



Exploring the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty

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Research

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the **BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communications** degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

In today's attention economy, marketers are finding themselves hard pressed to 'cut through the clutter' to capture and retain audience attention. As a result, marketers are turning to shock advertising to grab attention however the impact of shock advertising remains in question. This study sought to explore the impact shock advertising has on the attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty of young black consumers. A qualitative methodology was adopted and included the use of structured, open-ended individual interviews used to explore the attitudes and behavioural intentions of participants after being exposed to shocking adverts. Three different types of shock were analysed namely gruesome images, sexual references, and racist content as well as the inclusion of an example of positive shock. The overall findings of this study indicated that shock advertising is successful in grabbing attention; however, when it is not used for good or positive purposes, it has an overall negative impact on attitudinal or behavioural brand loyalty. This study adds to the South African literature by providing marketers and advertisers with insight into the possible responses to and ramifications of shock advertising, allowing them to make informed decisions about whether to use shock advertising instead of other methods of advertising.

Keywords: advertising, shock advertising, type of shock, level of shock, brand loyalty, behavioural loyalty, attitudinal loyalty.

	3
Abstract	2
Contents Page	3
Introduction	5
Contextualisation	5
Rationale	6
Problem Statement	6
Purpose statement	8
Research Question	8
Research Objectives	8
Literature Review	9
Conceptualisation	9
Theoretical Foundation	9
Literature Review	11
Research Methodology	18
Research Paradigm	18
Methodology & Research Design	19
Population	20
Sample	21
Data Collection Method	22
Data Analysis Method	23
Findings	28
Interpretation of findings	34
Emotional reactions	35
Cultural norms	36
Brand Loyalty	37
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	39
Contribution & Conclusion	39
Conclusion	39
Trustworthiness	41
Ethical Considerations	42
Limitations & Recommendations	43
References	45
List of Figures	55

	4
List of Tables	56
List of Annexures	56

Introduction

Contextualisation

Marketers spend billions annually advertising their products and services (Bauer, Boudet, Lamb, & Robinson, 2020) in an attempt to build brand awareness, to create stronger bonds with consumers that will maximise brand resonance (Keller, Aperia, & Georgson, 2012: 203), turning brand preference into brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991).

This task has become ever more difficult in today's attention economy where capturing consumer attention is both challenging and short lived (Romaniuk & Nguyen, 2017). As a result, many marketers are turning to "shock advertising", a marketing technique used to surprise audiences by intentionally abusing standards of cultural norms and individual beliefs (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003) in order to grab their target audience's attention (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013). While surprise captures attention, affording marketers additional processing of advertising content (Dahl *et al.*, 2003) shock advertising has proven to have lasting negative effects on consumer's future purchasing decisions (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012) as it often offends by intentionally going against moral or social codes of acceptability (Dahl *et al.*, 2003).

While shock advertising has been studied by scholars like Parry *et al.*, (2013) and Sandicki (2011), there is a shortage of studies looking at its impact on brand loyalty. Furthermore, studies focusing on how black consumers are affected by shock advertising and the subsequent impact on brand loyalty are slim to none. This study aims to unpack how shock advertising, using obscene sexual references, gruesome imagery and racist content, impacts the behavioural and attitudinal loyalty of black consumers. Brands like Dove, The United Colours of Benetton, PETA, Burger King and Procter and Gamble will be used to unpack the key concepts mentioned above. These brands were selected because at one point or another, they produced a shocking advertisement that can be unpacked in this study.

Through a qualitative methodology, this study will make use of in-depth, open-ended individual interviews to explore the attitudes and behavioural intentions of participants after being exposed to shocking adverts.

