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**The antecedents of brand loyalty that lead to re-purchase intention in the
South African sports and fitness apparel industry**

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*I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic
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Abstract

The fitness industry is set to grow rapidly and is worth 50.43 million USD by 2023. This suggests that the businesses supporting the industry such as its apparel is set to grow as well. However, due to its massive and rapid growth it suggests an investigation discussing the purchasing decisions of people who take fitness to the highest level like professional or semi-professional athletes or sports and fitness professionals. Since it is their main income and passion it suggests that training apparel is important to them. The purpose of this study is to discover what factors of brand loyalty lead to brand loyalty and re-purchase intention for individuals who take performance seriously. Through a qualitative approach the researcher was able to guide in-depth interviews to gain further understanding of what factors of brand loyalty were most important to the participants. Through the use of an online portal due to the international pandemic COVID-19, the interviews were conducted. The information provided aligned with past research and the researcher was able to place participants into the levels of David Aaker's consumer loyalty pyramid which was the main theoretical framework for the study. The researcher analysed the data by thematic analysis methods as behavioural loyalty is a main concept for this study. It can be summarised as the action or behaviour of the participants identify if performance-based individuals were any different from the rest of the public regarding their re-purchase intention.

Key Words: Brand Loyalty; Behavioural Loyalty; Attitudinal Loyalty; Sports; Fitness; Apparel

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Section 1 Introduction

Structure of the Paper

In this research paper the researcher provides a background of the study on brand loyalty and its relevance. The research problem and objectives of the study are outlined and expanded on. Through the use of seminal authors, the author explains brand loyalty its antecedents as key concepts in section 2.

In Section 3, the applied research methodology is explained as well as the sampling method. It is then followed by data gathering and data analysis methods explained thoroughly.

In section 4, the research findings are presented in a table format with a discussion linking the findings to the past literature, research problem, questions and objectives followed by an overall conclusion and suggestions made by the author.

Contextualisation

Branding was essentially the separation of products and brands through quality and price to make the identifiable for consumers. Through technology and increased accessibility, consumers started to form preferences. (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:59) It is suggested that the world in general is now in the declining loyalty era consisting of increased quality due to competition, price sensitivity and consumer purchasing multiple brands (declining loyalty). Rundle and Thiele claim that presently, brand communities still exist. Brand Communities are groups who are joined by the use of a particular brand and “the more integrated the consumer is into the brand community, the more loyal they are in consuming the brand.” (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:59) This suggests that brands should study their community. Their habits, values, environment for example, can give brands insight to creating products and campaigns that keep and increase their loyal base.

Rationale

Just like competitive athletes, the competitiveness of the sport industry is increasing. The global sports and fitness wear market, reports that from 2019-2023 the industry will be worth 50.43 million USD (Tech Navio, 2020) The industry will not only consist of the obvious members, being *Adidas*, *Nike*, *Puma* and *New Balance* but popular apparel companies such as *Gymshark*, *Lululemon* and local companies such as *Ultimate Wildcat*, *Kheper*, *Fit Farm Girl*, *Valencia Sports* and more. This impacts market share and brand loyalty. With a compound annual growth rate of 5.1%, (Allied Market Research, 2019) the sportswear industry holds promise. The market in regard to athletic footwear, reports that Africa and the Middle East are the fastest growing market with South Africa placing first holding 15% of the market. However, research has shown majority of the information provided is from a western view thus emphasizing the need to focus on responses or behavior of the South African market. Small South African business still have to compete with bigger more established companies, competitors who have defined the industry and newer competitors who have tapped into the market successfully and gained a loyal customer base. The marketers for these local companies have to find methods to not only convince consumers to give their product a chance but to continually choose them over major companies. The Pareto principle suggests that 80% of a brand income comes from 20% of their consumers. (Entrepreneur, 2013) Perry Marshall author of *80/20 Sales and Marketing*, states that business need to focus on the 20%, because they are essential to a businesses' prosperity. (Entrepreneur, 2013) The principle supports the value brand loyalty. This makes brand loyalty an important area to study using the South African consumer mind set or point of view to help grow these small businesses.

This subject is related to strategic brand communication which is the researcher's area of study. The researcher hopes to explore the topic to build their brand strategy skills as building and maintain brand loyalty is essential skill to brand succeeding. By identifying the antecedent of brand loyalty with the sports and fitness apparel market businesses can learn to build a strategy that can make their brand appeal to larger consumer base and build brand loyalty and eventually increase overall income.

Problem Statement

As the fitness apparel industry grows, it is important to find research that can benefit the industry and more importantly add from a South African perspective to benefit the local economy as it was stated that a large amount of the research available is from a western perspective. Conducting research with South African residing participants who fall into the Generation Z category is important. This generations buying power is increasing rapidly and since they have been subjected to the many forms of advertising from a young age it is important to gain an understanding in of their thought patterns because of this immunity this group has seemed to develop. (Digital Marketing Institute,2020) They (Gen Z) know how to cut through the noise and know what matters to them such as the environment and healthier work conditions. Thus, regarding high performance sport and fitness, it is important to see if their thought patterns during purchasing sports and fitness apparel has altered because the desire to be the best or reach one's goals may not be generational but a general desire.

Research Goals and Research Questions

Research Purpose Statement

Through a qualitative study utilizing the interpretivist empirical paradigm, this paper investigated the relationship between brand loyalty and repurchase intention within the sports and fitness apparel industry with the approach of finding the antecedents of brandy loyalty that lead to brand loyalty in this particular market. The researcher is to understand and identify the purchasing decisions of consumer, that leads them to be loyal to a brand so that the brand can utilize those practices to influence re-purchase intention and create brand loyalty. Thus, increasing overall profit. The research asked - What levels of the consumer loyalty pyramid do South African consumers fall into with regards to the sports and fitness apparel industry?

Primary Research Questions

The Researcher's main question – What are the antecedents of brand loyalty that lead to re-purchase intention in the South African sports and fitness apparel industry?

Supporting Questions

- What level of Aaker's consumer loyalty pyramid do South African Generation Z individual fall into?
- What are main antecedents of brand loyalty that are most important to participants withing the sports and fitness apparel industry?

Objectives

The research objectives of this study regrading brand loyalty in the South African fitness apparel market are as follows:

1. To determine the placement of consumers in David Aaker's Consumer loyalty pyramid.
2. To identify the factors that influence their purchasing behavior.
3. To identify if South Africans are loyal to one sport/fitness apparel brand.

Section 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation/Model

This foundation of the study aims to outline what the researcher knows or discovered about the subject. The subject of loyalty; brand loyalty behavioral and attitudinal loyalty in relation and David Aaker's "Brand loyalty pyramid" was used to guide this study.

Loyalty

Rundle-Thiele (2005) define loyalty "as a feeling or an attitude of dedicated attachment and affection. The feeling tends to infer that a person feels an obligation to continue with a personal relationship through good and bad times" Relational approaches suggest that researchers studying the topic need to understand that the interactions between consumers and marketers interaction impacts loyalty (the interaction of attitude and behavior). Lichtlé and Véronique (2008) suggests that loyalty in marketing has been divided into three sections: attitudinal, behavioral and mixed.

David Aaker's Consumer loyalty Pyramid/Model

The consumer loyalty model by David Aaker is the main foundation for this study (Aaker 1991:45). David Aaker in, Moisescu & Gica, (2006:56), illustrates that attitudes, habit and loyalty are outcomes of brand equity. This model is appropriate for this study as consumers are provided with multiple options in the sport apparel market and can easily switch brands. David Aaker's Consumer loyalty model is introduced in his 1991 book *Managing Brand Equity*. It states that each level of the consumer loyalty model expresses a marketing challenge and an asset that a business needs to utilise. (Aaker, 1991:45) He explains that at the core of brand equity, lies brand loyalty which is a reflection on how likely a customer will switch to another brand, particularly when said brand makes a change in price, product feature, communication and/or distribution channels. In *Brand Leadership* it is explained that brand loyalty is one of the four dimensions of brand equity with brand awareness; perceived quality and brand associations being the other dimensions. (Aaker, Joahimsthaler,.2000:17)

The model's different levels include (from bottom to top): (5) Switchers/Price, Sensitive Indifferent-No brand Loyalty; (4) Satisfied/Habitual Buyer – No Reason to Change; (3) Satisfied Buyer with Switching Costs; (4) Likes the Brand -Considers it a Friend; (1) Committed Buyer. (Aaker 1991:45)



Figure 1: Consumer Loyalty Pyramid. Adapted from Aaker

Aaker explains that even a small loyalty base in a business or brand can form an important part equity. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000:17) Suggesting that the model highlights how businesses can best utilise their marketing decisions and where to place their focus to increase brand equity.

Brand Loyalty is an element of brand equity that differs from the other elements because it focuses more on the experience factor. (Latif, Islam & Noor, 2014:550) In Aaker's Loyalty Pyramid, each level represents a marketing challenge and can reveal various assets that the brand may have and can use to their advantage. (Aaker, 1991:45) Not all customers will be exclusive to one level. For example, a customer may like the brand (level 2), but they have switching costs (level 5). Aaker explains that even a small loyalty base in a business or brand can form an important part equity. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000:17) Suggesting that the model highlights how businesses can best utilise their marketing decisions and where to place their focus to increase brand equity.

Explanation of the various levels of Aaker's loyalty pyramid

The Committed Buyer (level 1). This customer is considered a top-level customer who takes pride in being an early adopter of brand when there was scepticism about the brand's product. The brand has become important to them as it is an extension of them and has great functional use to them. Committed buyers waste no time in recommending the brand to others. They are a valuable category to the brand because they influence others and the market, not just because of the business or money they generate for the brand as an individual. A committed buyer would be the person who constantly attends the Apple launch every year for the announcement of the new iPhone. (Aaker, 1991:46)

Likes the Brand- Considers it a friend (level 2). The relationship this customer has with the brand can be based on symbols, personal experiences, memories or a high opinion of the brands quality. However, 'liking' a brand is subjective. Consumers struggle to pinpoint why they like a brand and constantly choose it over others. It is enough that they have continued to buy the product or that it was the brand they first bought when they bought that product and liked it enough not to change brands. These consumers find comfort and safety in the symbol/logo and techniques used to make

their products and simply do not change because of the emotional attachments. (Aaker, 1991:46)

Satisfied Buyer with switching costs. (level 3) These consumers are content with the brand however they have switching costs. Switching costs are onetime costs facing the consumer from switching to another brand. Switching costs include transactional, learning and contractual costs. (Caruana, 2004:257) To attract these buyers, the competing brand needs to overcome the costs though offering incentives to switch brands or provide large enough as a payoff for the switching costs endured. Aaker's calls them the "switching cost loyal". (Aakers, 1991:46-46)

The Satisfied/Habitual Buyer (Level 4) are consumers who are satisfied with the brand or product and they are not discontent with the brand enough to change, especially if there is effort needed to change brands or products. This group can be identified as habitual buyers who are at risk to moving to competitors if there are benefits involved. Although they are difficult to market to as they have no need to change brands. (Aakers, 1991:45)

The non-loyal buyer situated at the bottom of the pyramid, includes customers who are apathetic towards brands. They feel no personal responsibility towards a particular brand. They purchase brands on sale or whatever is most convenient. This group is also known as a 'switcher' or 'price buyer'. (Aaker, 1991:45)

Literature Review

Definitions of Brand Loyalty

There are various definitions of brand loyalty, many altered based on research to suit the researchers anticipated findings. However, a definitive or solid definition has not been produced or agreed upon. Loyalty is a combination of various factors that make it difficult to establish a definition.

Jacoby and Olson define brand loyalty is a product non-random, long-existing response of behavior (to a brand) and it was a process of mental purchase formed by some certain decision units who consider more than one brand. (Jacoby and Olson, 1970:13).

Brown defines the concept of brand loyalty as a sequence of purchasing a specific brand into three groups of undivided loyalty, divided loyalty, unstable loyalty and no loyalty. (Brown, 1953:12). This definition does not touch on behavior which is an important theme identified in researching brand loyalty and will not be used.

