to South Africa being highly diverse in terms of demographics, psychographics and varying cultures (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Pham, 2018). Thus, it is recommended that future studies encompass a larger sample size with varying demographic, psychographic and cultural participants which can provide a more holistic and accurate view on the issue of food waste management and how it relates to meaningful brands or being seen as a brand with purpose.

Lastly, this study was conducted throughout travel and interaction-based restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, causing data collection to be carried out fully online and without the face-to-face interaction which is suggested is important for qualitative studies such as this (Chowdhury, 2014). Additionally, connection issues and expensive data costs both posed significant challenges for participants. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies on the topic take this into account and conduct their studies in person with all necessary Covid-19 precautions in place so as to further enhance the data collection.

8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations can be seen as a vital step that ensures the moral and professional standards are upheld by the researcher, protecting all stakeholders, maintaining the acceptance and trustworthiness of the research itself (Louw, 2014). According to DeRenzo, Singer and Moss (2020), researchers need to remain ethical through the promotion of the aims of the research, authentic knowledge, truth and avoidance of possible errors.

For this research in terms of ethical considerations, the formal process for procedural ethics was followed using the Research Request Form and ethical approval (Annexure B) was received from Vega School through the relevant ethics committee in adherence with the Vega School ethics checklist. Once this ethical approval was gained, the approved research guidelines were followed for the research, subsequent data collection and analysis.

Initial contact with all participants in the form of the Woolworths' consumers who were over the age of 18 was carried out and informed consent conducted. This contact involved the formal invitation to participate, along with the participants being informed of what was required from them during the study, how their identities would be protected, how their responses will be utilised throughout, how they could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions and finally the study's confidentiality limits were discussed (Louw, 2014; Arifin, 2018). After which, a written form was given to participants, that included the researcher's and leaning institutes details, purpose for the research, what is required of participants, explanation of how it will be recorded, how their responses would be used, how their identities would be protected, notification that no incentives would be offered and a consent signature field (Annexure B). Additionally, audio and video recording consent forms were provided (Annexure C). These forms were then signed by those willing, allowing those who were not to refuse participation; the signed forms were then stored securely for record keeping purposes (Arifin, 2018). A script for the structured interview questions was also provided to remain transparent and trustworthy (Annexure D).

Furthermore, during the collection of data, participants physical and psychological comfort and safety were prioritised, ensuring they were protected, felt comfortable and respected during each stage of the research (Louw, 2014).

Participants were therefore informed that their private or sensitive data and overall identities would be protected and remain confidential to anyone besides the researcher (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). Thus, as recommended by DeRenzo *et al.*, (2020) pseudonyms in the form of semantic characters and numerical values were combined and utilised, with participants being informed of such. Furthermore, participants were allowed to select a suitable time and online platform, so as to ensure Covid-19 compliance (Dodds & Hess, 2021).

Due to the importance of transparency, full consent and to avoid any physical, psychological, prejudicial, relational or emotional harm to participants, the purpose of the research, how it would be handled, along with participant confidentiality was made clear and anyone who was considered vulnerable such as those too young or who could be marginalised or disempowered due to their views on Woolworths, food waste or Woolworths as a meaningful brand was excluded from the study (Louw, 2014; Arifin, 2018). According to Akaranga and Makau (2016), unequal power relationships, feelings of harm and deception may result in participants not being honest or withdrawing from the study. Thus, to avoid this a rapport and relationship of trust was established between the researcher and the participants by avoiding group settings, conducting the interviews online, one-on-one, avoiding the use of any misleading or leading questions, avoiding any type of coercion, ensuring participants had a full and detailed understanding of the research and its processes, and asking the participants about any concerns beforehand (DeRenzo *et al.*, 2020).

Lastly, the researcher avoided any ethical issues that related to the way in which data analysis and reporting was conducted as suggested by Louw (2014). No information or data was deliberately falsified or changed in anyway, ensuring the results were completely accurate and honest (Pope & Mays, 2020). Additionally, the results were not distorted in terms of interpretation or communication in any way, giving the full context and accurate emphasis throughout (Louw, 2014). Moreover, bias was not present on the researcher's part, the participants were not influenced, no information was misused or plagiarised in any way, for any self-gain or unethical purposes, which was due to a high level of transparency, the use of a personal ethical code of conduct, and guidance from the Vega School's ethics committee (Louw, 2014; Pope & Mays, 2020).

9. Limitations of the Study

Every study will have certain limitations that should be outlined by the researcher which according to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) refers to elements or situations that could threaten the validity or trustworthiness of the study, for example, the scope, logistical or resource limitations.