Rationale

While marketers may claim to be fighting for attention to motivate their use of shock advertising, we cannot ignore the possible negative ramifications of the use of shock advertising (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). Scholars like (Klara, 2012; Parry *et al.*, 2013) believe shock advertising has become redundant. Lightfoot, Lilley & Kavanagh (2006) also state that the excessive use of shock advertising in media is resulting in the technique losing its 'shock value'. Research looking at the effects of shock advertising on consumer behaviour is limited and therefore, this study will look at three (3) elements used to create shock, namely sexual references, images and racist content. This study aims to understand how shock advertising affects brand loyalty of black consumers in South Africa. Black consumers were chosen as the focus for this study because racially charged advertisements directly impact South African black consumers living in a country that has a legacy of racial discrimination in the media (Durrheim, Quayle, Whitehead & Kriel, 2005) and finally, studies centring the experiences of this audience are scant. Brand loyalty is considered as a marker for marketing success (Rather, 2019) therefore studying how shock advertising affects it is important in order for marketers to make informed decisions on whether to use this tactic or not. This study will provide much needed insight to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of shock advertising in grabbing consumer attention and the subsequent effects on consumer attitudes and behaviour towards a brand.

Problem Statement

Phrases like "the attention economy" have gained popularity with more and more scholars looking to understand the currency of attention and its limitations in a world overflowing with information (van Krieken, 2018). According to Simon Herbert, as shared by van Krieken (2018) the proliferation of social media and the internet as a whole has raised the supply of information and diminished the availability of attention needed to consume it. As a result, attention has become a limited resource, a currency, if you will, that marketers are constantly trying to exchange for their content (Romaniuk and Nguyen, 2017). According to Georg Franck (2019), attention begets attention, the same way money creates its own interest. Marked by engagement, attention is more easily given to a previous holder than a new attention seeker (van Krieken, 2018) and once chaptered, is often fragmented or fleeting (Romaniuk and Nguyen, 2017). To this end, marketers have had to become more innovative, perhaps even,

bolder in their attempts to 'cut through the clutter' and reach target audiences (Vezina and Paul, 1997). This is the justification used for shock advertising.

In 2017, Dove was accused of creating a racist online ad which the brand quickly apologised for, admitted to “missing the mark” and removed from Facebook however not before this ad trended and caused severe outrage (CNBC, 2017). In this advertisement, a black woman removes her brown top to transform into a white woman wearing a white top after using Dove’s body wash (Astor, 2017). In 2018, Procter and Gamble produced a television advertisement titled ‘The Talk’ which shows an African American mother coaching her young son on how to handle the racism and verbal abuse he may someday experience as an African American male (Bahrapour, 2017). Similar to the Dove, P&G’s commercial was also seen as a controversial ad however it was met with praise from black consumers who claimed to have found the ad relatable (Bahrapour, 2017). Unlike Dove, P&G used shock advertising to bring attention to an important yet ‘taboo’ topic, racism in America and police brutality, in a meaningful and consumer-centric way. Former Race Discrimination Commissioner of Australia, Tim Soutphommasane spoke up against sections of the Australian media whom he claimed to be “monetising” racism in an attempt to retain audiences (Grattan, 2018). Racism, as per the Cambridge dictionary, refers to “policies, behaviours, rules, etc. that result in a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race”, which is what we can observe from multiple forms of shock advertisements.

However, not all examples of shock advertising use race to shock, some use shocking images to try and change behaviours like PETA (Teather, 2003) or obscene sexual references like Burger King’s “Super-Seven Incher” ad (Parry *et al.*, 2013; Stransky, 2019).

While it is clear that more research is needed in order to understand whether shock advertising is indeed effective, it is important to note that some examples of shock advertising are only ‘shocking’ because they address important social issues with a bluntness that is simply jarring to audiences that prefer to look away, like Benetton’s most recent advertisement showing immigrants in lifejackets being rescued from the Mediterranean (BBC, 2018). This advert shines a light on the tensions around immigration in Italy (BBC, 2018), raising consciousness through controversy.

