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Alchemy

Thesis

**EXPLORING HOW CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM
AFFECTS BRAND EQUITY AT CONSCIOUS CAFÉ.**

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 TITLE

Exploring How Conscious Consumerism Affects Brand Equity at Conscious Café

1.2 PROPOSED JOURNAL

African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure

The African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (AJHTL) is a peer reviewed journal (AJHTL, 2015). This journal is relevant as my research is within a South African context; exploring how changing consumer awareness is affecting the creation of brand equity.

This journal publishes a variety of articles on the following topics:

- Marketing
- Nutrition
- Sustainability
- Any area which impacts hospitality, tourism and leisure

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Due to increased awareness in modern society, a “counter culture” of consumers is believed to take different considerations; as opposed to what is commonly accepted by society; into account when choosing where to dine out. Heightened awareness of environmental sustainability, healthy food, waste management, the source and effects of food chain supply and moral beliefs have all contributed the creation of the socially conscious consumer (Lewis & Bridger, 2011). For this study the socially conscious consumer is defined as “a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change” (Webster, 1975, p.188). It is argued that restaurant's' economic success is becoming reliant on building brand equity through the application

of a trustworthy green image so as to create green satisfaction and value for consumers (Hedjasie, Bekk & Sporrle, 2011).

The decision on whether to purchase a product or service is impacted on by whether the production and attributes of a commodity or service fits into the consumer's construct of what is ethical (International Markets Bureau, 2012). The overarching purpose of this study was to see if consumer demands are changing in relation to growing environmental concerns and how this affects the creation of brand equity, specific to the restaurant industry.

Thus the research problem focused on the environmentally aware and responsible consumer in terms of his/her views on green supply chains and the health conscious and ethical restaurant patron.

The research considered two issues. Firstly it looked at how restaurants could potentially capitalize on sustainable supply chains and waste management practices in order to create consumer equity through embracing an environmentally responsible business model that monitors and limits its impact on the environment in a situation where it heeds the needs of the conscious consumer. This research was centered on Conscious Café, a restaurant founded on the principles of the conscious consumerism movement.

The second purpose of this study focused on determining the relative importance the conscious consumer placed in a green supply chain. According to Davari and Strutton (2014) a disparity exists between common pro-environmental beliefs and the actual expenditure consumption patterns of consumers (Davari & Strutton, 2014). This gap has complicated the creation and execution of marketing strategies promoting a green supply chain and has led to the need for an understanding of green marketing mix elements in relation to brand equity (Davari & Strutton, 2014).

1.4 THE CURRENT SITUATION AT CONSCIOUS CAFÉ IN DURBAN

Through an informal interview with the owner of Conscious Café, the underlying mission and values of the organization was discovered. This Durban café focuses on creating awareness through food and promotes a holistic lifestyle of health, knowing where your food comes from and preserving the planet's resources. This café is focused on being the meeting ground for 'conversations that matter' and prides itself on hosting movie nights and events promoting veganism and a 'kind life'. The owner believes in getting food from the source or growing it yourself and his menu boasts homegrown

vegetables, locally sourced produce as well as cruelty free eggs and milk. Conscious Café does not want to be viewed as an exclusive vegan hub banning those who eat meat, but instead wants to create a focus on the coming together of people. This café wants to be the place where conversations happen, paradigms shift and information is exchanged. They want to create value that extends beyond their menu and is placed more in what the café means as a social gathering point for its clientele.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Can brand equity be built for a restaurant's brand through being environmentally aware, completely transparent and endorsing products that are seen to be ethical?
2. Can this method of conducting business be extended to other restaurants despite their previous lack of environmental awareness?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine how much value can be added to a brand through branding techniques that endorse transparency and ethically sound products with minimal impact to the environment.
2. To determine if a restaurant can create value for its customers by switching to a new socially conscious business ethos.

1.7 RATIONALE

This research was phenomenological in its approach, with an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm using Conscious Café as a case study. The value being that the responses received from the patrons were people converted to a healthier and more responsible food production and consumption lifestyle/approach. The research explored the relationship between brand equity and conscious consumerism at Conscious Cafe.

The personal significance of the study includes that I fully embrace the conscious consumer lifestyle, but, as a waitress, I am part of a system where I see large amounts of waste and environmentally harmful practices. I wish to change this status quo and provide reasons for why green practices are better in business. It has been suggested that dietary change may be the solution to reduce the impact food production has on the environment (Hallström, Carlsson-Kanyama, & Börjesson, 2015).

Social Significance

This research has social significance as it aims to help Conscious Café and its brand image by examining its current brand loyalty, brand associations, perceived quality and brand awareness amongst its patrons and seeing how, based on these findings, the brand could grow its target market. The complexity of targeting conscious consumers is rooted in the fact that every consumer has different beliefs and values over what is

acceptable and what is not (International Markets Bureau, 2012). This means broadening your niche market is a complex activity as there is no specific demographic or psychographic for this segment (International Markets Bureau, 2012)

1.8 DELIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Due to the broad spectrum of brand equity and its various effects to different brands this study was limited to one brand, specifically Conscious Café . The field of research was limited to a restaurant catering to a niche vegetarian, vegan, health orientated and socially conscious consumer clientele. This study focused on brand equity and its creation through the eyes of the consumer while it assumed service and quality at Conscious Café is at industry standard. It is a comprehensive case study of one brand with no attempt to conduct research on another restaurant to compare results. The demarcation of my research was Hillcrest City with the population consisting of Conscious Café patrons.

A limitation to my research was a lack of secondary information concerning socially conscious consumerism with insufficient data to draw conclusions from. Literature was limited and lacking with recent articles about the new type of consumer almost nonexistent. Other limitations included time constraints, financial constraints and drawbacks in primary data collection.

1.9 HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis: Brand Equity does not result out of adhering to the tenants of socially conscious consumerism

Hypothesis: Brand Equity results out of adhering to the tenants of socially conscious consumerism

9.1 ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed that Conscious Café has quality service and food of equal standard to other restaurants in the Durban area. This allowed the research to focus on brand equity and its creation for the restaurant and not issues of service or the menu. It was assumed that participants in the survey answered honestly. This was achieved by preserving anonymity and confidentiality, the research also allowed volunteer participants to withdraw at any time and with no ramifications.