David Aaker (1992) defined brand loyalty as a concept used to measure the connection or relationship between the customer and brand. It represents the chances that a customer will return to a brand when aspects such as price or product features are changed. (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:55)

Brand loyalty according to Cunningham 1956 can also be measured in quantity or proportions. A consumer who has purchased a brand repeatedly, is considered more loyal compared to the consumer who purchases another brand in-between of purchasing the main brand. ()

Reichheld and Teal claim that having loyal customers tends to bring a variety of benefits to a company in various forms such as continuous streams of profit, reduced operating and marketing costs, increase in brand/company referral and build a form of immunity to marketing from competitors. (Rapala, 2014:1)

For the purpose of this study Jacoby and Chestnut and David Aaker's definitions have been combined and used. David Aaker's definition discusses the consumer's re-purchase intention and the aspects that can influence it. Simultaneously, Jacoby and

Chestnut discuss behavioural response and the time period in which brand loyalty forms. Aaker's customer loyalty pyramid is the model used in this study to help measure brand loyalty making it an appropriate choice as it is an objective of this study.

Brand Loyalty is non-random, long-existing response of behavior (to a brand) and a process of mental purchase formed by some certain decision units who consider more than one brand. (Jacoby and Olson, 1970:13). David Aaker (1992) defined brand loyalty as a concept used to measure the connection or relationship between the customer and brand. It represents the chances that a customer will return to a brand when aspects such as price or product features are changed. (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:55)

Behavioural Loyalty according to Paacola (2006) is the type of loyalty where a consumer repeatedly purchases the same item or brand or returns to place of service and mental processes are left unanalysed. (The 'mental process' suggests that the consumer places the purchases automatically without much thought) The concentration is placed on the intention to repeat the past purchase. (Rampala 2014:8) In Gupta, Schivinski and Brzozowska-Wos (2017) the same concept is explained as a combination of conditions or antecedents such as switching-costs, price promotion, values demographics or poor alternative products. (Gupta, Schivinski and Brzozowska-Wos, 203:2017) The study also explains that there is a link between behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. It suggests that if attitudinal loyalty does not exist, behavioural loyalty will only last for a short period of time. However, behavioral data has its limitations even though it is objective data. This data makes it difficult to be biased against participants who switch brands. This meaning that a switch from Nike to Adidas for example, could occur because the participant's training group or environment is loyal to Adidas while the other participants group is loyal to Nike. (Aaker,1991:48)

In another study, behavioral loyalty is essential when a consumer purchases the same brand frequently. This then suggests that loyalty is measured by actual purchase behavior. While attitudinal loyalty, focuses on customers that have developed an advantageous attitude towards a brand. This makes re-purchase intention fall part of attitudinal loyalty. Behavioral and attitudinal loyalty are the two components that make

the concept of consumer loyalty two-dimensional. (Lichtlé and Véronique, 2008:122) Day in 1969 then states that re-purchase behavior must be followed by a favorable attitude of the brand. While this study will focus on behavior, it is important to touch on attitudinal loyalty as well to fully understand consumer and brand loyalty.

Attitudinal Loyalty

Loyalty has been described as a function Attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Bennet and Rundle-Thiele (2002) explain that behavioural loyalty is the evident outcome of attitudinal loyalty that can be analyzed. These are factors such as market sales and shares that can be analyzed without understanding the concept of attitudinal loyalty. However, what attitudinal loyalty can do is identify the consumers that are exposed or susceptible to change in a changing industry. This is important to analyse in the type of markets where consumers do not make their final purchasing decision among brands when the purchase occurs. It should be treated as a personality trait. (Bennet and Rundle-Thiele, 2002:141) Suggesting that marketers can ask: What is the consumers attitude towards the brand and its product or service? This suggests that they must identify where the switch happens and what the switching costs are. This is supported by Paavola (2006) in Rapala's study (2014). It states that the research that studies loyalty from the psychological point of view, shows that a customer's loyalty is a reason for brand or consumer loyalty (Rapala, 2014:11) The psychological commitment a consumer has towards a brand is the focal point of attitudinal loyalty. The psychological angle is supported again by Jacoby and Chetnut 1978 study. Attitudinal loyalty is defined by these researchers as the consumer's inclination towards a brand as a function of psychological process including a preferable attitude towards said brand. Simply put: How does the consumer feel about the specific brand? Attitudinal loyalty can help marketer develop a high proportion of loyal consumers which is a focal point for them. (Bennet and Rundle-Thiele, 2002:141) Casidy & Wymer 2015; Casidy & Wymer in 2016 define attitudinal loyalty as the consumers dedication and attachment or closeness to a brand (Gupta et.al.203:2017) Consequently attitudinal loyalty without behavioral loyalty will not result in higher revenue or repurchase intention as the behavioral is the actual purchase of the brand's product or service. This is referred to by Dick and Basu's 1994 as latent loyalty. It can occur due to various factors such as lack of funds.

Therefore, the research suggests that behavioral loyalty is the actual action of consistently re-purchasing a brand while attitudinal loyalty is more psychological. It is the individuals constant favor of or positive attitude towards the brand regardless of whether they purchase the product or not. The two are linked however, attitudinal can take place without behavioral as behavioral loyalty, the repeated purchase suggests that there is an attitude towards that brand. This is linked to the two categories of brand repurchase discussed by Odin, Odin and Valette-Florence (2001). Repurchasing of a brand can be divided into two categories of reflective loyalty and inertia. (Odin, Odin and Valette Florence, 2001:78) Reflective refers to brand commitment or favour towards a brand, while inertia refers to re-purchasing of the same brand without reason supporting the choice. It is important to distinguish these categories as inertia implies situations of weak involvement. (Not a lot of thought or effort was put into the purchase). The participants illustrated one of the two categories after the interviews were conducted.

Consumer Attraction

Mitchel and Olson in 1981 defined brand attitude as a consumer's overall perception of the brand and that brand attitude is reliant on the customers personal perceptions. Making it an indicator of future consumer behaviour. (Liu, Li, Miszerski and Soh, 2011:924) Consumer attraction may suggest that a relationship can give more reward and pleasure than it can give pain and sacrifice. Consequently, enforcing the desire to continue with the relationship, in other words, igniting re-purchase intention.

The Value of Brand Loyalty

Research shows that utilising brand loyalty is a strategic plan that can help transform one's brand. (Aaker, 1991:50) There are reduced marketing costs as retaining existing customers, costs less than gaining new ones. Potential customers need motivation to change brands and can be costly to reach especially if they are not planning on switching brands. This also means that brands need to make sure that with all the effort they are putting in to gain new customers, they do not ignore the old ones due to the Pareto principle. The satisfaction loyal consumers have, attract new customers to the brand as they want the same satisfaction as well. It is a type of brand assurance. (Aaker, 1991:51) The loyalty base of brands provides brands with time to respond to competition threats or product issues. A loyal consumer would not leave the brand

immediately, but their trust buys time for the brand to remain competitive in the market and keep their loyal consumers. (Aaker, 1991:51) Trade leverage is extremely important part of brand loyalty. Due to the fact that a brand is popular and has a loyal base, the brand can easily acquire better commercial space in retailer store and advertisements. The retailer wants to make a profit as well, resulting in them making decisions that benefits the brand such as giving their products the best and sometimes the most shelf space. (Aaker, 1991:51) These factors are part of the reason for this study. Within the sport and fitness apparel industry, what factors of brand loyalty do brands, and retailers need to understand from a sport perspective to better retain their consumers and attract new ones? This directs the study to the measures of brand loyalty which will be referred to as the antecedents of brand loyalty.

Antecedents of brand Loyalty

This section has a few approaches, however, due to Aaker's model being applied to the study, his approaches of measuring brand loyalty will be used. He discusses the importance of behavior, which is for the purpose of this study, the end act of buying or re-purchasing an item from the same brand. (Aaker, 1991:48)

Antecedents of brand Loyalty

In Rapala's 2014 study, she identified several antecedents of brand loyalty these were used to help the researcher identify loyalty factors in the participants and place them in a level of Aaker's brand loyalty pyramid. In a 2017 paper by Rynek et al. The antecedents are divided into categories such as consumer, brand, social and corporate. The same study discussed antecedent such as switching-costs, price promotion, values demographics or poor alternative products. (Gupta et.al., 2017:203) The factors that Rampla discusses can be found under Brand Antecedents. It is summarized into where consumers seek value and all the elements of the brand and symbol that give consumers that perceived value or determine value for that consumer. (Gupta et.al, 2017:201) El-Manstrly 2016; Ramaswami & Arunachalam (2016) brand antecedents study includes terms supported in other literature such as perceived quality, brand personality and brand associations. These antecedents help consumers decide between competing brands and drive satisfaction, due the consumers perceived value. (Gupta et.al. 2017:202) Based on studied literature the

researcher for the purpose of this study has suggested that antecedents of brand loyalty can be identified as:

Trust is the desire of the average consumer to rely on the brand's ability to deliver and perform its specified function. (Chauduri & Holbrook, 2001:82) It has been researched extensively and been linked to the type of loyalty that a consumer has such as attitudinal loyalty.

Satisfaction is also discussed in Dick and Basu's 1994 study and Aaker's study as an element of brand loyalty. Satisfaction affects repurchasing behaviour, repurchase intent consumer retention and positive word of mouth. (Brunner, Stocklin & Opwis 2007:1095)

Commitment is an intentional factor brand loyalty. Is the participant commitment to the brand in purchasing, and favouring the brand in supporting aspects such as social media following and so on. Strong or extremely popular brands will have high equity consisting with a large number of committed customers. An indicator of commitment is the amount of interaction and communication customers have with the brand or product. You can measure commitment by asking if the customer likes to discuss the brand with others? Do they recommend the product or brand to others along with the reasons they should buy it? (Demonstrating their knowledge of the brand or product) Does the consumer enjoy using the brand? – In this case, do they enjoy training in it to help them get their desired fitness and/or performance results? (Aaker 1991:49)

Image Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) argue that if a brand has developed a strong reputation, it is an important factor in developing brand loyalty. The consumers may desire the perceived image that comes with purchasing the brand.

➤ Lifestyle brands

This is when a brand decides to alter their existing portfolio to the lifestyles of specific market segments. Rapala speaks of Kornbeger's lifestyle branding. The aim of lifestyle branding is to define the desired lifestyle to the target market instead of convincing them that a particular brand fits into their existing lifestyle. (Kornberger, 2010:194) Therefore, these brands continue to sell products

catered for the desired lifestyle they have designed and are promoting. This is relevant to this study because it suggests that due to the overwhelming number of products available, it may be easier for consumers to shop for the lifestyle they want. This links to an antecedent of brand loyalty of image and social group influence. Saviolo and Marazza (2013) when discussing what builds brand loyalty, suggest that the cornerstone of successful lifestyle branding lies in what the brand believes in, how they communicate it and express it. (Rampala, 2014:31) This suggests that lifestyle brand can be linked to relationship marketing which is a component of building brand loyalty. Consequently, satisfaction from these lifestyle brands and the social group influence can build brand loyalty for the sport and fitness apparel division of the brands.

➤ **Social group influence**

Gounaris and Stathakopolos (2004) suggests that social group influence tends to occur when individuals are with influences of closer environment as well as normative and social environments. This is important because the people or teams that the participants train with, can influence the participants perception of and favour towards a brand. With more aggressive marketing techniques, though techniques like pop-up stores, meet and greets, secret meet up, social media influencing and so on, the pressure to fit into a category increases which may create or enforce band loyalty. This is important to the study as the chosen population of athletes tend to train with a group of people and/or compete with others, suggesting that their teammates or competitors are their 'social group' who may influence their purchasing decisions as well.

Perceived value Consumers want to get value for their money; however, the definition of 'value' can depend on the consumer. Sirdeshmukh in 2002 proposed that value is the consumer's perception of the benefits of a purchase minus the financial cost and non-financial costs (Rapala, 2014:22).

Product Quality can produce feelings of excitement, pleasure and satisfaction that the consumer would want to replicate again in the future.

Switching Costs

Switching costs are important to this study as they are one of the factors that can determine if a consumer becomes and/or remains loyal. Switching costs are onetime costs and decisions that the consumer has to make when determining to switch from one brand's product or another. (Caruana, 2003:257) They involve several different costs such as financial costs, accessibility, learning costs (learning how to use the new brand's product), and contractual costs. This study hoped to discover if participants discussed learning costs of switching from one brand to another. Discovering what the learning costs were shed a light on what prevents a consumer or participants from trying a new brand or factors that convince consumers to try the newer brand despite the learning costs.