Purpose statement

Shock advertising has been studied however no research looks into its impact on brand loyalty in a South African context. Despite shock advertising being intended to capture attention by stirring up an emotional reaction, not all 'shockvertisements' are negative. The purpose of this study is to explore how shock advertising through gruesome images, sexual references and racist content impacts the behavioural and attitudinal brand loyalty of black consumers. This study aims to understand the impact shock advertising has on brand loyalty in order to offer present day marketers insights on the risks or rewards associated with the use of this advertising technique.

Research Question

Primary Question

How does shock advertising impact the brand loyalty of black consumers?

Secondary Question

1. How does shock advertising, specifically i) gruesome images ii) sexual references iii) racist content, influence attitudinal loyalty?
2. How does shock advertising, specifically i) gruesome images ii) sexual references iii) racist content, influence behavioural loyalty?

Research Objectives

1. To determine how shock advertising impacts the brand loyalty of black consumers in South Africa.
2. To determine how shock advertising through i) gruesome images ii) sexual references iii) racist content, impacts the behavioural loyalty of black consumers.
3. To determine how shock advertising through i) gruesome images ii) sexual references iii) racist content, influence attitudinal loyalty impacts the attitudinal loyalty of black consumers.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation

The key concepts relevant to this study have been refined and defined in the table below:

Table 1: Key Concepts

Concept	Definition
Brand equity	“A set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers” (David Aaker, 1993).
Shock advertising	“An attempt to ‘surprise an audience by deliberately violating norms, societal values and personal ideals...to capture the attention of a target audience” (Dahl <i>et al.</i> , 2003: 269). Shock advertising is achieved in a number of ways including through the use of gruesome images, obscene sexual references or contravening laws through the use of racist content to grab the attention and interest of a target group (Dahl <i>et al.</i> , 2003; Morrison, 2014; Singla & Sundrani, 2012).
Brand loyalty	“The attachment that consumers have with a brand” Aaker (1991). Brand loyalty is a multidimensional concept that can be defined in a variety of ways namely, attitudinal, behavioural and composite (Rather, 2018). Behavioural brand loyalty is marked by repeated purchases while attitudinal brand loyalty is marked by affection and emotional attachment to a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Theoretical Foundation

According to Littlejohn and Foss (2008) theories are the building blocks of all academic and scientific knowledge, enabling one to turn data into knowledge.

Developed by Fishbein and Azjen in 1975 and discussed by Bhalla (2021), the theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposes that an individual's actions can be attributed to their

behavioural intention. Fishbein and Azjen (1977) posit that a person's intentions are influenced by their individual attitudes and beliefs as well as the perceived attitudes and beliefs of the society around them. In their TRA model, attitude and subjective norms create intention and intention creates behaviour (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). "Intention" refers to a person's willingness or readiness to engage in a specific action (Ajzen, 1985). Therefore, the core concept of TRA is, the intention of an individual to engage in a certain activity will drive their behaviour.

As applied to this study, it is suggested that ever so often, consumers may be exposed to an offensive or insulting ad. As a result of the offence taken or insult felt, consumers may decide to boycott said brand that is responsible for the offensive advertisement. While the intention to boycott the brand may be felt strongly in the heat of the moment, seeing whether or not consumers actually follow through with their intentions is important to this study. This is why the theory of reasoned action is best suited for this study as it looks at the relationship between attitude and behaviour (Fishbein, 1980). The TRA model will be used to see what kind of intentions shock advertising creates in the minds of black consumers and whether those intentions translate into behaviours impacting brand loyalty.

Literature Review

Shock advertising

Shock advertising, also called ‘shockvertising’ has many definitions however for the purpose of this paper, shock advertising is defined as an endeavour to startle audiences through gruesome images, obscene sexual references or contravening laws through the use of racist content to grab the attention and interest of a target group (Dahl *et al.*, 2003; Morrison, 2014; Singla & Sundrani, 2012). Level of shock, norm violation and memory recall are all variables affecting the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of shock advertising (Urwin, 2014).