Conscious Café was assumed to be viewed as clean and hygienic by the general public and its patrons. This formed the basic levels of quality a restaurant needs to begin building brand equity.

Conscious Café was assumed to have a clientele of vegan, vegetarian and socially conscious consumers who had concerns over some or all of the following topics; environmental sustainability, healthy food, waste management, the source and effects of food chain supply and moral beliefs. This allowed the research to operate within the constructs of conscious consumerism so as to see how these changing consumer demands affected brand equity for Conscious Café.

1.10 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

This study has significance in determining the relative value the new consumer places in a holistic business model that focuses on providing quality through limited impacts on the environment.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was utilized to determine the importance of Brand equity for Conscious Café. This research is a case study on Conscious café and its consumer created brand equity through the opinions of its patrons. The research design was phenomenological in nature, 'researching the world through the eyes of those with direct lived experience to discover how they interpret their experiences' (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the relevance and interest the researcher had in this topic. It explained the delimitations of the study and assumptions made in order to conduct the

research. The following chapter will be comprised of literature relating to conscious consumerism and brand equity. This will bring understanding to who the socially conscious consumer is and how they affect a brand's equity.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents current and relevant literature that is pertinent to the research problem and objectives of the research. Core headings include brand equity, “new consumer”, socially conscious consumerism and creating brand equity through green practices. This chapter focuses on understanding the context of what being a socially conscious consumer is. It looks at how brands in the restaurant industry can leverage equity through being environmentally.

2.2 BRAND EQUITY

Brand equity is the marketing effects that are specifically attributable to and holistically tied into a brand's name and persona in the public sphere (Keller, 1993). It is because of the name and reputation that a brand holds, specifically its value, that it is able to yield certain results. Brand equity, according to Aaker's model, is devised of four dimensions: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009). Brand added value is stressed through this model with its reliance on the four dimensions that either detract from or enhance the brand's value (European Institute for Brand Management, 2009). According to Pullig (n. d.) “Brand equity is the value of the brand in the market place” meaning that “high brand value, a brand with high equity, means that the brand has the ability to create some sort of positive differential response in the marketplace” (2008, p1). According to Keller (1993,p.1) the two reasons brand equity should be examined are for financial purposes so as to estimate the value of the brand and for strategic purposes in an effort to improve marketing productivity (1993, p. 1). Based on Aaker's model, of brand equity,

the components have interlinked relationships that magnify the implication of their dependency on one another (Sun & Ghiselli, 2010). Applications of this model, in the hospitality sector, have rendered varied results in determining the main creator of brand equity therefore requiring a discussion of each dimension in isolation so as to better understand its effects.

2.2.1 BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty can be conceptually defined through six specific conditions: (1) has bias towards a specific brand, (2) is a behavioral response, (3) is expressed over time, (4) involves decision making from consumer, (5) to favor one or more brands over other alternative brands, and (6) is created through a psychological process (Jacoby, 1971). Through strengthening the size and intensity of a brand's customer loyalty a business can ultimately increase the overall value of their brand (Tepeci, 1999). This means that consumer expectations need to be met so as to ensure repeat patronage and avoid negative word of mouth (Barber, Goodman, & Goh, 2011). When customer expectations are satisfied it means they are more likely to form loyalty towards the brand (Barber, Goodman & Goh, 2011).

The ambition of any brand is to win the lifetime loyalty of patrons. It has been argued that there are two specific courses of actions a company can take to gain loyalty namely improve quality while reducing price or to become more customer focused and centered on their needs (Lewis & Bridger, 2000). This notion of being customer focused is not always translated correctly by companies as customer satisfaction is often confused with customer loyalty (Lewis & Bridger, 2000). Consumers are becoming increasingly individualistic, involved, independent and informed in the brands they choose to support therefore authenticity needs to be present and reflected in a brand's actions consistently, as well as the brand giving more than consumers expect, so as to avoid the trap of creating pseudo loyal consumers (Lewis & Bridger, 2000). The pseudo loyal

consumer may offer repeat business but holds neutral feelings to the firm and their loyalty is short lived (Lewis & Bridger, 2000).

2.2.2 BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness allows familiarity to be fostered between people and a brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009). It is viewed as a strategic competitive advantage which serves as a differentiator to ones recall dimension affecting how the brand is familiarized (Aaker, 2013). Positioning a brand to gain desired awareness requires a connection to be established between the brand and relevant mental positions it already holds with consumers (Business News Publishing, 2014). It is assumed that consumers will only accept new information about a brand if it aligns with their previous perceptions making it difficult to communicate information that is seen as valuable (Business News Publishing, 2014). Sungyuh and Wansoo's application of Aaker's Brand equity model, in a restaurant setting, determined that brand awareness is the foundation upon which brand equity is built (Wansoo & Hyun, 2011).

2.2.3 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

Brand associations are critical in the use of defining what a brand stands for over its lifetime (Kumar, 2007). According to Aaker (2009) an association is anything that links the customer to the brand. These connections include symbols, organizational associations, use situations, product attributes, use imagery and brand personality (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009). Brand associations need to nurture the relationship between consumers and the organization, often correlating to the brand's personality, as well as differentiate the brand from competitors (Kumar, 2007). This aspect of brand equity requires active brand management so as to ensure the brand is correctly portrayed in the public eye.

2.2. 4 PERCEIVED QUALITY

It was determined, in the hotel industry that perceived quality is the strongest creator of brand equity when applying Aaker's model (Sun & Ghiselli, 2010). This aspect of the model has direct links to profitability and affects the various other associations in many contexts (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009). A distinction needs to be drawn between perceived quality and objective quality. Perceived quality is a consumer's judgment of a business's overall performance in the marketplace (Lalit & Dabade, 2010). Objective quality is a type of attitude relating to satisfaction. This attitude stems from a comparison between the consumers expectations of the organization and their personal perception of the organization's performance (Lalit & Dabade, 2010).

2.3 DETERMINANTS OF BRAND EQUITY THROUGH GREEN PRACTICES

Young and SooCheong (2013) sought to explore if green equity mattered in the creation of customer brand equity by examining its effects in upscale and casual dining out establishments. It was found that green equity was created with consumers that held high health and or high environmental concern (Young & SooCheong, 2013). The study further concluded that upscale diners patrons responded more to green practices focused on food while casual diners were seen to enhance brand equity through a focus on environmental concerns (Young & SooCheong, 2013).