Four brand loyalty types were identified by Henry Asseal: (Moiescu & Gica, 2006:56-57)

- a) **The Complex Loyal** conducts research then develops an opinion about the brand and finally makes a final decision. It becomes the job of marketers to educate their consumer about all aspects of the brand. Such as the brand's attributes, unique points, and features to motivate salespeople to support and sell the brand.
- b) **The Dissonance Loyal** tends to shop around and make their purchasing decisions quickly. They consider brands within the same price range to be similar, even though the brands may be expensive and have communicated distinct identities. After not fully engaging themselves in the shopping experience like complex loyals, this group sometimes seeks validation for their choice of brand. The choice is usually called into question by their discovery of other brands favourable features and attributes. Marketers need to provide the right information to assure the consumer about their purchase. (Moiescu & Gica, 2006:56-57)

- c) **The Habitual Loyal** base their purchasing decisions on how familiar the brand is to them. They re-purchase the brand out of habit and because of convincing advertising. Marketers need to assure a constant supply of stock and release constant reminder advertisements. (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:57)

- d) **Variety seekers** constantly switch brands because they prefer variety over dissatisfaction. They have formed their own belief about brands and purchase without assessing the brand too much and only assess them later as they use or consume them. (They give the brand a chance to perform before the final assessment) Marketers have a variety of options to reach this group. They can offer free samples, coupons or redesign the brand's product to offer new features to attract customers. (Moisescu & Gica, 2006:57)

Conceptualization

This research study aims to gather an in-depth understanding of antecedent of brand loyalty withing the sports and fitness apparel industry with a focus of semi-pro athlete or fitness professional where the apparel that they use is more important to than the normal individual who exercises frequently.

The key concepts are as follows:

Brand Loyalty	Non-random, long-existing response of behavior (to a brand) and a process of mental purchase formed by some certain decision units who consider more than one brand. (Jacoby and Olson, 1970:13). David Aaker (1992) defined brand loyalty as a concept used to measure the connection or relationship between the customer and brand. It represents the chances that a customer will return to a brand when aspects such as price or product features are changed.
Antecedents of Brand Loyalty	Trust; Satisfaction; Commitment; Image; Perceived Value; Product Quality and Switching Costs.
Consumer Attraction	Mitchel and Olson in (1981) defined brand attitude as a consumer's overall perception of the brand and that brand attitude is reliant on the customers personal perceptions. It is an indicator of future consumer behavior. (Liu, Li, Miszerski and Soh, 2011:924) Consumer attraction may suggest that a relationship can give more reward and pleasure than it can give pain and sacrifice. Consequently, enforcing the desire to continue with the relationship, in other words, igniting re-purchase intention.
Behavioral Loyalty	The action of re-purchase or return where the mental processes are left unanalysed.
Attitudinal Loyalty	The attitude towards and brand that does not necessarily always lead to purchase due to various reason such as accessibility or lack of funds

Section 3: Methodology

Methodology Overview

The researcher conducted research using the qualitative method. It was conducted in Pretoria, South Africa focusing on individuals ages 18 to 25. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews and used thematic analysis data.

Paradigm: Interpretivism

Interpretivism paradigm was used to conduct this study. The interpretivism approach discussed by Sage Research methods states that it refers to theories or epistemologies about how one can gain understanding or knowledge about the worlds that loosely depends on the interpretation or understanding of the meanings that individuals attach to their actions. For the purpose of this study, the actions of selecting certain sport and fitness apparel brand continuously over competitors. (Sage Research Methods, 2020) Interpretivism is sometimes referred to as constructivism because it emphasizes the ability of the individual to construct meaning from the data or information provided. This suggests that this paradigm combined with a quantitative approach and an interview format was the correct paradigm for the researcher to use. (Maree, 2019:219)

Epistemology

Epistemology is collection of verifiable empirical evidences in support of theories or hypotheses. Human experience provides knowledge or information, in this case the participants' sporting or physical exercise experiences. (Intgrty, 2016) Guba and Lincoln claim that the approach of the knower or researcher should be objective or value 'freedom' to the can come to a conclusion of 'how things really are' or how they really work. (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52) This research could be used by companies in the sports and fitness industries to best utilise what earned them brand loyalty to repeat in product, services and campaigns.

Ontological approach

Ontology is defined by Crotty (2003) as the study of being. (Ahmed, 2008:2) It focuses on the nature of reality and what kind of world is the researcher investigating? (Ahmed 2008:2) This approach analyses what the data is about and uses that information as the basis or foundation for the structure of the data. (Science Direct, 2020) Ahmed study continues to explain that it focuses on the social world of meanings. In this world the researcher has to assume that the environment is filled with individuals that have their own opinions. Thoughts meanings and interpretations of things and concepts. (Ahmed, 2008:2) There is also realistic ontology that exists in a physical world that assumes cause and effect. Pring (2004) explained the concept as an attempt to research what the case is or what happened. And the purpose of the research is to predict what will happened in the future or what would happen if there were interruptions. (Ahmed, 2008:2) For the purpose of this study, understanding the factors that cause brand loyalty and switching costs that may disturb or reduce brand loyalty and re-purchase intention.

Methodology

Methodology concerns itself with the methods one uses to discover what it is they believe or can believe after discovery. (Witwatersrand, 2022) It is the strategy that the researcher chooses to adopt to create the desired outcome of the research. (Ahmed, 2008:5) The interpretivist paradigm adopted by this researcher aimed to use the qualitative method of interviews to analyse the thought patterns that affect the shopping behaviours that can impacted brand loyalty to gain an overall deeper understanding of the topic.

Research Approach/Design

Research Design explains how the researcher will approach the sections need in the study. It explains how the researcher will choose, analyses and interpret the data. The Approach to research is based on the research objective and the research questions.

Population

The target population is the people or audience that falls within the established population perimeters (du Plooy, Davis,& Bezuidenhout, 2014:133) This study had a target population made up of individuals aged 18 to 25, who reside in South Africa and are active meaning they are committed to a fitness routine either for the own interest or for competing purposes. The study's participants were no older than 24 years of age suggesting that they fall into the Gen Z category making this research important as this age group's buying power increases rapidly. (Digital marketing Institute, 2020) It is important to understand their thought processes during the purchasing process to gain an understanding on how to position to better position brands to sell their apparel to this group. 'Competing purposes' suggests that the participants are semi-professional athletes or professional athletes without a main apparel sponsor affecting their answers. It also suggests that the participants have spent a lot their time training or being active, indication that fitness apparel is an important component in their lives. The accessible population refers to the target audience that the researcher has access to and will include in the study. (Du-Cillers et al., :134). Since this researcher used to be part of this group, there was easy access had already been gained to contact and interview this group. The country of South Africa was also selected for this study as the researcher resides there, as well as the participants selected for the study thus making setting up the interviews easier for the parties involved. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the government regulations set out to control the spread of the disease, the population was accessed via the online platforms Zoom. They were made up of athletes and active participants that the researcher has access to since the researcher herself is a competitive athlete.

Sampling

As a qualitative study the number required for sampling is far less than quantitative. The sample size, quantity and type have been chosen according to qualitative requirements and what the researcher deems necessary to gain quality data to make the needed conclusions. Qualitative research aims to draw in a representative sample. (Du-Cillers et al 2004:135) Suggesting that the information and insights provided by the sampling group should represent a larger group of samples if the sampling group was increased to a larger number of participants with the same characteristics or criteria.

The type of sampling is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is usually chosen when it is difficult to gain access to the entire populations that fit the criteria for the study. (Du-Cillers et al 2004:135) This means that the 3 participants were chosen at the researchers discretion. A Pilates trainer who is also a swim coach (used to competitively swim as well); A track and field athlete and a 7's rugby player was chosen for the study. All participants had fit the criteria of people who train frequently where two compete and the other is involved in fitness as a job. Thus, suggesting that fitness apparel is very important to them and they know more than the average person who exercises.

Convenience sampling refers to situations where population elements are selected based on the fact that they are easily and conveniently available (Maree, 2019:219). Therefore, the researcher used their judgment to select a population to sample to draw conclusions for the study. The researcher conducted a total of 3 interviews from people that the researcher knows due to the researcher's own sporting and fitness background. Purposive Sampling involves the purposefully choosing the elements that the researcher wants from their sample population from characteristics that they have set out. (Du Plooy et al. 2014:142-143) Purposive assures that the selection of the right participants will provide the right kind of data that will aid the research being conducted.

Data Gathering

As a qualitative study, the aim of the study was to explore the perspective of the participants to experience or understand meaning, situations and actions through their eyes. (Hallberg 2013:1) Most researchers who choose this approach desire to gain a greater understanding and explore meanings and processes of everyday life.

An interview process had been chosen as the form of qualitative data gathering for the study. Interview data can reveal factors like opinions, experiences and values. (Showkat, 2017:2) Structured interviews allows the researcher to enquire about past, present experiences and hypothetical situations. There is a high response rate and opportunities for the researcher to clarify questions to avoid misinterpretation. (Queiros, Almeida, and Almeida, 2017:337) However, Queiros et al. continue to explain that structured interviews can be time consuming because of the preparation needed and participants may not have the same flexibility and an in-depth interview offers.

Data collection was conducted during the 2nd week of September 2020. Interviews can be setup in various way to suit current life conditions. The interviews were not face to face due to the Covid-19 to ensure the safety off the researcher and participants. Interviews length varied on the participant. The research required an in-depth structured interview to get as much information as possible. However, was limited to 40 minutes for the questions and followed by one in-depth question to allow some flexibility for the participants. Interviews are goal orientated and the aim of these interviews were to place participants in a loyalty level of Aaker's pyramid. The interviews were all held on Zoom as the participants did not need an account to participate making their participation easier. It started with a welcoming and gratitude by the researcher. The participants were provided with an explanatory letter in the email containing the consent from which allowed the researcher to start the interview almost right away. The explanatory letter and consent forms contained a short explanation of the research consisting of the reason for the research and topic of the research as well as their permission to record video and audio of the interview. The interview questions mainly consisted of open-ended questions to allow the participant to elaborate on the reasons for the answered or choices.

Application of Data Gathering Methods

Pre-Testing Phase

A pre-testing phase took place. The one participant was chosen according to the same criteria set for the main participants. The person was given consent and explanatory. Over zoom the interview was about 35 minutes. It was found that the interview questions flowed and made sense, however some were restructured to obtain more detail. This was because the researcher noticed that the participant answered some questions before they were asked as part of other questions, therefore making the interview repetitive. From there, some questions were reconstructed for the final interviews. However, it was also identified that the new participants may not answer other questions as part of another as the pre-test participant did. Thus, the same questions were asked but constructed in a manner that may brought out more information. After consulting with past literature, it was noticed that the interview questions did not have questions that were clear about the participants possible commitment to a particular brand. The questions about commitment theme we reconstructed better to create a clear link and to help the participant discuss their relationship with the mentioned brands better. As this is discussed in Aaker's book *Managing Brand Equity* under measuring brand loyalty. (Aaker, 1991;48) This suggests that it was important that the newly reconstructed questions are clear about a participant's commitment to a brand for better conclusions about their brand loyalty. The interviews with the main participants took place over Zoom. Each interview did not take more than 25 mins each with the exception of the test interviewee. A total of 17 questions were formed and asked in the interviews.

Steps of contacting the participants

- Contacting the participants via private messages
- After they agree ask for email address and set up interview time
- Email the consent forms

The research questions formed for this study are drawn from previous research. David Aaker book *Managing Brand Equity* (1991) discussed measuring behavior and the questions presented below are derived from it to form research questions.

Interview/Research Questions:

1. What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
2. How often do you train?
3. What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
4. How important is the quality of your training apparel to you?
5. Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
6. When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
7. Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?
8. What attracts you to certain brands over others?
9. Of the last five purchase made, can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased?
10. When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? (This is to categorize whether the participants fall into the reflective loyalty or inertia category)
11. How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events (To identify if they have attitude or behavior which is the actual purchase or participation)
12. After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
13. When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first? – This question was formed because of the differentiation between brand loyalty and inertia (weak involvement)
14. When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand? (Identifying switching costs.)
15. What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands? (Identifying Switching costs and commitment)
16. Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
17. Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research data analyzing method. It guided the researcher to identify themes, codes, topics and patterns of meanings (Scibbr, 2020) Qualitative research shows that data should be used to predict future behavior and identify casual variables. (Lewis 2009:3) Benefits of thematic analysis is that it allowed the researcher flexibility in how they choose to analyses and interpret the data especially large sets of data which is a strong possibility with interviews that have open ended questions. The goal of thematic analysis was to make some conclusions or suggestions about the overall topic according to the patterns of data and identified themes that appear as important or interesting to the study that the researcher had identified. Thematic analysis interprets data rather than just summarizing it. (Nowell; Norris; White and Moules, 2017:2) However, using themes can be considered a simple summarization of data. This suggests that in order for the researcher to go deeper, the researcher had to form insights linked to the literature of brand loyalty. Advantages of this form of analysis includes an approach that is easy to learn and can be easily modified for the researchers needs. Braun and Clark (2006) explains that this approach can help examine different perspectives to easily allow the indication of similarities and differences. (Nowell, et al., 2017:2) However, thematic analysis can also produce inconsistency and poor interconnection when developing themes from the data provided from the participants. To address this, the researcher had to make sure that there was clear enough link between the data, theme and literature discussing brand loyalty. Research also shows that to avoid this issue with thematic analysis, there needs to be an explicit link to the epistemological position that the study is taking. (Nowell et al, 2017:2) The steps of thematic analysis to be followed are derived from Braun & Clark 2006 study as well and will be discussed later.