From this definition, there are different types of shock appeals that marketers can use to shock their intended audiences, namely **gruesome images** that are distasteful, disgusting or crude to the senses like lifeless bodies or starving children (Chan *et al.*, 2007) ; Involving violations of social codes or cultural values e.g. **obscene sexual references** or **obscenity** like masturbation, oral sex etc (Parry *et al.*, 2013). Moral offensiveness; **vulgarity** which contains crass actions like as farting or nose picking (Yan & Chapa, 2018) contravening laws where images depict behaviour that goes against legal and socially acceptable actions like **racist content**, women, children or animals being abused or **gratuitous violence** (Parry *et al.*, 2013). Another avenue used to shock is through **religious taboos** where marketers make use of religious or spiritual symbols or people inappropriately (Dahl *et al.*, 2003).

Shock advertising incites surprise, shock and even fear in order to attract the attention of a targeted audience (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). In order to create shock, brands must disparage beliefs held by the audience intended to consume the content (Chan *et al.*, 2007). This means, shock advertising must be both contextualised and created with the norms of that society in mind (Parry *et al.*, 2013). Shocking advertisements that include culture, religion, language or history trigger different responses amongst different groups of people (Wang, Deshpande, Waller & Erokan, 2018). As a result, in order for a campaign to achieve its goal of creating shock, it must violate shared meaning standards and personal values of the intended audience (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). For example, Benetton’s “UNHATE” campaign ruffled many feathers as it featured Pope Benedict XVI kissing a Muslim imam (Zavis, 2011). The campaign was met with outrage from the Vatican despite the campaign’s objective, being to combat hatred and “combat hatred” and

promote “closeness between peoples, faiths, cultures, and the peaceful understanding of each other's motivations” (Benetton Group, 2011).

Scholars have contrasting views on its overall efficacy and value of shock advertising (Sabri & Obermiller, 2013). Scholars like (Waller, 2004) find shock advertising effective while others like (Klara, 2012) are of the opinion that as a marketing technique, it has become redundant (Parry *et al.*, 2013). Lightfoot, Lilley & Kavanagh (2006) posit that shock advertising has become widespread in advertising and movies, and as a result, it is losing its ‘shock value’. Dahl *et al.* (2003) adds that brands tend to use shock advertising routinely when launching a new product. This begs the question of whether shock advertising achieves the mandate of “cutting through the clutter” as marketers hope (Urwin & Venter, 2014). While not enough research has been done on the relationship between shock advertising and brand loyalty, studies have found that shock advertising may cause negative attitudes toward a brand resulting in reduced future purchase intentions for the brand (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). This is the most significant criticism toward shock advertising.

In this study, we will look at four shock appeals marketers use to shock audiences, namely:

- disrupting the senses (gruesome or disgusting images),
- violating social codes or cultural values (use of obscene sexual references),
- moral offensiveness or contravening laws (racist content) and;
- social consciousness (positive shock).

Shock advertising through images

Shock advertising using images is the use of distasteful, gruesome or disgusting images that disrupt the senses (Chan *et al.*, 2007). In 2003 PETA, rolled out a campaign called ‘Holocaust on your Plate’ comparing poultry and livestock farming with the Holocaust (Sharp, 2008). The campaign juxtaposes distressing images of Jews in concentration camps with pictures of animals in cages (Teather, 2003) with the tagline ‘*to animals, all humans are Nazis*’. This campaign sparked outrage amongst the Jewish community and was described as “offensive, outrageous by the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and holocaust survivor, Abraham Foxman (Teather, 2003). The campaign is an example of shock advertising using jarring images with the intention to influence attitude or behaviour change, like stopping

smoking or not drinking and driving (Parry *et al.*, 2013) and in this case, to stop eating meat. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1: PETA. [2003]. *To animals all people are Nazis*. (The Social Pages, 2008)

Shock advertising through obscene sexual references

Shock advertising using obscene sexual references refers to indecency or obscenity within sexual contexts (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). In 2009 Burger King released the ad for their new submarine sandwich or 'sub', called the 'Super Seven Incher' which was less than tasteful and left very little to the imagination (Stransky, 2019). This ad received a great deal of criticism and was labelled as crude and offensive (Miller, 2009). The ad in question depicts a young, blonde female with red lipstick opening her mouth, preparing to take a bite out of the super seven incher. The positioning of the sub and the women's face are consistent with references of oral sex. The ad continues to reinforce an overtly sexual narrative with the tagline, "It'll blow your mind away" (Stransky, 2019). This ad is an example of obscene sexual references being used to shock audiences and grab attention. (See Figure 2.)