When brands try create green brand equity the return on their investments is not always substantial as consumer skepticism over the brand's perceived quality and credibility may not align with the brand's new green image (Butt, Khong, Ong & Pui, 2014). Anderson, Jutbring and Lundberg (2013, p224) reviewed the effects of music festival strategy to decrease the events environmental impact by only serving vegetarian food. It was determined that “, a vegetarian strategy can be recommended as an innovation for festivals that have core values and a brand image grounded both in sustainability and the reduction of environmental impacts and that are truly concerned about the environment”(Anderson, Jutbring & Lundberg, 2013, p22). This study highlighted that a strategy aiming to create brand equity through minimal environmental impact must ensure the brand image aligns accordingly with the chosen strategy so as to enhance consumer perceptions and not deter from the core values of the brand.

2.4 WHO IS THE “NEW CONSUMER”

The term “new consumer” is a concept that transcends all ethnic groups, ages and incomes defining the consumer who can easily satisfy their basic needs but is more concerned with fulfilling their wants through brands they see as authentic (Lewis &

Bridger, 2011). The new consumer faces three scarcities in today's society; a shortage of time, lack of attention span to topics that have no personal relevance and a lack of trust in suppliers (Lewis & Bridger, 2011). These three scarcities impact on the new consumers which are characterized by their individualistic, involved, independent and informed behavior in their quest for authenticity with brands (Lewis & Bridger, 2011). Brands can no longer rely on mass advertising to tell customers what they want to hear as in today's society; everything a brand does communicates a message (Zyman, 2002). To attract and retain sales it is thus essential that brands keep their promise so as to attract loyal customers who are not looking for the perfect company but an authentic, honest and transparent brand to support (Blackett, 2004).

According to du Plessis and Rousseau (2003, p10) "buying behavior is the mental and physical activities (behavior patterns) of decision units (individuals, families and organizations) which precede, determine, and follow on the decision process for the acquisition of need-satisfying-products, ideas and services". This process has been complicated on by the "new" consumer who does not merely purchase out of habit or strong trust in what mass marketing dictates but because they are in search of authentic products to satisfy their own ethical beliefs or safeguard their own health (Lewis & Bridger, 2011). It has been argued that consumers are more likely to prefer products whose image transgresses with their own personal image indicating that products and brands have dimensions beyond their functional utility, impacted on by consumer lifestyle, affecting consumer behavior (Blake, 2007). Zyman (2002) however contradicts this viewpoint stating that connecting with consumer needs and wants comes before connecting with their minds and hearts, believing this is how companies build loyalty, not necessarily love.

The "new" consumer is making companies reevaluate how they do business requiring consideration be taken into the lifestyle, opinions and images of consumers as well as the information available to them (DeVincenzo, 2008). This means business practices

need to be viewed holistically ensuring all brand associations, supply chain and other firms the brand aligns itself with embody the core promise of a brand. This “new” consumer means that brand equity can be created in new ways through being an ethical organization but consumers hold an unpredictable and changing viewpoint on what is ethical (Arnold, 2009). Brands are judged based on their behavior by consumers who all have varying stances on what is correct business ethos (Arnold, 2009). In this society a brand must stand for something that resonates with a segment of the “new” consumer so as to ensure its survival (Sartain & Schumann, 2006).

2.5 UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS CONSUMER

Figure 2.1

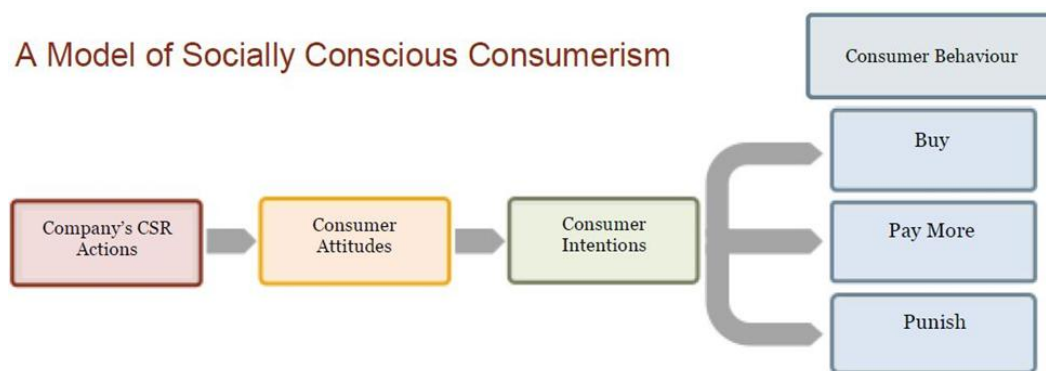
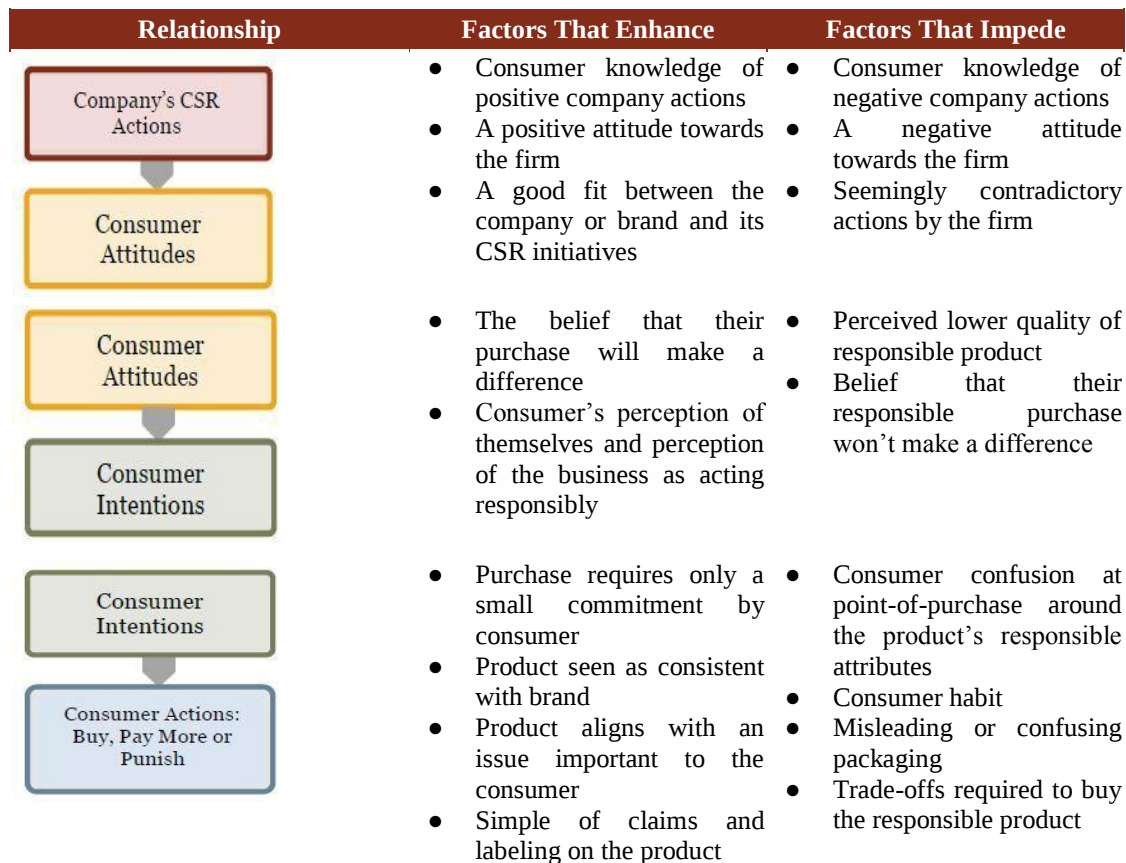