A deductive approach had to be used which involves using preconceived themes deducted from studied literature. This does not mean new themes identified during the data gathering will not be used. Preconceived themes, and newly identified themes will be used to create the codes (colour) that will be linked to levels of the Aaker consumer loyalty pyramid to categorize the participants. Once the interviews had been transcribed and analysed the thematic process using codes and themes will be applied.

Expected Themes are the themes that the researcher expects to develop based on the past literature identified. Deductive reasoning is making implications based on previously provided information. (Brission and Markovits, 2020:920) In this case the previous literature of brand loyalty. It is a prediction of the consequences based on the research questions and objectives. (Live Science,2017) Expected themes were extracted from the antecedents of brand loyalty identified in past literature. Such as trust, commitment, quality and perceived value. For example, the researcher thought that if a participant continuously discusses one brand or one brand more than another, indicated trust which is the desire of the average consumer to rely on the brand's ability to deliver its specified function. (Rapala 2014:21) For example the researcher thinks "Knowing" is a code that may be identified that falls under the theme of trust. The participant knowing that a brand works for them may indicate trust.

Application of Data Analysing Methods

Step by step process to be used in the study will be as followed according to Braun and Clark 2006 study (Braun and Clark,2006:17)

After the interview has been conducted through a video call:

1. The data will be organized by saving the video call and transcribing the interview.
2. Transcribe Interviews
3. Familiarization with the data (Read the transcribed interview at least twice)
4. Coding – Identifying parts of the interview that appear to be interesting and provide insights to the topic of brand loyalty.
5. Search and Create Themes – This step involves arranging the codes into potential themes which will be influenced by the antecedents of brand loyalty and other major concepts identified in literature such as switching costs.
6. Review of the Themes Discuss, define and refine the themes (According to this research topic and past literature) This step also involves analysing whether the themes form a clear pattern. If not, a re-structure of themes may need to follow. An analysis of the validity of the themes will also be conducted in this step.

6b). Check whether the thematic analysis conducted so far works in relation to the data provided if not, the process needs to start from step 3 or 4 depending on the problem.

7. Discuss and define Themes. What is each theme about? What theme is linked to what kind of data set? How are the themes related to one another? Are there sub-themes? This section will include a detailed analysis and possible insight of each theme. Each theme description should not be too long if so, this is where refinement will take place.
8. Final Findings. What story that this research is saying about brand loyalty in sports apparel brands? The 'story' needs to include evidence of the formed themes with strong examples extracted from the interviews and past literature. This section is where the argument in relation to the main research topic and questions will take place.

The methods were chosen to compliment the research goals as a main concept of the study is behavior patterns during the purchasing process. Behavioural Loyalty according to Paacola (2006) is the type of loyalty where a consumer repeatedly purchases the same item or brand or returns to place of service and mental processes are left unanalysed. (The 'mental process' suggests that the consumer places the purchases automatically without much thought) The concentration is placed on re-purchase intention. (Rampala 2014:8) The mental process can be analysed through thematic analysis because the participants had discussed their past purchases and the reasons for them as well as how and why they will approach future purchases.

Section 4: Findings and Discussion

After conducting in-depth interviews with the three participants, the data was gathered into a table format before expanding on further of the data and linking it to the past literature.

Presentation of Findings and Coding

The researcher had used the antecedents of brand loyalty to create the themes and

Coding

The coding conducted in the interview transcripts are according to the antecedents of brand Loyalty which is used to measure brand Loyalty according to previous literature

01	QUALITY AND VALUE	When feelings of satisfaction, excitement and pleasure are gain from the brand and want to be repeated. Perceived value – Consumers get value for their money (depending on their definition of value)
02	TRUST	Being able to rely on the brands ability to deliver on its promise and perform its promoted function.
03	COMMITMENT	This is intentional. They support the brand through its products and surrounding factors such as social media. They recommend the brand and genuinely enjoy the products
04	IMAGE	Consumers desire a perceived image that comes with buying a reputable brand.
05	IDENTIFIED SWITCHING COST	One-time costs and decisions that a consumer faces when moving to a new brand or product. It can determine if a consumer remains loyal. Costs vary from actual price to learning curve (brand sizing for example).

LINKING AAKER'S PYRAMID TO THEMES

The themes which are the antecedents of brand loyalty, definitions will be linked to the levels of Aaker's Consumer Loyalty Pyramid to help place participants and suggest the type of "loyals" that they are.

Pyramid Level	Committed Buyer:	Likes The Brand	Satisfied Buyer	Satisfied/Habitual Buyer	Non-Loyal Buyer
Characteristics of Level	• Early Adopter • Brand is Important to them - it's an extension of them • Has functional use • Recommends to others • Participates in events etc.	• Relationship is based on symbols, personal experiences memories or a high opinion of the brands quality. • Likes, but cannot pinpoint their preference over others, like it enough not to be bothered to switch • Finds Comfort and safety in the logo and techniques • Does not change because of emotional attachments	• Content but have switching costs • Competing brand needs to overcome the costs by offering incentives to switch brands	• Satisfied but nor discontent enough to change • At risk to move to competitors if benefits are provided • Difficult to market to as they have no desire to switch brands	• Feel no responsibility towards being loyal to a brand • Purchase on sale or based on convenience
Corresponding Themes	• Commitment • Quality and value	• Quality and Value • Trust • Image	• Trust • Switching Costs • Quality and value	• Quality and Value • Trust • Switching cists	• Quality and Value • Switching Cost

Presentation of Findings

INTERVIEW QUESTION	CONCEPT	THEME NAME	INTERVIEW QUOTE	OBJECTIVES
How important is the quality of your training?	Behavioral Loyalty	Quality and Value	PA “The durability of the shoes....is durable and got good grip and all of that then, I’m on.” PC “Super important. I want to be able to be comfortable in the clothing I train in...”	Objective 2
	Finding - Participants see comfort as an indicator of quality. The two go hand in hand for them. - Quality appeared in several answers suggesting that this is the most important factor for participants			
When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?	Attitudinal Loyalty	Quality and Value	PB – “it felt like it was something that would last” PC – “Does it do the things that Nike would do for me?”	Objective 2
		Finding - Participants have an idea of what quality apparel is like already influencing their purchasing decisions. - Consumers compare unfamiliar brands to the quality and value familiar trusted brand given them.		

Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?	Attitudinal Loyalty	Trust	PA - So I don't think there is much of a need for me to do research with them being our team sponsor they make sure we get the best quality possible and we look good and in the same make them look good and promote them. But sometimes the shoes, I'm very picky and I stick with Adidas shoes because I feel like they are very comfortable. PB - "I always buy from places that I'm used to because I know what quality I'll expect from that place." ""	Objective 2
		Finding Participants already have a preferred brand indicating trust in that particular brand.		

Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?	Behavioral Loyalty	Trust	"I always purchase from them specifically because I know of the quality I'll be getting from them and how it will fit me and I'm definitely sure of the sizing as well." The familiarity. The knowing. The feeling of feeling safe in this product Um with shoes yes. But with training shoes yes. But casual clothing I'm very open with it.	Objective 1
	• Findings - Trust is built because of the quality of the brand's product and the previous experiences the participant has had with that brand's products. • Participants trust brands more when it comes to their shoes and unfamiliar purchasing conditions.			
When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what	Consumer Attraction	Commitment	PA- "For shoes Adidas. But for clothing, it will probably have to be Asics because that's out team sponsor.	Objective 2

brand are you most likely to go to first?			Well 90% of the time I'm wearing Asics clothing to gym or whatever." Participant PB – "I always to the section...between the takkies and the long tights And I always go to Adidas and after Adidas I go to Nike." PC – "Total Sports always definitely go to Nike, Uh the sports bras being my favorite. Then Ill go over to the tights. But definitely always Nike like 80% of the time."	
	Findings – Commitment is also dependent on the product. Participants appear to be more loyal regarding their footwear and even bras (which tend to be very expensive items)			
How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social	Consumer Attraction (Relationship MT)	Commitment	PA – "Um, not really. I'm not deep into that whole thing. Just that...I mean if I	Objective 3

media? Engage in challenges and go to events?			were to get endorsed by one of them, then I would. At the moment. I'm just free flowing." PB – "with Adidas I follow them on social media which would be Instagram. And I haven't attended any event at all like at all at all. I did have the Adidas app. So, I have like ...I signed up to their newsletter." PC – "Yes, Social Media definitely. I follow them. If they do host an events, host an event, I would love to go."	
	Findings Participants are committed because of other participation other than purchases however, opportunities to portray deeper commitment has not presented itself.			
Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?	Consumer Attraction	Image	PC - "Yeah because it kind of sets up this image of what you	Objective 1

			trying to do or trying to be.”	
		Findings Participants want a complete look either to sell an idea and/or blend in with athleisure trends as well.		
What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands?	Behavioral Loyalty	Switching Costs	“definitely an endorsement, if I get endorsed by another sporting brand and I have to be loyal to that brand.” “You just want to be wearing one brand. Like be wearing different brands all over the place...just make me seem like I’m confused”	Objective 2
		Findings - Future partnerships - as participants take their sporting activity very seriously in hopes that it may lead to a career or partnership of some sort. - A “complete look” influences the loyalty. They do not want to switch brands too much because a split brand look is not appealing to them		
When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?	Behavioral Loyalty	Switching Costs	PA - “Uhh not really. Not at the moment.” PB - “my decision making comes down	Objective 2

			to affordability and how does this fit my body” PC- “Uhhh Sometimes. I would say 30% of the time. So, it’s not a high calling but sometimes it does cross my mind. Especially if something, you know, catches my eye and it is different from the brand I normally choose. I will go for something different because of my likening in what I’m seeing”	
			Findings Switching costs vary. Participants indicated that “fit” and image (clothing style) influence their decisions to switch however, items must be clearly different from what they normally buy to convince them to make the switch.	

Interpretations of Findings

The following analysis is organized according to the themes presented in the table above.

Quality and Value

Quality produces feelings that consumers want to replicate while value is dependent on the consumer. Participants stated clearly that quality was important to them as it offers comfort and reassurance of what they have paid for. The lifespan of the product was also important to them due to the fact that they are performing in the apparel and shoes and need a product that they can rely on.

Commitment

Participants appeared to be committed to a brand especially when it came to sport and fitness apparel directly connected to their performance. Most apparent was their footwear. They all had a preferred brand which they discussed (and repeatedly mentioned) when it came to participating with the brands other outlets or channels. Such as social media, newsletters, apps and events. However, the participants had not been given the opportunity to attend events and really engage with the brand which according to Anna Rapala 2014's study is a sign of commitment. She explains that commitment is intentional, while they have shown some signs by adding these forms of media in their life. (Rapala 2014:21) This suggest due to factor out of their control, participants have poor relational antecedent. (Gupta, 2017:202) It may be suggested that there are signs but is it not a strong enough to categorize them as fully committed to a brand. This is seen especially in participant A, who will participate on the conditions that it may lead to a formal partnership. Participant B suggested this as well.