Figure 2: Burger King. [2009]. *It will blow your mind away.* (The Most 10, 2012)

Shock advertising through racist content

Shock advertising through the use of racist content uses the contravention of laws and moral offensiveness to shock (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). Dove's 2017 body wash ad was met with heavy criticism online for its racist undertones. The ad depicts a black woman removing her brown top to transform into a white woman wearing a white top after using Dove's body wash (Astor, 2017). This ad suggests that the black woman was dirty and in order to become clean, she must become white inferring that black people are inherently dirty and white people are clean. Despite the brand's denial, this ad is an example of shock advertising through racist content. See *Figure 3* below.

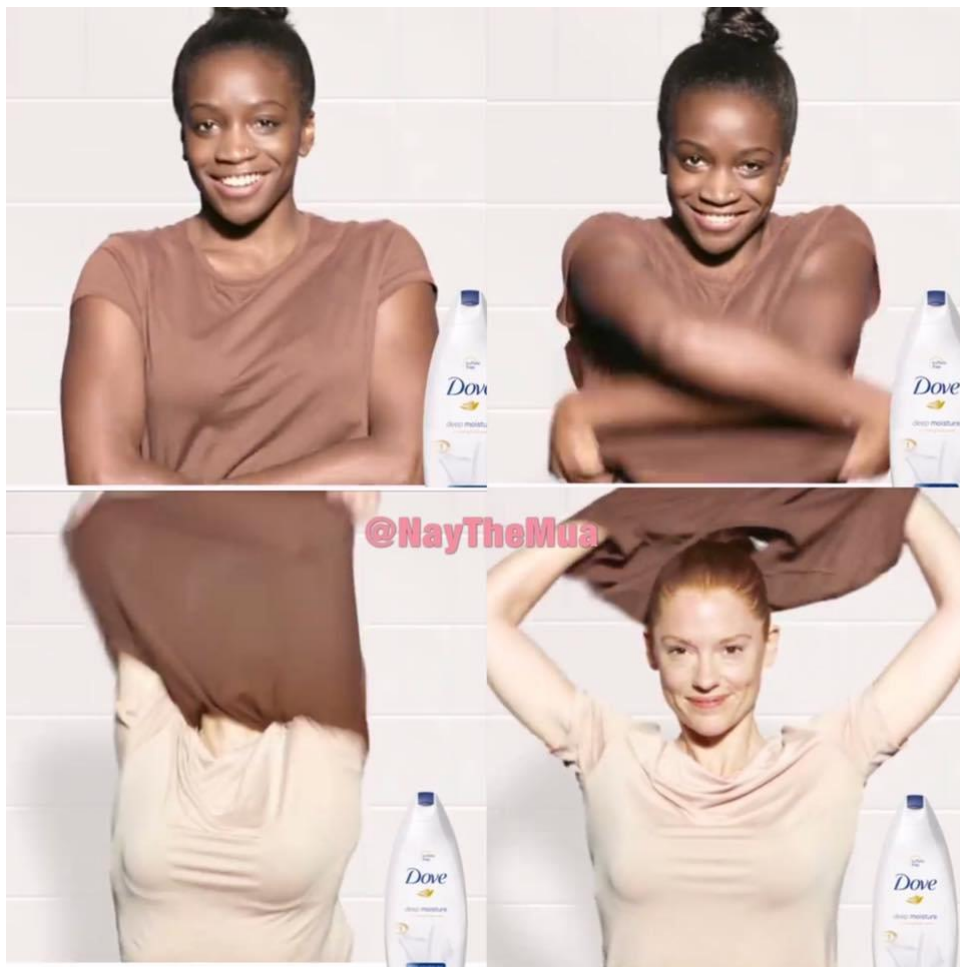


Figure 3: Dove. [2017]. (The New York Times, 2017)