Figure 2.2

A model depicting factors that enhance or impede consumer's intents to an organization



Socially Conscious Consumerism is believed to be an “expression of pro-social value” (Pepper, et al., 2009, p. 126) by the consumer through what they choose and do not choose to purchase. The Network for business sustainability (2011) proposed a model for conscious consumerisms stating that a company's actions will affect consumer attitudes which will in turn affect consumer intentions and ultimately consumer behavior will result in one of three outcomes; buy, pay more or punish (figure 2.1). This model is then further elaborated on detailing the factors that enhance or impede a consumer's decision to purchase (figure 2.2). The success of green marketing strategies is therefore reliant on their link to the core fundamental business practices of a firm (Meacher,

2015). The relevance of embracing a business model solely around limiting your impact on the environment can be lost if the placement of the message by the firm is done in an inaccurate manner (Network for business sustainability, 2011). It is therefore relevant that a brand gain insight into what issues are deemed important to their consumers so as to better formulate a strategy relevant to their needs.

Attitudes, perceptions and intentions are three interlinking concepts that, among other variables, determine a consumer reaction to a brand and decision to purchase (du Plessis & Rousseau, 2008). Other variables affecting a consumer's decision include personality, motives, needs, culture, social influences, references, family, economic demand and business and market influences (du Plessis & Rousseau, 2008). For the purpose of this literature review it will be assumed that all consumer decision making is rational and the result of a problem solving activity. Consumer attitude is seen as a learned predisposition determining how one will respond to market related objects in terms of one's behavior (Strydom, 2007). Perceptions are the process by which people select sensory stimuli, organize and interpret them into a coherent picture that is meaningful (du Plessis & Rousseau, 2008). Consumer intentions are molded by the above mentioned concepts resulting in a purchase or failure to do so.

In a study conducted by Webster (1975), who created the socially conscious consumer index, it was determined that that these consumers are aware of problems in society, believe their actions can change these problems and have attitudes toward social affairs that are homogenous with their behavior. This concept was further explored by DeVincenzo (2008) who noted that if the socially conscious consumer makes purchases, not always in line with the expected norms of their society, but, for the greater good of their community and to make a difference then an understanding of what they deem socially important is required. Devincenzo (2008) highlights the importance in understanding the context of their social contexts and how these impact their ability to find greater meaning in each purchase. This category of consumer has

been typecast as outspoken and part of a “counterculture” in search of self-actualization through actively defying dominant social norm (Brooker, 1976). Devincenzo (2008) argues that because this consumer is part of a “counterculture” it is their social connections that influence their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors as opposed to the actions of the community they reside in. Blake (2007) found that the socially conscious consumer, who makes a concerted effort to purchase organic food, is determined by their socio economic class. It was further elaborated that these purchases were not by coincidence but with intent and concern over societal issues, highlighting that financial stability is a prerequisite in becoming a socially conscious consumer (Blake, 2007).

2.6 CONCLUSION

Through a discussion of the above literature it is evident that consumer trends and needs are evolving to consider elements that were not seen as important in the past. A brand now needs to stand for something if they wish to emotionally connect with consumers. It is evident that defining the socially conscious consumer means understanding the culture and context from where their values stem. The importance of brand equity and the value it brings shows how a brand needs to consider a holistic approach to their business practices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, research methodology in general and the methodology used for research are described. The geographical area where the study was conducted, the study design, population and sample are described. This chapter also discusses how reliability and validity is considered so as to ensure the research is scientifically sound. Ethical considerations are taken into account and how the data was collected explained. The research design for this study is a descriptive and interpretive case study that is analyzed through qualitative methods

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Bryman and Bell (2014; p31) quantitative research 'entails the collection of numerical data, regards the relationship between theory and research as deductive, prefers a natural science approach in general and adopts an objectivists conception of reality'. Quantitative research is deductive and precise with a focus on hypothesis testing (Django & Winn, 2015).

3.2.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is interpretative in nature used to gain a better understanding of a situation in the social world (Merriam, 2014). Bryman and Bell (2011) define qualitative research as the collection and analysis of opinions informed by constructionism and interpretivism. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) qualitative research explores reasons for responses and provides descriptions of opinions.

3.2.3 MIXED METHODS

A mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research in a single study to understand a research problem (Merriam, 2014).

3.2.4 ADOPTED METHODOLOGY

This research was qualitative in nature and focused on the opinions of Conscious Café patrons and centered on how Conscious Café’s consumers created brand equity relevant to the evolving movement of socially conscious consumerism at the café. It included an interview with the owner, semi-structured conversations with the café’s patrons and observations so as to gain understanding over how the brand created value. This research required a deep involvement in the natural setting, of Conscious Café, because a study of social life is complex in its range and operates at different levels (Hair, 2007). The study was phenomenological with a focus on the experienced world lived around the participants being surveyed (Gee, Loewenthal & Cayne, 2013). The research drew on observations, interviews and surveys conducted at Conscious Café.