Trust

The researcher has discovered that trust was linked to quality and value of a brand's product. Because of the quality and value participants received trust was earned. All participants indicated trust by suggesting they stick to brand due to factors such as comfort and previous positive experiences with the brand. It is the brand's ability to

deliver on the brand and/or products specified function. (Rapala 2014:21) Participant demonstrated trust because “familiarity” and “knowing the quality” of a brands product. Image

This illustrated by all participants in various questions throughout the interviews. Participants linked image with performance but not as more important than performance. While looks are important to them, they suggested that the brand needs to deliver on its function first. Past literature suggests that consumers may desire the perceived image that comes with purchasing the brand. (Rapala 2014:21) Participant C supports this by suggesting that image was an important factor to directing future relationships or goals. Participants linking themselves with reputable brands, positions them as who they are trying to be or see themselves as. According to Gupta (2017), image may be a social antecedent. (Gupta et al., 2017:202)

Switching Costs

Their re-purchase intentions are dependent on various factors. It was identified that their switching costs are based on:

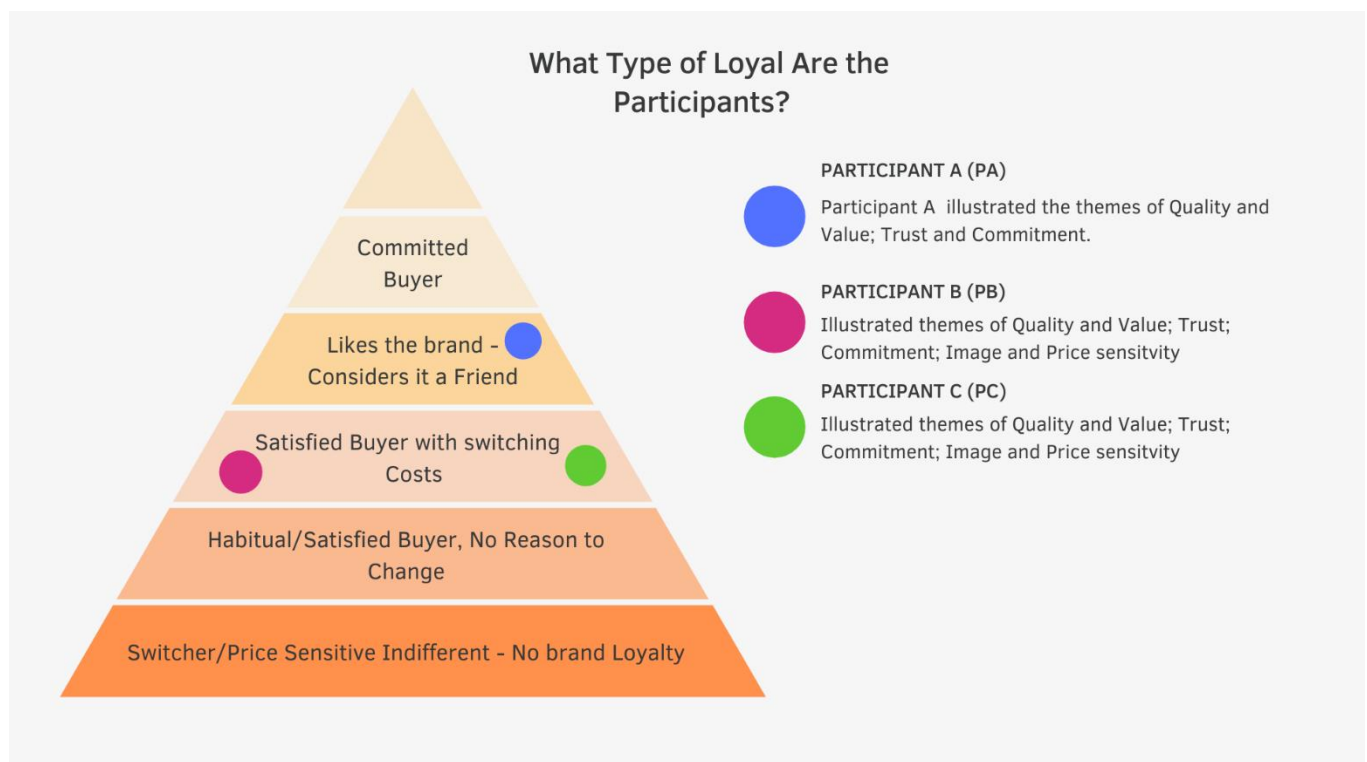
- Performance
- Price
- Sizing of a brand
- Future Relationships/Opportunities

This suggests that loyalty within this industry has many conditions and the researcher felt that performance was the strongest switching cost as it was influenced by quality and value which all the participants strongly agreed was really important to them because of performance factors. They appeared to be willing to sacrifice other factors for performance.

The researcher has discovered that there is variety of factors contributing to brand loyalty in the sports and fitness apparel industry. However, as expected, the participants take more time to research their apparel and are stricter with brand loyalty as can be, due to the fact that they focus more on performance compared to the average person. They consider what works for them as the main deciding factor but take image into consideration. Majority of interview questions uncovered more than one theme suggesting that brands can find ways to get them to switch and factors that

they can work on to get consumers to become loyal. The participants can be categorized as complex and habitual loyals as well as fall into the reflective category of repurchasing. Inertia focuses on repurchase without reason supporting the choice and weak involvement. (Odin et al, 2001:78) Participants demonstrated inertia as they have brand preferences however, the data collected suggests that the participants are more reflective because they have reasons behind their purchases because of performance desires thus, they cannot always go blindly into a purchase. Cases of attitudinal loyalty were also demonstrated by the participants as they have positive experiences with certain brands that make them lean towards a brand or at least consider a particular brand first before others. In the interviews they showed that behavioural and attitudinal loyalty do go hand in hand but due to switching costs such as price, the final behaviour which is the purchase or repurchase did not always occur. This suggests that the researcher did conduct relevant research to support the researcher study

Pyramid Placement



While it is possible for a consumer to fall into more than one level of the pyramid. Participants can more likely be accurately depicted in more than one level because of switching costs and performance needs. Trust appeared the most important and

repeated factor, however, it was the quality and value that build the initial trust in the brand and its product in the first place.

Validity and Reliability

For research to be considered trustworthy, the research provided needs to be valid and reliable. Validity and reliability are concepts used to evaluate the quality of the research. Hammersley in 1987 states that validity addresses whether the data collected accurately, reflect the phenomena being studied. Reliability focuses upon the reproducibility of the data produced by the research approaches used in the study. (Jordan, 2018)

Reliability focuses on the consistency of a measure that focuses on the instruments used to measure and outcome. Qualitative research, from traditional and modernist perspective, can be considered reliable if other researchers can replicate the findings. (Lewis 2009:3) This links to transferability. It is the study's ability to apply its outcomes to similar conditions or other groups and deliver similar results. (Cope, 2014) Transferability in qualitative research is successful if the results of the study have meaning to the individuals who were not participants of the study and the readers can link the results of the study to their own lives. This study is transferable because local fitness apparel business should be able to read it and get insight to the South African market and apply the knowledge to their own practices.

Validity (considered truthfulness), focuses on how accurately a method measure what the researcher intends to measure. In regard to this study, how accurately David Aaker's consumer loyalty pyramid measures brand loyalty. A past study used Aaker's model as an outline and created a brand loyalty pyramid to suit their study. They divided the levels into more specific categories of recommenders; preferers; dependable; regulars; considers; trialists and awareness. (Marketing Mind, 2020) Their categories linked to the types of loyals discussed in the literature review. The model illustrated how a pyramid can be used to assess brand loyalty.

It is divided into internal; external; construct and statistical validity. Internal validity refers to internal control over variables, while external refers to the degree to which the result of the study can be applied or generalized to the extended population.

For this study to be considered reliable the questions formed for the interview were supported by previous literature discussing loyalty; attitude and behavioral loyalty; brand loyalty and linked to the various levels of the model being David Aaker's Consumer Loyalty Pyramid. Questions needed to be repeated or rephrased to ensure that the interviewee understood the question and gave enough information that can be measured.

Credibility focuses on the accuracy of the data that was gathered from the respondents. It is the truth of the data gathered or the participant's perspective and how it is interpreted and represented by the researcher.(Cope, 2014) Due to limitations set by the IIE institution, the research method has been limited to interviews using thematic analysis consisting of coding and identifying themes. This interview method has been used. The interview questions can be found above in 'Data Gathering Methods' and the transcripts of the interviews can be found in addendum A.

Anticipated Contribution

"One of the main reasons for the premature failure of small businesses in South Africa is that they are started as survivalist ventures. It is almost inevitable for them to fail because their owners do not have the skills, experience or resources to build a sustainable business," says Ravi Govender. (JTB Consulting, 2016) There several small businesses selling on fitness apparel in South Africa have risen. Such as Wildcat, Dranged, Fit Farm Girl, and Kheper for example.

The failure rate of South African small businesses is over 50% which is one of the highest rates in the world. (USB, 2018) The article states that without growth small businesses cannot progress from the existence-survival tot the success-maturity stage. It was also suggested that many fail, because their founders and owners do not have the experience, resources or skills to build a sustainable business. (JTB Consulting, 2016) Research like this, that focuses on the South African market, can become a valuable resource that sheds light on how consumers thing, so owners can use the information to build a sustainable and successful business and contribute to building a strong local economy.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This study was conducted for academic purposes, meaning that some of the limitations were set by the researcher's institution. There were time constraints as the researcher had deadlines. Due to corporate contracts, the research did not include professional athletes that have sponsorships from athletic apparel brands. No sharing of data took place and consent forms, or a designated section was included in the survey to ensure confidentiality. The researcher did their best to avoid bias and did not falsify any results. The IIE researching guidelines were used to provide quality research. This also prevented the researcher from interviewing participants under 18 years old. As the research indicated, a structured in-depth interview took place for participants to speak freely on the topic to provide more information without the questions set from the researcher proposing any bias

Other limitations may include the emerging sport apparel market in South Africa. Participants may not be fully aware of the local market and the apparel that they are selling and may express bias toward popular brands or methods. They may have been unaware of the brands themselves, the options/apparel they sell, the prices of said apparel.

Ethical considerations of the researcher

The researcher searched for answers that help her categorize the participants into certain level of the consumer loyalty pyramid. As this is a qualitative study, personal bias may appear. To avoid this the researcher had conducted past published research to support the interview questions to present fair conclusions.

Ethical Considerations of the Institution.

This research was being conducted to fulfill a Bachelor of Arts Honours towards Strategic Brand Communications at the IIE Vega School of Branding. Therefore, the research was conducted using ethical methods that will follow the institutions rules and produce work reflecting their standards.

Conclusion

Consequently, the conducted research provided an in-depth analysis to the factors or antecedents influencing brand loyalty in the South African sports and Fitness apparel market. The methods chosen for the study appear to be consistent and coherent with the topic of brand loyalty through a qualitative approach. The research can agree that this target segment of the market does appear to have relatively high loyalty to the brands main due to performance goals. The participants were gen Z suggesting that the lifespan of this research paper is long as this group is growing in buying power. The study has the potential to be valuable to South African retailers and manufactures to grow their personal business, increase market share and boost the overall health of the economy.

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ANNEXURE

APPENDIX A: CONCENT FORMS



RESEARCH PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Morenike Oloruntoba about brand loyalty to sports apparel brands. The aim is to understand how you go about making your purchasing decisions when shopping for apparel and picking brands to categories the participant into a brand loyalty division. The researcher hopes to understand brand loyalty from a South African consumer perspective using a qualitative approach. The research will be conducted using the interview process.

If you have any questions regarding the research, please contact:
• Morenike Oloruntoba

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

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

Signature

Date 11/09/2020

CONSENT FORMS FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO CONSENT



Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, Anita Madike , agree to allow Morenike Oloruntoba to audio record my interviews as part of the research about brand loyalty to sports apparel brands. The aim is to understand how you go about making your purchasing decisions when shopping for apparel and picking brands to categories the participant into a brand loyalty division. The researcher hopes to understand brand loyalty from a South African consumer perspective using a qualitative approach. The research will be conducted using the interview process. It will be conducted through an online video platform to protect the safety of the researcher and participant due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

Signature

05 September 2020

Date

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in the research about brand loyalty to sports apparel brands. The aim is to understand how you go about making your purchasing decisions when shopping for apparel and picking brands to categories the participant into a brand loyalty division. The researcher hopes to understand brand loyalty from a South African consumer perspective using a qualitative approach. The research will be conducted using the interview process.

If you have any questions regarding the research, please contact:

- Morenike Oloruntoba

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

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

Signature

4 September
2020 Date

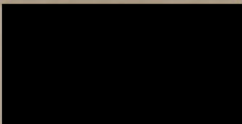
CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO AND VIDEO CONSENT

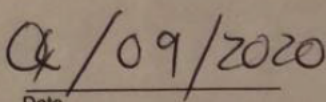
Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, , agree to allow Morenike Oloruntoba to audio record my interviews as part of the research about brand loyalty to sports apparel brands. The aim is to understand how you go about making your purchasing decisions when shopping for apparel and picking brands to categories the participant into a brand loyalty division. The researcher hopes to understand brand loyalty from a South African consumer perspective using a qualitative approach. The research will be conducted using the interview process. It will be conducted through an online video platform to protect the safety of the researcher and participant due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. 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

APPENDIX B: Transcribed Interviews

Participant A

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	My name is [REDACTED] I'm 21 years old. I'm a professional rugby player. I partake in gym running and playing rugby as a form of exercise and health care.
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train? (Regard less of lockdown)
PARTICIPANT	4 to 5 times out of the 7 days we have. Maybe 2 or 3 sessions in day.
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	A good 80%
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your training apparel to you?
PARTICIPANT	Ugg its very important. It aids in the workout. If you don't feel comfortable, if you don't feel good, then you obviously not going to do good. So comfortable clothing during fitness is very essential.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Umm, With me how it works I don't really buy clothing. The clothing that I have is clothing that we get from our team sponsor. So I don't think there is much of a need for me to do research with them being our team sponsor they make sure we get the best quality possible and we look good and in the same make them look good and promote them. But sometimes the shoes, I'm very picky and I stick with Adidas shoes because I feel like they are very comfortable. So yeah.
INTERVIEWER	Ok, so you don't really conduct that much research because you've already made up your mind about how you feel about Adidas and their brand, when you do purchase clothes or the few times that you do.
PARTICIPANT	Um, yeah.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, I am.
INTERVIEWER	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?
PARTICIPANT	Um with shoes yes. But with training shoes yes. But casual clothing I'm very open with it.