Positive shock advertising

Positive examples of shock advertising refer to adverts created with the intent to raise public awareness of social issues (Dahl *et al.*, 2003). The United Colours of Benetton released a controversial advert in 1991 depicting two women of different races, holding up a baby who is also a different race, all three wrapped in a blanket. This 1991 advert is layered in meaning. The first layer is the more apparent message of unity: one figure from three historically conflicting continents all being warmed by a single blanket. According to Floros (2017), a closer look at the advertisement suggests that it is actually a family portrait. Although shocking in its time, this Benetton advert succeeded in grabbing attention, for the right reasons, and subsequently inciting conversations around homosexuality, the assumed stereotypes of interracial relationships and also, the adoption for same sex couples (Floros, 2017). This is an example of how shock advertising can be used positively. (See *Figure 4*).



Figure 4: Toscani, O. [1990]. *Blanket*. (Benetton Group, 2022)

Brand loyalty

Multiple definitions for brand loyalty exist; however, for the purpose of this paper, brand loyalty is defined as “the attachment that consumers have with a brand” Aaker (1991). Liu, Li, Mizerski and Soh (2012) expand on this definition by adding that brand loyalty is also observed by the bond consumers form with a particular brand over a competitor brand. Scholars regard brand loyalty as a multidimensional concept that can be defined in a variety of ways namely, attitudinal, behavioural and composite (Rather, 2018).

Brand loyalty is sought after as studies have shown that customer profitability is positively correlated to customer brand loyalty (Helgesen, 2006). According to David Aaker (1991) brand loyalty decreases marketing costs while increasing trade advantage offering brands an opportunity to retain consumers while responding to competitive threats.

Aaker's (1991) brand equity model highlights the importance of brand loyalty to the strength of a brand. In order for brands to retain their market share and secure financial sustainability, they must first ensure repetitive sales (Rather, 2018) which is achieved through brand loyalty.

Attitudinal and Behavioural loyalty

Brand loyalty is not only observed through action but also emotions (Rather, 2018). Behavioural brand loyalty is marked by repeated purchases while attitudinal brand loyalty is marked by affection and emotional attachment to a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Baloglu (2002) believes emotional or attitudinal loyalty is of greater value to a brand compared to behavioural loyalty as emotions drive behaviour. This belief can be seen to hold merit as the theory of reasoned action posits that a consumer's willingness, driven by their attitude, to engage in a certain activity drives their behaviour (Ajzen, 1985).

Research Methodology

Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a set of beliefs that guides what should be examined, how research should be conducted, and, most importantly, how the results should be interpreted (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism is the most suitable paradigm for this study because interpretivists believe individual experiences shape multiple realities that change as people's views change (Davis, 2014). Shock advertising depends on culture and social context (Chan *et al.*, 2007) to shock or trigger audiences. Exploring how black people experience shock advertising individually will shed light on the cultural and social norms that brands violate through shock advertising. With the sole purpose of understanding subjective human behaviour instead of trying to control it like positivists or emancipation like critical realists (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014), interpretivism is the best paradigm to achieve this.

The epistemological position of interpretivism

Interpretivists believe facts are unfixed and ever-changing since they are related to meaning systems that grow with the discovery of new information and context (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is especially important for this research as consumer attitudes to brands are ever changing along with expectations of acceptable behaviour. Shock advertising, a product of defying social norms or violating moral beliefs or standards (Dahl *et al.*, 2003) is therefore also constantly changing. To this end, this research aims to understand how black people relate to outrageous content from brands and what beliefs they are left with.