Firstly, in terms of the scope of the study, a limitation can be seen in the insufficient sample size and lack of diversity amongst participants, which may negatively impact the study's ability to create meaning (Anderson, 2010). By only engaging with eight Woolworths consumers through purposive snowball sampling, it could lead to difficulty and issues of validity when examining the Woolworths brand overall as they have a large number of consumers across many different locations in SA, many of whom have their own unique cultures, ethnicities or are at differing stages of life; making it more difficult to maintain or exhibit the rigor of the research, draw accurate conclusions and verify findings or research outcomes (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Furthermore, in a qualitative study such as this, the quality of the research can be seen linking to and depending on the researcher, their skills or actions (Anderson, 2010). Meaning it can lack objectivity and has a tendency to be heavily influenced by the researcher's own meaning systems through their presence and direct involvement in the research, for example, through their biases, beliefs, culture or differing schools of thought (Pham, 2018). This means that participant responses or honesty can be affected (Ryan, 2018). Additionally, qualitative research is not as accepted or understood as quantitative research is within the scientific community, meaning it could be limited due to its lack of credibility for some and fear of it being inaccurate or impossible to replicate (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Moreover, as the research's qualitative approach will result in large amounts of data, it can make the analysis and presentation time consuming (Anderson, 2010). As the study is conducted by a single student who has a deadline of around 7 months, this could result in another clear limitation for the study. Additionally, Vega School would not be providing any financial assistance for students, meaning

financial constraints that result in a small sample size and restricted timing would create another limitation for the study (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

Lastly, as Dodds and Hess (2020) expresses, the pandemic has greatly affected people's current realities and has altered behaviours and attitudes in the short term, which may not be the case post-pandemic, creating another limitation in terms of validity. Furthermore, the pandemic and subsequent restrictions have made it difficult for researchers to directly interact with participants as there are face masks or increased distancing (Dodds & Hess, 2020). This may limit the researcher's ability to interpret participant's body language, emotions, facial expressions, ask follow-up questions or pick up on any other nuances which are key to the success of gaining an in-depth understanding through the eyes of the participant (Dodds & Hess, 2020; Lobe *et al.*, 2020). Additional limitations could also be found in a lack of equipment, issues with internet or expensive data costs, security risks for sensitive participant data on online platforms or the risk of illness from physical interaction, thus, making the data and research unexpected and difficult to verify or validate (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

10. Ensuring Trustworthiness

For the research to be accepted, seen as useful, meaningful or credible, it is imperative that trustworthiness is established through the meticulous and methodological processes undertaken when gathering and analysing the research (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Connelly (2016) believes that a lack of clarity in the purpose of the study, methodological inconsistency and a lack of transparency can lead to untrustworthiness.

Amankwaa (2016) and Nowell *et al.*, (2017) both agree that the criteria established by Guba and Lincoln (1994) should be used to establish if research is worthy of consideration and trustworthy in nature. These criteria include, credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In terms of credibility, it is seen as one of the most important criteria for ensuring trustworthiness and examines how consistent and accurate the researcher was in terms of interpreting the participant's data (Hadi & Closs, 2016). According to Amankwaa (2016) for a qualitative study such as this, credibility can be improved when researchers take extended periods of time to fully connect with and gain insight into the lives and experiences of their participants, in this case Woolworths' consumers. Additionally, for this study the findings were made to be adequately descriptive in nature and fully believable from the perspective of the participants (Koonin, 2014). To do this, credibility strategies were included, such as, reflective field journaling, triangulation, member checking and ensuring the researcher expressed authority and was able to inform participants that their answers have no right nor wrong answer, ensuring they provided honest and valuable information for the study (Anney, 2014).

In terms of dependability, it examines the stability and quality of the data over time and the processes between its collection, analysis and generated theories (Koonin, 2014). Cope (2014) argues that to achieve dependability in a study, its findings would need to be able to be replicated with similar participants, in similar conditions. Moreover, dependability can be generated through the use of an audit trail, triangulation in the form of multiple sources, peer evaluation and an effective strategy for the coding and recoding (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Thus, to

ensure dependability in this research, in-depth descriptions and reflections on the processes and methods used to gather and analyse the data were provided to ensure replication could occur and that stability and quality between processes occurred (Cope, 2014).

In terms of confirmability, it examines the researcher's neutrality and if the data collected is consistent with and can support the findings of the researcher (Koonin, 2014). Ensuring confirmability means that the data gathered and interpretations of it could be repeated and successfully verified by others as the researcher described the research process in full (Cope, 2014). Additionally, it is ensured that the data came from the perceptions of the participants and not from the researchers' own biases or characteristics (Anney, 2014). Thus, to ensure confirmability for this qualitative study, detailed notes were kept through reflective journaling and an audit trail, in which each decision and process followed was described in-depth (Connelly, 2016).