INTERVIEWER	What attracts you to certain brands over others? (What are the factors that you see that you like that make you feel like I'm going to stick with this brand over another brand like adidas)
PARTICIPANT	The diversity you know. I like clothing brands where they produce material where you can wear it out in public, you know? Hang with friends but at the same time you can still go to the gym with it. So if I'm able to –“Ok I'm wearing this for a casual day” but yeah. That's the main attraction for me. The diversity of the clothing.
INTERVIEWER	Of the last five purchase made, (yourself) can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased?
PARTICIPANT	I did purchase a pair of Nike shoes. Adidas running shoes and boots. So, I've only bought 3 things that I can recall and two out of the 3 was Adidas.
INTERVIEWER	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? (Because before you mentioned comfort but what are the others that you consider that make you make that final purchasing decision)
PARTICIPANT	The durability of the shoes. You know in the line of sports that I do you need shoes that are going to last you a very long time but at the same time be comfortable like I said. So the main thing that I look at is the durability of the shoes because we do a lot of vigorous running, a lot of turns and a lot of that. So the shoes that I had in the past, most of them would tear, or the soles would just start to lose their grip. So if the shoe is durable and got good grip and all of that then, I'm on.
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events?
PARTICIPANT	Um, not really. I'm not deep into that whole thing. Just that...I mean if I were to get endorsed by one of them, then I would. At the moment. I'm just free flowing.
INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	Not to go make a purchase, but I enquire about it should the need to go get a new pair of shoes. Then I at least know what I want. But I don't really feel like I should go buy a shoe when I see an advert or anything like that.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?

PARTICIPANT	The shoes section. For shoes Adidas. But for clothing, it will probably have to be Asics because that's our team sponsor. Well 90% of the time I'm wearing Asics clothing to gym or whatever.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	If it's not going to cause any conflict with the team sponsorship that we have, Um then I'm all for it but besides that, there never really another reason for me not to buy a shoe or whatever the clothing item may be.
INTERVIEWER	So it really just depends on whether you like it not?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands? (So for example you tend to buy Adidas boots and running shoes so what factors might make you leave and purchase an Asics, Nike or Underarmour boot for example)
PARTICIPANT	definitely an endorsement if I get endorsed by another sporting brand and I have to be loyal to that brand. Also, it goes down to what helps me perform better you know. Some shoes, some boots actually hinder you in terms of how you perform. Um the conditions that I might be using the boots in. Some sports brands don't have the proper shoes to help you. For example, some shoes they don't help when it comes to AstroTurf, and don't help when it comes to thick grass. So, it's all those environmental factors that contribute to like what type of shoes wearing and what type of shoe I'll be using.
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Uhh not really. Not at the moment.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important? (Is it important to you?)
PARTICIPANT	Uuum, yeah I guess I say so. With loyalty, you build a relationship with that brand. If it gets you that position and with that you are able to communicate with the people there, on what type of stuff you like and what works for you and what doesn't work for you. That way you ensure that you get the best possible product that you can get. Because you've given them feedback. And you are able to do that through the loyalty that you've established and the brand loyalty.

Participant B

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	██████████ 23 Student Athlete; Athletics -I'm a Long Jumper,
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train?

PARTICIPANT	Under normal conditions, which is without lock down and everything. I would be training everyday except for Thursday and Sunday.
	5-7 times a week. Does that include gym?
	Yes that includes gym.
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	Ohhh Oh My Gosh....90% of my closet.
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your fitness apparel to you?
	Please explain that for me a bit more.
INTERVIEWER	The quality of the clothes you wear when you train. How important is that to you?
PARTICIPANT	Oh no. Training clothes are very important because...First of all their expensive, so I don't think I want be buying training clothes all the time. So when it's proper quality it last longer obviously. And uhmm, and you can feel....sometimes you can actually feel like with tights and stuff you can actually feel the quality of the leggings etcetera. It's just when....I like when tights that are light but at the same time it mustn't be light as you can kind of see through them but they must be light. You know? So the quality must be really good but at the same time be reasonably priced.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Ok. The thing I always research on is like when I buy long tights because I have the problem of big thighs and small waist. So, I don't want to buy tights and they don't fit properly and I have to always be lifting them up and stuff. So, if I'm buying it online, I always have to check the people who are wearing it. If they have my body type. Um if I'm lucky and I'm in store, then I have to obviously fit it on. So, it most cases, I've noticed also with my long tights, I always get high waisted tights because they always smaller waist and with the thighs, they fit properly. So that's the research I always do. Umm so, I always buy from places that I'm used to because I know what quality I'll expect from that place. So, if I'm used to buying from Adidas, Ill buy from Adidas. If I'm used to buying from Mr Price Sport, umm yeah.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	I am open to trying new brands, especially if they look really nice. So, but I'm obviously skeptical because of the whole sizing issue that I have. Because I wouldn't want to go purchase something and have that whole sizing issue happening with the long tights. So uhmm I noticed that as much as I would really really really like to buy other brands that are not so popular, like the up and coming brands. I kind of shy away from that because I don't know how they would fit on me until I know someone I know who

	has bought them. So that is probably why I haven't really bought that much from other brands.
INTERVIEWER PARTICIPANT	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why? I definitely do constantly purchase from the same brands. Because I know how they fit, and I know the quality. But it's only recently that I just bought from Total Sport for the first time but it's because I was told that the quality being good. That's why I purchased it but other brands that I buy from, I always purchase from the specifically because I know of the quality I'll be getting from them and how it will fit me and I'm definitely sure of the sizing as well.
INTERVIEWER PARTICIPANT	What attracts you to certain brands over others? Ok the thing is I really like Adidas... That's that's fine...So what attracts you to Adidas over other brands them. I honestly can even answer that...Ok with Adidas the first pair of tights like long tights I ever bought was Adidas, and it lasted for so long! So that is why I would obviously be drawn to Adidas towards buying Adidas clothing. But I have explored other brands like Mr Price for instance. And when I bought from Mr Price, I was happy with what I go therefore I continued wearing it. So as much as you know Adidas, I love Adidas. I was open to trying something else. I think it's MAXed. So those two I definitely love wearing. MAXed and Adidas. Nike sometimes but I just....apart from the name its just knowing a brand and having worn it for so many years, it shows that its proper quality and it lasts and fit well. And even though I've worn it for so many years you wouldn't be able to tell when I'm wearing it that – Oh its been around for so long. Ok, so it looks good and new for a longer period of time? Definitely
INTERVIEWER PARTICIPANT	Of the last five purchase made, can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased? So, I've purchased from...when you say average slip do you mean cost or.... No percentage as in number. So, if the five items I can say 4 out of 5 was of this brand. Ok. (Thinks and speaks to herself) So out of 5 I think...(Speaks to herself – Oh I just bought Adidas the other day) Out of five, 3 are Mr Price. So, 3 Mr Price, 1 Total Sport One Adidas Yes
INTERVIEWER PARTICIPANT	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? I consider colour. Definitely colour and size and – What am I going to need it for. Am I buying these tights for training or am I buying these tights for competition? Because I'm a student athlete I can't wear like pink tights or orange tights when I'm going to compete. I have to wear specific colours. So if I'm

	buying tights I'm like okay – I want to wear them for training so I can buy any colour. But if I want to wear them for competitions then I'd obviously have to buy black or navy. So it's the colour and sizing.
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events?
PARTICIPANT	Ok with Adidas I follow them on social media which would be Instagram. And I haven't attended any event at all like at all at all. I did have the Adidas app. So, I have like ...I signed up to their newsletter. So, I keep getting their emails about their new Adidas wear and stuff. So, except for events...everything else.
INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	No, I would buy the product when I actually want it or need it. I don't have money like that.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?
PARTICIPANT	I always to the section...between the takkies and the long tights And I always go to Adidas and after Adidas I go to Nike.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	Ok for instance... because I always loved Adidas, only Adidas for the longest time. And what made me try Mr Price was it looked really nice and lucky I was at the store at the time I was buying the thing so it looked nice and it felt like it was something that would last and I really needed it so I had to settle for what was right in front of me
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands?
PARTICIPANT	Loyalty! And I got so many of them. So I don't like...if I now want to go get Puma. Now I'll be wearing a Puma top and I'd still have to wear my Adidas tights and Adidas takkies and Adidas socks so
	So it's also about a complete look for you then?
	Exactly. You just want to be wearing one brand. Like be wearing different brands all over the place...just make me seem like I'm confused
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Yes, definitely. I think a lot of the brands are starting to be like... their clothes are starting to look really good and their takkies really good. For instance Puma, I've never liked Puma but now, I'm so tempted to try out some of their products because they look so good. And it's not just that it looks good, but it looks like its something I would really like.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?

I think its important with regards to why you are wearing that brand. For instance, I prefer Adidas takkies over Nike takkie because there're a lot more comfortable. And I've used both brands and I would definitely definitely prefer Adidas. For me as an athlete, I don't think I would want to hurt myself or injure myself going on with Nike just because Nike looks really nice, when I know for sure what comfortable. So, with takkies that's the case and also with spikes for instance, uhm jumping spikes some people prefer Adidas, some people prefer Nike they have their reasons why. So, I think at the end of the day it what you're comfortable in because I don't think anyone would want to compete or train in something that's uncomfortable and that hurts them.

So, for you the loyalty is dependent on performance?
Definitely definitely on performance.

Participant C

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	[REDACTED]. Day to day job is - Learn to swim for children. Pilates instructor (Not happening at the moment due to Covid) A sport would be...I don't know I'm all over the place. A sport would be general functional movement.
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train?
PARTICIPANT	6 times a week
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	I would say 60%
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your training apparel to you?
PARTICIPANT	Super important. I want to be able to be comfortable in the clothing I train in and also look good somewhat.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Before I purchase, I normally go on word of mouth from my friends from what they know to be good or what they say is working for them. And generally, I have background knowledge of what I'm going to buy and for what reason. For example, if I'm going to buy say tights, I want them to be high waisted so they could be more or less more comfortable and what going in with the general flow of where society is going with gym clothes.
INTERVIEWER	Ok in way trends as well.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, trends that's the word I was looking for. I won't really ask questions that much unless its like for footwear. Then I'll definitely ask. And for sport brans I just generally read the label and know from there. This is the sports bran for this activity.
INTERVIEWER	Oh yes, because you don't want to buy a low impact bra then go running in it.
PARTICIPANT	Yes, Yeah exactly.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Generally not, but if I do it's because of price wise, like affordability and whatever looks, suits my body type. So, I am open to trying new brands but it generally my decision making comes down to affordability and how does this fit my body.
INTERVIEWER	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?
PARTICIPANT	Yes, constantly purchasing the same brands because it is affordable and it fits my body well because it works for me.
INTERVIEWER	What attracts you to certain brands over others?