A case study is a process of research into the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This research focused on the Conscious Café restaurant and its clientele so as to explore the constructs around which brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality were created within the changing paradigms of customer demands in relation to socially conscious consumerism. It was a critical case study used to determine whether my stated hypothesis upheld or not within the setting of Conscious Café (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This case study was used so as to gain understanding into how consumer based brand equity is affected through the application of a strategy that endorses

transparency, waste management, green practices and food sources that are deemed ethical in their source and supply chain.

3.3 POPULATION

A population is a complete set of elements (objects or persons) that possess similar characteristics defined by set criteria according to the needs of the researcher (Merriam, 2014). The population for the purpose of this research was exclusively limited to the Conscious Café clientele in Hillcrest. It included any members of the general public that frequented the restaurant for meals and social or special events. The population was estimated by the café's owner to be 300 people.

3.4 SAMPLE

A sample is the selected participants or subjects chosen for participation in a piece of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The act of sampling involves selecting a small percentage of people from the population with which to conduct the study (Kumar, 2011). For the purpose of this research the sample size was a small percentage of the population drawn from walk in patrons during the lunch time rush. Randomization was utilized for this research implying each member of the population had an equal chance of being surveyed (Merriam, 2014). Patrons had to fulfill the three basic sample criteria to participate in this research. They had to be sixteen years of age or older, willing to participate and physically present at the café. For the purpose of this research a convenience sample was used. This being a qualitative study there was no requirement for it to be statistically sound.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ISSUES

Reliability implies that the significant results of one's research must be inherently repeatable meaning there is consistency in the data collected (Kumar, 2011). Other researchers must be able to perform the experiment, under the same conditions and arrive at the same findings (Merriam, 2014). This element reinforces the findings and is

a prerequisite for a hypothesis to become accepted as scientific truth (Kumar, 2011). Reliability implies that the significant results of a piece of research must be inherently repeatable meaning there is consistency in the data collected (Kumar, 2011). Other researchers must be able to perform the experiment, under the same conditions and conclude the same results (Merriam, 2014). This element reinforces findings and is a prerequisite for a hypothesis to become accepted scientific truth (Kumar, 2011). An instrument is valid when it measures precisely what it was intended to measure while also achieving the purpose for which it was designed (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Validity involves the appropriateness and meaningfulness of the research instrument (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In order to assess the validity and reliability of this research the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were applied (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Credibility was achieved through ensuring the research was carried out according to the 'canons of good business practice' (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 44). Transferability is the degree to which research can be replicated (Django & Winn, 2015). This was achieved by providing in depth research and descriptions on who the socially conscious consumer was for the purpose of this dissertation. Dependability is a parallel concept to reliability and is used instead for qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Confirmability was used through not allowing the researcher to knowingly use his or her own personal biases to influence the results (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.6 CONSTRUCTION OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

3.6.1 CONSCIOUS CAFÉ PATRONS INTERVIEW

When developing an interview schedule certain principles and techniques should be adhered to (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An interview is comprised of the opening, body and closing. The opening should indicate the objectives of the interview and make it clear what topics will be addressed, the body of the interview schedule lists the potential

questions and the closing should maintain the tone and should be brief in conclusion (Seale, 2012). When the interviews were conducted caution was taken so as not to introduce biases which could affect the reliability of the responses gathered. The main potential bias for this research was the concern that patrons would give socially desirable responses with regards to the subject matter (Seale, 2012). The removal of this bias was attempted through making the interviews confidential and anonymous. The interviews were informal and allowed consumer opinions to manifest themselves through conversation.

BRAND LOYALTY

- How often do you frequent the café in a two week cycle?
- Do you go to other restaurants that are in your opinion similar to Conscious Café in their business ethos?
- Do you only dine out at Conscious Café?
- Do you dine out at restaurants regardless of if their food is ethically produced or not?

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

- What do you associate with the Conscious Café brand?

BRAND AWARENESS

- How did you become aware of the brand?
- Do you promote the café to friends or family?

PERCEIVED QUALITY

- How do you rate the quality of food at conscious café?
- How do you rate the service at conscious café?
- How do you feel Conscious café creates overall quality as a brand?
- How do you feel they could better improve on their overall quality?

3.6.2 IN DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH OWNER OF CONSCIOUS CAFÉ

The owner of Conscious Café was interviewed in a semi unstructured manner so as to gain insight into the café's fundamental business ethos and values. In a semi-structured interview, a researcher has a list of fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has leeway in how to reply' (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 225) . The interview process was flexible and focuses on ensuring the interviewee understands the issues being addressed so the data gathered is relevant (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The owner was questioned on his green supply chain, brand equity, how the brand creates value for patrons, the brand's mission and values.

3.7 ETHICS

To ensure this research was ethical respondents were asked to participate voluntarily, (Connelly, 2014). No coercion was applied to potential respondents (Kimmel, 1998). All secondary sources used were acknowledged. All respondents were sixteen years or older in age. To ensure participants capacity to answer each question the researcher readily gave definitions and explanations of terms referring to brand equity.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Surveys in the form of interview schedules were used to gather data on customer's opinions of green practices and the relative value restaurant patrons placed in them. In depth interview with the owner of Conscious Café was used to better gain insight into the brand's ethos, strategy and value creation through pursuing a business strategy based on socially conscious consumerism. Observations were also gathered through four separate visits to the café through watching and interacting in the Cafés environment. Secondary Data was be analyzed using a thematic analysis to gain a better understanding of brand equity and the socially conscious consumer.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was interpreted by the researcher and analyzed so as to provide meaning. The concept of grounded theory was used to analyze the data. Grounded theory is a process whereby data collection and processing occurs at tandem (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This method of analysis allows theory to develop out of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3. 10 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the population and sampling techniques that were used in this research, highlighting that it was a convenience sample. This chapter explained the various research methodologies and explained why for the purpose of this qualitative research was used. The next chapter will involve the analysis of the collected data, highlight key findings and expand on core insights from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESEARCH RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzed the qualitative data for patterns or themes, and presented the major themes found in the data. It summarizes the research findings and analyzes key themes presented to develop precise insights into the brand equity of Conscious Café. The research was then interpreted so as to develop a logical understanding of how consumers' create brand equity in a socially conscious setting.