In terms of transferability, it examines if the outcomes of the research can be placed into similar situations, settings or groups and deliver the same results (Connelly, 2016). According to Anney (2014) the results must have meaning to others not involved in the study, therefore, purposive sampling and thick descriptions of the findings can help ensure transferability. Thus, for this research, detailed information in the form of thick descriptions relating to the context of the study which provide insight into the characteristics of the participants and any methodologies used throughout the study was given (Connelly, 2016).

11. Anticipated Contributions of the Study

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), the anticipated contributions should indicate what kinds of contributions a study is likely to make to the field, body of knowledge or stakeholders.

For this study, it could lead to an enhanced, trustworthy and rigorous understanding of how brands like Woolworths can be considered meaningful in the context of food waste management and contribute to the overall body of knowledge relating to the topic such as, Trotman and Carson (2018) or Parker, Sikobi and Jones (2020) have done. The study could lead to an improved understanding of how events like the Covid-19 pandemic impact food waste, branding with purpose and the processes of qualitative research (Norris *et al.*, 2021).

Additionally, as the study is exploratory, qualitative and unique in nature, not only could it add to the existing body of knowledge but it could further aid future researchers through the provision of factual and descriptive information to better understand what contributes to a brand being seen as meaningful in the minds of consumers, and how food waste management can play a role in such; allowing for brands to implement and share strategies that can effectively reduce food waste and improve future research (Cook *et al.*, 2010; Norris *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, through the use of the study's open-ended interviews, context sensitive qualitative data was gathered and analysed which could assist South African brands, such as, Woolworths to better understand their food waste management practices, their consumer's behaviours, sustainability and what can make their brand more meaningful, allowing for each to be improved upon, positively impacting the issue of food waste and benefitting the brand (Bevir & Blakely, 2018).

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Annexures:

Annexure A – Approval of Proposal & Ethical Clearance Letter:



Date: 27 July 2021

Student name: Dean Sartor

[REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Bordeaux

Re: Approval of RMET8429 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

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

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

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

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

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

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

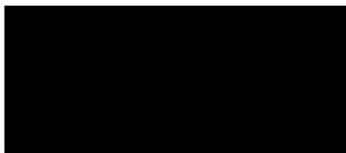
1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

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

Supervisor name: Dr Tish Taylor



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Dr Tish Taylor



Annexure B – Consent Form for Respondents & Participants:

CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern,
My name is Dean David Sartor and I am a student at Vega School. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr Tish Taylor about gaining an in-depth understanding of Woolworths' consumers post-covid food waste behaviour, I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how brands like Woolworths can be considered meaningful in the context of food waste management and contribute to the overall body of knowledge relating to the topic. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because (insert reason). If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve). You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your (insert what you are examining). If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega School will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Dean David Sartor



The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Tish Taylor



Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Dean Sartor about gaining an in-depth understanding of Woolworths' consumers post-covid food waste behaviour, I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how brands like Woolworths can be considered meaningful in the context of food waste management and contribute to the overall body of knowledge relating to the topic.

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

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

Signature	Date

Annexure C – Consent Form for Audio or Visual Recording:

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Dean David Sartor to audio and video record my interviews as part of the research about gaining an in-depth understanding of Woolworths' consumers post-covid food waste behaviour, I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how brands like Woolworths can be considered meaningful in the context of food waste management and contribute to the overall body of knowledge relating to the topic. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Annexure D – Interview Questions / Guide:

Interview Questions:

1. As a Woolworths consumer, what food products do you usually purchase from the brand?
2. Do you purchase food products from Woolworths over other similar retailers, if so why?
3. How do you feel about wasting food?
4. Do you feel like Woolworths tries to minimise food waste, if so how?
5. What food waste strategies, if any are you aware of that Woolworths practices?
6. How do you normally dispose of your Woolworths food products?
7. What do you think are the most effective ways to avoid or reduce food waste in your home?
8. In what ways, if any has the Covid-19 pandemic altered the way in which you waste food?
9. Does purchasing from Woolworths assist in minimising your food waste at home?
10. In what ways, if any do you think Woolworths contributes to the local community?
11. In what ways, if any do you think Woolworths stands for more than just profit?

Thank you for your participation in Dean Sartor's interview, please do not hesitate if you feel a need to contact the researcher with any queries.

██

██

██