PARTICIPANT	I think it's the niche. What is that brand known for generally? What is their niche. Like for New Balance it might be their running shoes. But for clothing I would generally say, they are so well rounded I could go to them for any type of apparel or footwear. But what are they most well-known for?
INTERVIEWER	Of the last five purchase made, can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased? (Extra explanation was needed – Of the last five fitness items you bought 50% was Nike and the other 50% was Cotton On body, so what was the brand split?)
PARTICIPANT	Ummm, I would say 80% Nike and 20% New Balance
INTERVIEWER	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? (What are you looking at? Quality, fabric. What are you looking for?)
PARTICIPANT	Definitely quality. Umm Affordability. Those two are definitely in there when making a decision. There's another one. How well are their marketing? Or how well is their marketing doing? For example are they leading in like trend markets. I'll give you an example. Have you heard of Ryderwear from Australia? I think they are very up and coming because they have influencers on social media. They are getting more of a following even from global suppliers. People in South Africa are ordering from Australia to get that.
	I think I've noticed Ryderwear has a bit more of a South African footprint over Gymshark for example. Because I think there's a South African supplier, for Ryderwear in South Africa. Ya I've seen a page several times. I think you can order straight from them and get your order within a few days. Because they do the main shipment from Austria
	Oh! Ok I did not know that
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events
PARTICIPANT	Yes, Social Media definitely. I follow them. If they do host an events, host an event, I would love to go. I haven't seen one as of yet, but I know that they probably do. I don't have that app...What's it's called?
INTERVIEWER	Nike Training Club, Nike Running Club
PARTICIPANT	I don't have that. Maybe if I get more into the running I might consider. To become accountable and feel part of the community. Because a big thing is also about community. Like how you interact. How that brand creates a sociable community and following. So, you become a part of something. Which I think Nike has done really well over the years. Better than other brands
INTERVIEWER	I think they have a leader board I think on their running app as well. And you can race against friends than might be across the world or country or right next to you.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah. Crazy

INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	Not necessarily. It's more like do I need the stuff right now? Then I'll go buy and stick to what I know. But I know I won't necessarily go just because someone is advertising.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?
PARTICIPANT	Total Sports always definitely go to Nike, Uh the sports bras being my favorite. Then I'll go over to the tights. But definitely always Nike like 80% of the time.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	Definitely price for me. At a good price I'll consider it. And probably try it on and make my decision from there. Does it fit my body? Does it do the things that Nike would do for me? So yeah, definitely affordability from that side. Especially if there's sales.
INTERVIEWER	Yeah No, when there's sales brand loyalty goes out the window.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, that true!
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands?
PARTICIPANT	Affordability again,....(hesitant)
INTERVIEWER	So, what do you like about this brand that will make you say no to other brands? Like knowing what it does for you?
PARTICIPANT	The familiarity. The knowing. The feeling of feeling safe in this product. In this apparel you know? When you exercise. So definitely familiarity plays a big thing. Like a decision already made so saving energy on those decisions. Affordability as well.
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Uhhh Sometimes. I would say 30% of the time. So, it's not a high calling but sometimes it does cross my mind. Especially if something, you know, catches my eye and it is different from the brand I normally choose. I will go for something different because of my likening in what I'm seeing and...yeah.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, because it kind of sets up this image of what you're trying to do or trying to be. It also identifying with the brand in terms of professionalism or how you see yourself in that industry. To summarize, identifying with the brand.

APPENDIX C: Coded Transcripts

Transcripts

Note: If the text appears in purple text, this mean is that they questions was formed on the spot as the participant needed extra information to answer or the researcher altered some questions because of the information provided in previous questions. For example, the vocabulary used in the expansions or elaborations to help prompt the participant was selected from previous vocabulary they used in previous answers. Some elaborations were also added as the researcher noticed previous participant gave more information from a single question compared to others. This helped the researcher get more or less the same quantity and/or quality information's for a fair to follower on later.

This was also done to facilitate a good interview past basic question and answer format to help the participant feel more comfortable like a real conversation where they can express their thoughts on the subject comfortably.

CODES	
QUALITY AND VALUE	
TRUST	
COMMITMENT	
IMAGE	
SWITCHING COST	

Participant A

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	My name is....., I'm 21 years old. I'm a professional rugby player. I partake in gym running and playing rugby as a form of exercise and health care.
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train? (Regard less of lockdown)
PARTICIPANT	4 to 5 times out of the 7 days we have. Maybe 2 or 3 sessions in day.
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	A good 80%
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your training apparel to you?
PARTICIPANT	Ugg its very important. It aids in the workout. If you don't feel comfortable, if you don't feel good, then you obviously not going

	to do good. So comfortable clothing during fitness is very essential.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Umm, With me how it works I don't really buy clothing. The clothing that I have is clothing that we get from our team sponsor. So I don't think there is much of a need for me to do research with them being our team sponsor they make sure we get the best quality possible and we look good and in the same make them look good and promote them. But sometimes the shoes, I'm very picky and I stick with Adidas shoes because I feel like they are very comfortable. So yeah.
INTERVIEWER	Ok, so you don't really conduct that much research because you've already made up your mind about how you feel about Adidas and their brand, when you do purchase clothes or the few times that you do.
PARTICIPANT	Um, yeah.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, I am.
INTERVIEWER	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?
PARTICIPANT	Um with shoes yes. But with training shoes yes. But casual clothing I'm very open with it.
INTERVIEWER	What attracts you to certain brands over others? (What are the factors that you see that you like that make you feel like I'm going to stick with this brand over another brand like adidas)
PARTICIPANT	The diversity you know. I like clothing brands where they produce material where you can wear it out in public, you know? Hang with friends but at the same time you can still go to the gym with it. So if I'm able to –"Ok I'm wearing this for a casual day" but yeah. That's the main attraction for me. The diversity of the clothing.
INTERVIEWER	Of the last five purchase made, (yourself) can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased?
PARTICIPANT	I did purchase a pair of Nike shoes. Adidas running shoes and boots. So, I've only bought 3 things that I can recall and two out of the 3 was Adidas.

INTERVIEWER	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? (Because before you mentioned comfort but what are the others that you consider that make you make that final purchasing decision)
PARTICIPANT	The durability of the shoes. You know in the line of sports that I do you need shoes that are going to last you a very long time but at the same time be comfortable like I said. So the main thing that I look at is the durability of the shoes because we do a lot of vigorous running, a lot of turns and a lot of that. So the shoes that I had in the past, most of them would tear, or the soles would just start to lose their grip. So if the shoe is durable and got good grip and all of that then, I'm on.
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events?
PARTICIPANT	Um, not really. I'm not deep into that whole thing. Just that...I mean if I were to get endorsed by one of them, then I would. At the moment. I'm just free flowing.
INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	Not to go make a purchase, but I enquire about it should the need to go get a new pair of shoes. Then I at least know what I want. But I don't really feel like I should go buy a shoe when I see an advert or anything like that.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?
PARTICIPANT	The shoes section. For shoes Adidas. But for clothing, it will probably have to be Asics because that's our team sponsor. Well 90% of the time I'm wearing Asics clothing to gym or whatever.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	If it's not going to cause any conflict with the team sponsorship that we have, Um then I'm all for it but besides that, there never really another reason for me not to buy a shoe or whatever the clothing item may be.
INTERVIEWER	So it really just depends on whether you like it not?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands? (So for example you tend to buy Adidas boots and running shoes so what factors might make you leave and purchase an Asics, Nike or Underarmour boot for example)

PARTICIPANT	definitely an endorsement if I get endorsed by another sporting brand and I have to be loyal to that brand. Also, it goes down to what helps me perform better you know. Some shoes, some boots actually hinder you in terms of how you perform. Um the conditions that I might be using the boots in. Some sports brands don't have the proper shoes to help you. For example, some shoes they don't help when it comes to AstroTurf, and don't help when it comes to thick grass. So, it's all those environmental factors that contribute to like what type of shoes wearing and what type of shoe I'll be using.
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Uhh not really. Not at the moment.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important? (Is it important to you?)
PARTICIPANT	Uuum, yeah I guess I say so. With loyalty, you build a relationship with that brand. If it gets you that position and with that you are able to communicate with the people there, on what type of stuff you like and what works for you and what doesn't work for you. That way you ensure that you get the best possible product that you can get. Because you've given them feedback. And you are able to do that through the loyalty that you've established and the brand loyalty.

Participant B

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	██████████ Student Athlete; Athletics -I'm a Long Jumper,
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train?
PARTICIPANT	Under normal conditions, which is without lock down and everything. I would be training everyday except for Thursday and Sunday.
	5-7 times a week. Does that include gym?
	Yes that includes gym.
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	Ohhh Oh My Gosh....90% of my closet.
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your fitness apparel to you?
	Please explain that for me a bit more.
INTERVIEWER	The quality of the clothes you wear when you train. How important is that to you?
PARTICIPANT	Oh no. Training clothes are very important because...First of all their expensive, so I don't think I want be buying training clothes all the time. So when it's proper quality it last longer obviously. And uhmm, and you can feel....sometimes you can actually feel like with tights and stuff you can actually feel the quality of the leggings etcetera. It's just when....I like when tights that are light but at the same time it mustn't be light as you can kind of see through them but they must be light. You know? So the quality must be really good but at the same time be reasonably priced.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Ok. The thing I always research on is like when I buy long tights because I have the problem of big thighs and small waist. So, I don't want to buy tights and they don't fit properly and I have to always be lifting them up and stuff. So, if I'm buying it online, I always have to check the people who are wearing it. If they have my body type. Um if I'm lucky and I'm in store, then I have to obviously fit it on. So, it most cases, I've noticed also with my long tights, I always get high waisted tights because they always smaller waist and with the thighs, they fit properly. So that's the research I always do. Umm so, I always buy from places that I'm used to because I know what quality I'll expect from that place.

	So, if I'm used to buying from Adidas, Ill buy from Adidas. If I'm used to buying from Mr Price Sport, umm yeah.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	I am open to trying new brands, especially if they look really nice. So, but I'm obviously skeptical because of the whole sizing issue that I have. Because I wouldn't want to go purchase something and have that whole sizing issue happening with the long tights. So ummm I noticed that as much as I would really really really like to buy other brands that are not so popular, like the up and coming brands. I kind of shy away from that because I don't know how they would fit on me until I know someone I know who has bought them. So that is probably why I haven't really bought that much from other brands.
INTERVIEWER	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?
PARTICIPANT	I definitely do constantly purchase from the same brands. Because I know how they fit, and I know the quality. But it's only recently that I just bought from Total Sport for the first time but it's because I was told that the quality being good. That's why I purchased it but other brands that I buy from, I always purchase from them specifically because I know of the quality I'll be getting from them and how it will fit me and I'm definitely sure of the sizing as well.
INTERVIEWER	What attracts you to certain brands over others?
PARTICIPANT	Ok the thing is I really like Adidas... That's that's fine...So what attracts you to Adidas over other brands them. I honestly can even answer that...Ok with Adidas the first pair of tights like long tights I ever bought was Adidas, and it lasted for so long! So that is why I would obviously be drawn to Adidas towards buying Adidas clothing. But I have explored other brands like Mr Price for instance. And when I bought from Mr Price, I was happy with what I got therefore I continued wearing it. So as much as you know Adidas, I love Adidas. I was open to trying something else. I think it's MAXed. So those two I definitely love wearing. MAXed and Adidas. Nike sometimes but I just....apart from the name its just knowing a brand and having worn it for so many years, it shows that its proper quality and it lasts and fit well. And even though I've worn it for so many years you wouldn't be able to tell when I'm wearing it that – Oh its been around for so long. Ok, so it looks good and new for a longer period of time? Definitely
INTERVIEWER	Of the last five purchase made, can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased?

PARTICIPANT	So I've purchased from.....when you say average slip do you mean cost or....?
	No percentage as in number. So, if the five items I can say 4 out of 5 was of this brand.
	Ok. (Thinks and speaks to herself) So out of 5 I think...(Speaks to herself – Oh I just bought Adidas the other day) Out of five, 3 are Mr Price.
	So 3 Mr Price, 1 Total Sport One Adidas
	Yes
INTERVIEWER	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider?
PARTICIPANT	I consider colour. Definitely colour and size and – What am I going to need it for. Am I buying these tights for training or am I buying these tights for competition? Because I'm a student athlete I can't wear like pink tights or orange tights when I'm going to compete. I have to wear specific colours. So if I'm buying tights I'm like okay – I want to wear them for training so I can buy any colour. But if I want to wear them for competitions then I'd obviously have to buy black or navy. So it's the colour and sizing.
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events?
PARTICIPANT	Ok with Adidas I follow them on social media which would be Instagram. And I haven't attended any event at all like at all at all. I did have the Adidas app. So, I have like ...I signed up to their newsletter. So, I keep getting their emails about their new Adidas wear and stuff. So, except for events...everything else.
INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	No, I would buy the product when I actually want it or need it. I don't have money like that.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?
PARTICIPANT	I always to the section...between the takkies and the long tights And I always go to Adidas and after Adidas I go to Nike.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	Ok for instance... because I always loved Adidas, only Adidas for the longest time. And what made me try Mr Price was it looked really nice and lucky I was at the store at the time I was buying the thing so it looked nice and it felt like it was something that would last and I really needed it so I had to settle for what was right in front of me
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands?
PARTICIPANT	Loyalty! And I got so many of them. So I don't like...if I now want to go get Puma. Now I'll be wearing a Puma top and I'd still have

	to wear my Adidas tights and Adidas takkies and Adidas socks so
	So it's also about a complete look for you then?
	Exactly. You just want to be wearing one brand. Like be wearing different brands all over the place...just make me seem like I'm confused
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Yes, definitely. I think a lot of the brands are starting to be like... their clothes are starting to look really good and their takkies really good. For instance, Puma, I've never liked Puma but now, I'm so tempted to try out some of their products because they look so good. And it's not just that it looks good, but it looks like its something I would really like.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?
	I think its important with regards to why you are wearing that brand. For instance, I prefer Adidas takkies over Nike takkie because there're a lot more comfortable. And I've used both brands and I would definitely definitely prefer Adidas. For me as an athlete, I don't think I would want to hurt myself or injure myself going on with Nike just because Nike looks really nice, when I know for sure what comfortable. So, with takkies that's the case and also with spikes for instance, uhm jumping spikes some people prefer Adidas, some people prefer Nike they have their reasons why. So, I think at the end of the day it what you're comfortable in because I don't think anyone would want to compete or train in something that's uncomfortable and that hurts them.
	So, for you the loyalty is dependent on performance?
	Definitely definitely on performance.