4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research findings were divided between the two research objectives under specific headings and subheadings. The constructs of brand equity and how they created value for the brand were discussed coupled with insights from the owner of the café. The probability of Conscious Cafés business model adding value to a different restaurant was also explored.

4.2.1 OBJECTIVE 1: TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH VALUE CAN BE ADDED TO A BRAND THROUGH BRANDING TECHNIQUES THAT ENDORSE TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICALLY SOUND PRODUCTS, LOOKING SPECIFICALLY AT BRAND EQUITY.

4.2.1.1 BRAND LOYALTY

Three types of consumers based on the interviews conducted appear to frequent Conscious Café.

1. Consumers who are extremely loyal to the brand and the conscious consumer lifestyle, choosing only to dine out at Conscious Café. These consumers consider themselves part of a “new movement” and take pride in being selective over where and how they spend their money. The café is like a second home to these consumers providing more than food. These consumers enjoy the social aspect the café provides, where they can have “conversations that matter” with like-minded individuals. These consumers are all plant based and vegan with very strong opinions and views about society and where food comes from.
2. Consumers who are loyal to the conscious consumer lifestyle and frequent restaurants who practice similar ethics to that of Conscious Café. These consumers are mostly vegan or vegetarian and enjoy variety in their meals out. These consumers focus on restaurants that provide options for their specific eating requirements. They are health focused and concerned over trying, as much as possible, to avoid products they deem as cruel. These consumers are drawn to the café because the menu provides a lot of options to suit their chosen diets. They enjoy having options when eating out and the café provides an array of food that is not in conflict with their personal beliefs.
3. Consumers who enjoy dining out regardless of a restaurant's ethics and business practices. These consumers enjoy variety in their eating out experiences and are not vegan or vegetarian. They frequent all types of restaurants with the food and service determining if they will return. The ethics of a restaurant and where they source their food from is not what keeps them loyal to a brand.

Loyalty was created to the Cafes brand though the message it drives and its ethics and principles, more so than the taste of food and quality of service. The most loyal patrons

are those who embrace the Cafes ethics in their own day to day lives. The way the Café conducts business is how they live their day to day lives. This is the connection that keeps these consumers returning to the café either for the food or for the social setting it provides.

Table 4.1 Shows Respondents visits to the Café in an average two week cycle with their respective levels of loyalty to the brand.

Respondent	Visits to Cafe	Level of loyalty to brand
Respondent A	9	Exclusive loyalty, only dine out at Conscious Café
Respondent B	2	Dine at other establishments, café ethos is not part of life style
Respondent C	1	Dine at other establishments, café ethos is not part of life style
Respondent D	7	Exclusive loyalty, only dine out at Conscious Café
Respondent E	6	Will dine at restaurants with same ethos as Conscious Café, loyal to being socially conscious
Respondent F	8	Exclusive loyalty, only dine out at Conscious Café
Respondent G	3	Dine at other establishments, café ethos is not part of life style
Respondent H	6	Will dine at restaurants with same ethos as Conscious Café, loyal to being socially conscious
Respondent I	2	Will dine at restaurants with same ethos as Conscious Café, loyal to being socially conscious
Respondent J	3	Exclusive loyalty, only dine out at Conscious Café
Respondent K	7	Will dine at restaurants with same ethos as Conscious Café, loyal to being socially conscious
Respondent L	4	Dine at other establishments, café ethos is not part of life style

4.2.1.2 BRAND AWARENESS

Awareness of this establishment is created through word of mouth. Newcomers frequent the café after being referred by friends or family. The café based on the sample, drawn for this research, has strong awareness among the non-meat eating community in Durban. The café caters to a niche market of vegans, vegetarians and consumers who are focused on eating healthy organic meals. The café is well known in these circles and is promoted by its patrons which often results in walk in clientele. The café is either promoted because of its menu or because of the social setting it provides for like-minded individuals.

Current clientele promote the café because of the healthy and unlimited food options for non-meat eaters or because of the social aspect the café provides. These two reasons are sometimes combined when consumers encourage friends, family or acquaintance's to visit the café. The café is made aware by a niche market of conscious consumers who are advocates for a lifestyle that leaves little impact on the planet or a consumer who is anti-eating meat.

Conscious Café is promoted by its current clientele, specifically to people who fit into the conscious consumer lifestyle or whose dietary requirements match that of the café. Consumers seem to be divided into two groups those who promote the café to friends so as to introduce them to the café and those who have no need to promote the café because all their friends dine there already.

The owner of the café also plays a dynamic role in creating awareness for this restaurant's brand. Without him pushing the brand's ethos of being environmentally aware, using products that are cruelty free and focusing on educating customers when they dine at the café, the brand would not be what it is today. The owner creates an educational aspect in his restaurant making patrons aware of the bigger reasons behind

his business model. He makes sure the conscious consumer lifestyle is exposed to every walk in or new patron to the café.

Table 4.2 shows respondents and how they first became aware of Conscious Cafe

Respondent	How they first became aware of Café
Respondent A	Friends
Respondent B	Friends
Respondent C	Owner
Respondent D	Friends
Respondent E	Friends
Respondent F	Owner
Respondent G	Facebook
Respondent H	Family
Respondent I	Facebook
Respondent J	Owner
Respondent K	Friends
Respondent L	Facebook

4.2.1.3 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

Respondents were asked what the top three associations they held with Conscious Café. The associations were listed by the researcher in the order in which they were stated by each respondent. The café is most associated with being an ethical organization that serves organic food which is cruelty free. These associations add to the brand's value in the minds of consumers. It shows how they place value in the knowledge that their money is not supporting practices they deem cruel to the environment or animals. Consumers associate the café with being a healthy decision both for their bodies, minds and the planet at large.

Table 4.3 Table depicting respondents associations with the brand Conscious Cafe

Respondent	Association 1	Association 2	Association 3
Respondent A	Education	Environmental Awareness	Animal Rights
Respondent B	Healthy food	Outdoor location	Vegetarian
Respondent C	Organic	Fresh	Healthy
Respondent D	Ethical	Cruelty Free	Conversations that matter
Respondent E	Environmental Awareness	Education	Conversations that matter
Respondent F	Organic	Cruelty Free	Ethical
Respondent G	Taste	relaxed atmosphere	Vegetarian
Respondent H	Cruelty Free	Vegetarian Options	Organic
Respondent I	Convenience	Friendly	Fresh
Respondent J	Part of the Movement	Place of Change	Ethical
Respondent K	Healthy food	Conversations that matter	Vegetarian
Respondent L	Taste	Healthy food	Vegetarian

4.2.1.4 PERCEIVED QUALITY

Customers interviewed felt the cafe's food was of exceptional quality with wholesome, organic and cruelty free menu items. It was a general consensus that the [cafe's](#) location and relaxing setting added to the overall dining out experience. The cafes brand identity is delivered at all points of contact with consumers making its message authentic and providing exactly what consumers expect. However the menu and slow service is what detracts from overall perceived quality. Interviewed consumers felt the cafes current menu, although tasty, has never been updated or altered since the inception of the café. This was found to frustrate some clientele who craved a specials board or new additions to the stale menu. Other customers however were adamant that taste and service were not the reason they dined at the café. The socially conscious mindset is what draws these consumers to the café, creating quality through the ethics and business practices of the café.

4.2.1.5 INTERVIEW WITH OWNER

The following section presents key themes and insights of the café and how it functions through the eyes of the owner.

Through discussions with the owner of this café it became evident that the brand's identity revolves around creating positive change in the world. All items on the menu are ethically sourced with no meat or dairy from factory farms being served. The coffee is “fairtrade certified” ensuring the farmers of the coffee are adequately paid and not taken advantage of in the production process. All meals on the menu are organic with a lot of the fresh produce being grown in the cafes garden or sourced from local farmers in the midlands.

The cruelty free dairy in the form of milk and cheese is one of the biggest points of pride with the owner. His dedication to serving food that has brought no harm to animals in any way is a testament to the overarching message of the Conscious Café brand. Food in this café is deemed to be good for the body, good for the mind and good for the planet completely guilt free in every sense of the word (according to the owner).

Education was deemed to be a crucial aspect of this brand's identity. It was deemed important to try and connect with customers who frequent the café, to educate and enable them to see the bigger picture. The owner believes in advocating change through the stomach and showing his customers how through changing their diets they can help preserve water, cut down carbon emissions, destruction of natural forests, eliminate factory farming and be part of something bigger than themselves.

The café is seen by the owner to create value through its dedication to education. It is the constant struggle to try and illuminate a more conscious state of mind for clientele that, in the owner's opinion, gives the café value. This café is focused on providing a safe haven for intellectual conversations and being the meeting point for like minded

individuals (often vegan or vegetarian) to come together and share opinions, facts and a cup of coffee.

The café has a core group of customers that have become like friends to the owner and staff. They inhabit everything the café stands for and uphold the very essence of what it means to be conscious in today's society. These individuals, like the café, are highly tuned into the ripple effects of every purchase they make.

4.2.2 OBJECTIVE 2: TO DETERMINE IF A RESTAURANT CAN CREATE VALUE FOR CUSTOMERS BY SWITCHING TO A NEW SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS BUSINESS ETHOS.

Based on the literature and various conversations with customers of Conscious Café it can be seen that this type of business model appeals to a specific niche market. Conscious Café has deep trust from its current clientele as it has never compromised on its ethics in order to make a profit. This is important in appealing to consumers who already have a deep distrust in society and societal norms that are overlooked despite the effects they have on the planet. This business model may not add value to a restaurant as the consumer base is small and select with high standards of what they expect from a brand.

The conscious consumer mindset is hard to define therefore a restaurant would need to carefully segment the market if they chose to appeal to this kind of person. Value can be added but this is a niche market where trust is crucial in making the consumer happy. Equity is best created when the brand fully endorses their particular set of ethics in everything they do as then it aligns with brand identity and message. This means the brand's actions will not conflict with its ethics or thoughts on what is right and deliver what it promises to consumers. Brands can increase value through being socially

conscious but it is difficult to switch the socially conscious consumer's mindset about a brand once they have formed an opinion.

A brand must not promise what it can't fulfill, as trust is hard to gain with the conscious consumer, these consumers are skeptical by nature. The café has created a loyal following of consumers because it has embraced its message of living a conscious life through every facet of the restaurant. The authenticity of the brand's identity and message is felt at all touch points with consumers. This is what gives the brand credibility as it shows the sincerity and passion with which the café conducts its business. This café has communicated a very clear reason for its business, with profit not being the driving force of the café's success. The message is genuine and it aligns with the brand making it a successful business model for the café to follow.

4.2.3 KEY FINDINGS

This is a bullet point summary of the key findings noted through the researcher's interviews, observations and secondary resources while conducting a case study on Conscious Café.

- Patrons enjoy atmosphere and having conversations that “matter” in Café.
- Owner is the brand, without him the café would lose credibility.
- Patrons are bored of the menu but still return for meals because the Café supports their personal ethics.
- Awareness of Café is slowly created through word of mouth.
- Patrons are divided into two groups those who completely inhabit the café's ethos in their day to day lives and those who are aware of certain issues but still live their lives in a “normal manner”.
- Meat eaters dine at Café and say they enjoy the meals, said conversations with owner made them rethink how much meat they eat to reduce carbon footprint.

- The location of Café and tranquil setting added value to dining out experience, making consumers happy to pay “extra” for their meal.
- Many viewed Café as a lifestyle choice.
- Some patrons only dine at this café and refuse to go anywhere else.

4.2.4 CORE INSIGHTS GAINED FROM FINDINGS

Based on the research and analysis of findings two key insights were uncovered about the café and how it creates equity with its customers.

- Conscious Café has created brand equity by connecting individual internal value systems to the Café’s external moral system, providing social value and acceptance for loyal patrons.
- Conscious Café is first and foremost a place of education, with their menu being the byproduct.

4.2.5 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Based on the conversations with respondents it is evident that this café creates value for its customers above and beyond what is offered on the menu. The café is a symbol to loyal patrons providing an external manifestation of their internal beliefs and ethics. The cafes over all equity stems from its ability to connect with the non meat eating community in Durban. The café has broken into a niche market of socially conscious

consumers who do not believe in cruelty to animals and see the meat and dairy industry as both inhumane and destructive to the environment. The café does provide healthy organic food to those consumers who are primarily focused on obtaining healthy meals. The mindset with which the café is run makes it a successful business model as it caters to vegetarians, vegans and people in search of organic and healthy food. Its associations are rooted in being ethically aware, cruelty free and environmentally friendly which endorse the brand's identity and overall message to the public.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter concluding remarks will be made about the research in its entirety. Recommendations will be put forward by the researcher for Conscious Café, based on the previously mentioned findings and literature review. This chapter will focus on providing a concise link between the literature and findings, enabling a beneficial platform for concluding remarks and recommendations.