Participant C

INTERVIEWER	What is your name, age, occupation, and fitness activity or sport that you part take in?
PARTICIPANT	██████████ Day to day job is - Learn to swim for children. Pilates instructor (Not happening at the moment due to Covid) A sport would be...I don't know I'm all over the place. A sport would be general functional movement.
INTERVIEWER	How often do you train?
PARTICIPANT	6 times a week
INTERVIEWER	What percentage of your entire closet, is fitness apparel?
PARTICIPANT	I would say 60%
INTERVIEWER	How important is the quality of your training apparel to you?
PARTICIPANT	Super important. I want to be able to be comfortable in the clothing I train in and also look good somewhat.
INTERVIEWER	Before purchasing fitness apparel, what kind of research do you do, or questions do you ask? And if not, why don't you conduct research?
PARTICIPANT	Before I purchase, I normally go on word of mouth from my friends from what they know to be good or what they say is working for them. And generally, I have background knowledge of what I'm going to buy and for what reason. For example, if I'm going to buy say tights, I want them to be high waisted so they could be more or less more comfortable and what going in with the general flow of where society is going with gym clothes.
INTERVIEWER	Ok in way trends as well.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, trends that's the word I was looking for. I won't really ask questions that much unless its like for footwear. Then I'll definitely ask. And for sport bras I just generally read the label and know from there. This is the sports bra for this activity.
INTERVIEWER	Oh yes, because you don't want to buy a low impact bra then go running in it.
PARTICIPANT	Yes, Yeah exactly.
INTERVIEWER	When the desire to purchase new apparel arises, do you ever want to try a new brand and why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Generally not, but if I do it's because of price wise, like affordability and whatever looks, suits my body type. So, I am open to trying new brands but it generally my decision making comes down to affordability and how does this fit my body.
INTERVIEWER	Do you constantly re-purchase the same brands and why?

PARTICIPANT	Yes, constantly purchasing the same brands because it is affordable and it fits my body well because it works for me.
INTERVIEWER	What attracts you to certain brands over others?
PARTICIPANT	I think it's the niche. What is that brand known for generally? What is their niche. Like for New Balance it might be their running shoes. But for clothing I would generally say, they are so well rounded I could go to them for any type of apparel or footwear. But what are they most well-known for?
INTERVIEWER	Of the last five purchase made, can you provide the average split of what brands you purchased? (Extra explanation was needed – Of the last five fitness items you bought 50% was Nike and the other 50% was Cotton On body, so what was the brand split?)
PARTICIPANT	Ummm, I would say 80% Nike and 20% New Balance
INTERVIEWER	When deciding to shop for new apparel what factors do you consider? (What are you looking at? Quality, fabric. What are you looking for?)
PARTICIPANT	Definitely quality. Umm Affordability. Those two are definitely in there when making a decision. There's another one. How well are their marketing? Or how well is their marketing doing? For example are they leading in like trend markets. I'll give you an example. Have you heard of Ryderwear from Australia? I think they are very up and coming because they have influencers on social media. They are getting more of a following even from global suppliers. People in South Africa are ordering from Australia to get that.
INTERVIEWER	I think I've noticed Ryderwear has a bit more of a South African footprint over Gymshark for example. Because I think there's a South African supplier, for Ryderwear in South Africa. Ya I've seen a page several times. I think you can order straight from them and get your order within a few days. Because they do the main shipment from Austria
PARTICIPANT	Oh! Ok I did not know that
INTERVIEWER	How involved are you with your favorite brands? – Expansion of question - Do you follow them on social media? Engage in challenges and go to events
PARTICIPANT	Yes, Social Media definitely. I follow them. If they do host an events, host an event, I would love to go. I haven't seen one as of yet, but I know that they probably do. I don't have that app...What's it's called?
INTERVIEWER	Nike Training Club, Nike Running Club
PARTICIPANT	I don't have that. Maybe if I get more into the running I might consider. To become accountable and feel part of the community. Because a big thing is also about community. Like how you interact. How that brand creates a sociable community and following. So, you become a part of something. Which I think

	Nike has done really well over the years. Better than other brands
INTERVIEWER	I think they have a leader board I think on their running app as well. And you can race against friends than might be across the world or country or right next to you.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah. Crazy
INTERVIEWER	After seeing an advert or campaign do you buy the brand (or its product)?
PARTICIPANT	Not necessarily. It's more like do I need the stuff right now? Then I'll go buy and stick to what I know. But I know I won't necessarily go just because someone is advertising.
INTERVIEWER	When entering a physical sporting goods store such as Sportsman's Wearhouse or Total Sport, what section of the store do you go to first and what brand are you most likely to go to first?
PARTICIPANT	Total Sports always definitely go to Nike, Uh the sports bras being my favorite. Then I'll go over to the tights. But definitely always Nike like 80% of the time.
INTERVIEWER	When faced with a product from a different brand, what factors convince you to try the new brand?
PARTICIPANT	Definitely price for me. At a good price I'll consider it. And probably try it on and make my decision from there. Does it fit my body? Does it do the things that Nike would do for me? So yeah, definitely affordability from that side. Especially if there's sales.
INTERVIEWER	Yeah No, when there's sales brand loyalty goes out the window.
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, that true!
INTERVIEWER	What factors prevent you from leaving your favorite brands?
PARTICIPANT	Affordability again,...(hesitant)
INTERVIEWER	So, what do you like about this brand that will make you say no to other brands? Like knowing what it does for you?
PARTICIPANT	The familiarity. The knowing. The feeling of feeling safe in this product. In this apparel you know? When you exercise. So definitely familiarity plays a big thing. Like a decision already made so saving energy on those decisions. Affordability as well.
INTERVIEWER	Do you ever feel the need to buy something different? Why or why not?
PARTICIPANT	Uhhh Sometimes. I would say 30% of the time. So, it's not a high calling but sometimes it does cross my mind. Especially if something, you know, catches my eye and it is different from the brand I normally choose. I will go for something different because of my likening in what I'm seeing and...yeah.
INTERVIEWER	Do you think brand loyalty to fitness and sports apparel is important?
PARTICIPANT	Yeah, because it kind of sets up this image of what you trying to do or trying to be. It also identifying with the brand in terms of professionalism or how you see yourself in that industry. To summarize, identifying with the brand.

APPENDIX D: Summary of Key Findings

➤ Behavioral Loyalty

Where a consumer repeatedly purchases the same item or brand or returns to place of service and mental processes are left unanalysed.

- Future partnerships as participants take their sporting activity very seriously in hopes that it may lead to a career or partnership of some sort.
- A complete look influences the loyalty. They do not want to switch brands too much because a split brand look is not appealing to them
- Switching costs vary. Participants indicated that “fit” and image (clothing style) influence their decisions to switch however, items must be clearly different from what they normally buy to convince them to make the switch.
- Trust is built because of the quality of the brand’s product and the previous experiences the participant has had with that brand’s products.

Participants trust brands more when it comes to their shoes and unfamiliar purchasing conditions.

- Participants see comfort as an indicator of quality. The two go hand in hand for them.
- Quality appeared in several answers suggesting that this is the most important factor for participants

➤ Consumer Attraction

As a consumer’s overall perception of the brand and that brand attitude is reliant on the customers personal perceptions. Making it an indicator of future consumer behavior.

- Participants want a complete look either to sell an idea and/or blend in with athleisure trends as well.

➤ Attitudinal Loyalty

This is more psychological. It is more of a personality trait of behavioral loyalty. Occurs in markets where consumers do not make their final purchasing decision among brands when the purchase occurs.

- Participants already have a preferred brand indicating trust in that particular brand.
- Participants have an idea of what quality apparel is like already influencing their purchasing decisions.
- Consumers compare unfamiliar brands to the quality and value familiar trusted brand given them.

➤ Relationship Marketing Theory

The marketing activities with the aims of establishing, developing and maintaining successful relationship exchanges.

- Commitment is also dependent of the product. Participants appear to be more loyal regarding their footwear and even bras (which tend to be very expensive items)
- Participants are committed because of other participation other than purchases however, opportunities to portray deeper commitment has not presented itself.

APPENDIX E: Concept Document

TITLE: Antecedents of brand loyalty influencing re-purchase intention in the South African sports and fitness apparel industry.

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
To investigate the factors influencing brand loyalty and repurchase intention within the sports and fitness apparel industry.	Within the South African market, are participant who are involved with sport and fitness loyal to particular sport and fitness apparel brands and what levels of loyalty are they according to the consumer loyalty pyramid.	It is relevant to the researcher's academic discipline. The South African small business industry has many small fitness apparel businesses emerging. This suggests that a study focusing on brand loyalty using South African participants is relevant. As well as to gain insight into Gen Z.	David Aaker 1991 Jacoby and Chestnut 1976 Anna Rapala 2014	Theme 1: Theoretic Framework - Aaker's Consumer Loyalty Pyramid Theme 2: - Loyalty - Brand Loyalty - Behavioral Loyalty Theme 3: - Consumer Attraction - Relationship Marketing Theory - Attitudinal Loyalty	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology Epistemology is collection of verifiable empirical evidences in support of theories or hypotheses. Human experience provides knowledge or information. (Intertv, 2016) Ontological Approach Focuses on the nature of reality and the kind of world the researcher is investigating. (Ahmed 2008:2)	Qualitative Population Population Parameters It will include South African residents from the age of 18 to 25. Non-sponsored athletes and people who consistently buy workout/sport apparel.	Structured In-Depth Interview Method.	All research needs to be in line with IIE Vega school policies. Obtaining the information as potential respondents may not be reliable since it is voluntary. Research is a non-sponsored athlete and need to remain unbiased when setting the questions.	The researcher is hoping to find aspects that drive brand loyalty in a sector where there are many options available to participants.	Rapala, A. 2014. Elements of Brand Loyalty in Lifestyle Brand Context. Moiseanu, O. 2008. A Conceptual Analysis of Brand Loyalty as Core Dimension of Brand Equity. Munich
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	Personal RePEc Archive.
To determine what level of the brand/consumer loyalty pyramid does South African public fall in regard to fitness and sport apparel.	RQ: What level of Aaker's consumer loyalty pyramid do South African Generation Z individual fall into? RQ: What are main antecedents of brand loyalty that are most important to participants with the sports and fitness apparel industry?	Loyalty Brand Loyalty Behavioral Loyalty	Theory of Consumer Behavior Theory of Customer Loyalty		Methodology Addresses the issue of how we go about finding out whatever it is we believe we know or can come to know (Wits, 2020)	Sampling method Convenience Sampling Size 3 -8 participants	Unit of Analysis Male and female South African residents that are non-sponsored athletes and fitness enthusiasts, that train for competitions or fitness results. Data Analysis Method(s) Thematic Analysis through coding. Deductive approach.	Due to COVID-19, participants may not be as active as they once were or in the manner, they wish to be, which may affect the quality of information they provide the researcher	The researcher can provide information to brands, their marketers and the stores that sell fitness apparel, so that they understand how their consumers think and sell them the right products to obtain or maintain brand loyalty.	

APPENDIX F: Ethics Letter



19 August 2020

Student name: MORENIKE OLORUNTOBA

[REDACTED]

Campus:

PRETORIA

Re: Approval of BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management/ BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS 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!