5.2 OBJECTIVE ONE: TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH VALUE CAN BE ADDED TO A BRAND THROUGH BRANDING TECHNIQUES THAT ENDORSE TRANSPARENCY AND ETHICALLY SOUND PRODUCTS, LOOKING SPECIFICALLY AT BRAND EQUITY.

5.2.1 BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty is the extent to which a consumer, based on their subjective opinion, will support a specific brand.

5.2.1.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

Based on the literature review it can be seen that brand loyalty focuses on winning the lifelong commitment of a customer through being customer centric and focusing on the customer's needs. It was seen that consumers are becoming increasingly individualistic and therefore require brands to personalize their offerings to specific niche markets.

5.2.1.2 FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Consumers who are loyal to the Conscious Café brand are first and foremost loyal to the socially conscious consumer lifestyle. They embrace the message of this lifestyle through their active support of the café. This clientele base is part of a niche market, meaning the café has differentiated its offering specific to a small segment's needs. This has resulted in the unyielding lifelong support from customers who fit the profile of the conscious consumer.

5.2.1.3 CONCLUSION

Brand loyalty can be achieved through a business model that endorses the conscious consumer lifestyle as it caters to the needs of a niche market, forming loyalty and trust between consumer and brand.

5.2.1.4 RECOMMENDATION

Conscious Café can try extend this loyalty to other types of consumers however it is the cafés focus on a niche market that has bought it success. Conscious Café needs to ensure it continues to meet these consumer expectations and practice socially conscious ethics so as to keep their loyalty.

5.2.2 BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness is the familiarity a consumer has with a brand.

5.2.2.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

It was noted that consumers will only accept new information about a brand if it aligns with their previous conceptions about the business. This means if a brand wants to forge equity through greener practices and make consumers aware of their efforts, they need to ensure their efforts merge with the brand's current identity.

5.2.2.2 FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

In the research it was discovered that awareness of Conscious Café was predominantly achieved through word of mouth from current consumers. The brand has a strong presence in the non-meat eating community in Durban. All information dispersed and discussed coupled with consumers opinions of the brand align to form a cohesive message to the public at large. The café promotes what it lives, eats and breathes causing no confusion over what the brand stands for.

5.2.2.3 CONCLUSION

Awareness of Conscious Café and its endeavours to create change through word of mouth is effective because all touch points with consumers align with the brand's message. This technique is effective for the café as it is authentic and provides credibility to the brand.

5.2.2.4 RECOMMENDATION

Conscious Café can try focus on their online presence to further enhance the brand's awareness in the Durban region. The strong following the brand has could be extended over various social media platforms.

5.2.3 PERCEIVED QUALITY

This is a consumer's opinion of a business and its products or services in the market place.

5.2.3.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

It was found that perceived quality is objective and subjective relating to a consumer's individual interaction with a brand. Consumer attitudes, opinions and personal biases affect how they view an individual brand and its service or product.

5.2.3.2 FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Research indicated that overall quality of the cafés menu and tranquil setting was well received by clientele. It showed that despite the menus lack of specials or new items and slow service the café was still seen to be of exceptional quality. This facet of brand equity gained strength from the brand's message and its attempts to harness positive change through what is served. People see the café to have quality because of what it is trying to achieve, not necessarily the menu or service.

5.2.3.3 CONCLUSION

The café is a symbol to patrons through its message and ethics. The way in which it conducts business and produces meals is what create quality for this niche market.

5.2.3.4 RECOMMENDATION

The café can alter the menu and bring in new food items to appease loyal customers. Attention could also be given to service issues, with a focus created on ensuring customers receive prompt table service. This will only strengthen the brand's equity and make customers see value in its day to day offerings as well as its overall brand message.

5.2.4 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

This is all the associations a consumer makes with a brand when its name is mentioned.

5.2.4.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

Brand associations foster the relationship between a consumer and a brand, aiding in the development of a brand's personality. It forms a mental imagery for the consumer and determines how they relate to the brand.

5.2.4.2 FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Research showed the café is not associated with being healthy, organic, cruelty free and focused on serving ethical products. These associations all help formulate the type of brand it is in consumers' minds.

5.2.4.3 CONCLUSION

It can be seen that Conscious Café holds associations that follow a specific theme in the minds of consumers. These associations are all aligned with what the brand stands for, adding value and credibility to the brand in the minds of consumers.

5.2.4.4 RECOMMENDATION

The café is strongly associated with specific themes that are recurrent amongst its consumers. The café is strongly associated with what it stands for as opposed to its product and service offering. The café needs to reevaluate the standard of service and meal options provided so that its product offering can be a point of value to consumers and not just what it stands for.

5.3 OBJECTIVE TWO: TO DETERMINE IF A RESTAURANT CAN CREATE VALUE FOR ITS CUSTOMERS BY SWITCHING TO A SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS BUSINESS ETHOS.

5.3.1 FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

It was seen that green equity can only be created for a business if the cause or change it is trying to promote aligns with the core functioning and practices of the brand. A brand needs to ensure its efforts to be greener are not in conflict with any of its business practices, a brand needs to ensure it can uphold any promise it makes to consumers.

5.3.2 FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Research indicated the café to be a lifestyle choice fully embraced by a small and specific niche market. This niche market does not easily trust therefore a brand needs to ensure that when targeting the socially conscious consumer all of its ethics align with its business practices. This consumer will only see value in a brand's actions to be

greener and more socially aware if the actions are deemed authentic and credible by the consumer.

5.3.3 CONCLUSION

It can be seen that the niche market catered to by Conscious Café does not easily trust, therefore an already established restaurant would need to think carefully before trying to appeal to this consumer. This type of business model works when it is implemented from the onset and throughout the lifetime of a brand as it means the message the brand stands for is authentic and genuine. It makes the brand easy to trust with its niche market of consumers.

5.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

A restaurant should focus on its current consumers and not try focus marketing efforts to this new type of consumers. A restaurant that wants to appeal to this type of consumer needs to have its brand identity rooted in being a socially conscious business. This will ensure consumer trust is created and maintained with the socially conscious consumer.

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