The ontological position of interpretivism

According to interpretivists, reality is subjective, and people have varied experiences based on their cultures, value systems, and personal experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Black people experience the world quite differently to white people (see CUNY Special: "Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority", 2011). Using this paradigm, the study aims to offer insight into the subjective experiences of black consumers as well as understand how these experiences shape or affect their relationships with the brands they consume.

The axiological position of interpretivism

The goal of interpretivism is to get an in-depth understanding of the values and concepts that form people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, hence interpretivists do not undertake value-free research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Understanding the thoughts and feelings of black people when exposed to deliberate offensive marketing as well as their attitudes post exposure will offer insight as to the impact shock advertising may have on their sense of brand loyalty. The researcher's subjective perspective and values as a person of colour will also be taken into consideration when evaluating the study's observations.

The interpretivist paradigm is the most suitable research tradition for this study in order to fully unpack the phenomena of shock advertising and its subsequent effects. Interpretivism values context, individuality and fluidity of meaning (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) which will aid in the pursuit of understanding what is considered offensive today, how marketing tactics like shock advertising affect brand loyalty and what consumer feelings and behaviours gruesome images, sexual references and racial content cultivate.

Methodology & Research Design

The most suited methodological position for this study is qualitative research. A qualitative research approach is most suited for getting rich, subjective accounts of experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) from this study's participants. Qualitative research deals with significant but not obvious causes of individual experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Through a qualitative research approach, this study will be able to get a better understanding of 'what' shock advertising is to black consumers, 'how' it makes them feel and behave in terms of brand loyalty towards brands and 'why' (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This approach is aligned with this study's paradigm, interpretivism.

This study follows a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was used as the theoretical standpoint of this study because it aims to understand and describe the lived experiences of people (Van Manen, 2017). This study aims to understand and describe how black consumers experience shock advertising and the subsequent impact it has on their behavioural or attitudinal brand loyalty. The researcher carried out this study with the intention of understanding the above mentioned phenomena while describing the experience from the point of view of black consumers.

Population

As defined by Wiid and Diggines (2013:186) population refers to the “total group of people or entities from whom information is required”. The population for this study was individuals born between 1987 - 2001, aged between 35 - 21 at the time of this study.

Target population refers to people or things that fall within the population parameters (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The target population for this study was black consumers born between 1987 - 2001, aged between 21 - 35 and colloquially known as *Gen-Zers & Millennials*. This age group matters because they are the target of most advertising (Huberman, 2021) due to their buying power however have been found to not be as brand loyal as previous generations and have reservations towards traditional advertising (Urwin & Venter, 2014). This age group falls within the most socially conscious generation who are willing to act in accordance with their beliefs (Blake & Callahan, 2019) and value peer reviews or opinions more than advertising when making a purchasing decision (Peterson, 2004). This group also lives online with 50% of gen-zers and 44% of millennials reporting daily usage respectively (Statista, 2022). Understanding what influences this group’s attitude and behaviours toward brands as well as the potential risks or rewards is important for marketers considering the use of shock advertising as a marketing technique.

Accessible population refers only to the section of the population that the researcher has access to and can actually include in their study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The accessible population for this research was black males and females aged 24 - 30, living or working in and around northern Johannesburg and Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa.

The target unit of analysis for the study was 4 participants however the researcher was able to interview 5 participants. This was due to the accessible population responding more favourably than expected to the invitation to partake in the study. 5 participants were enough for this study as the emphasis in qualitative research is not to gather a sample size large enough to be representative of an entire population but rather to gather enough participants in the sample to reach the data saturation point (Pascoe, 2014).

Sample

Including the entire accessible population in this study would be impossible as the number is too great, therefore the researcher scaled down the accessible population to a more manageable number of participants through the process of sampling (Pascoe, 2014). The sample for this study was black consumers aged 21 - 35 living in or around northern-Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. The sample size was five (5) participants.

Non-probability sampling was used for this study as every individual who is part of the accessible population did not have an equal opportunity to be a part of this study (Pascoe, 2014) due to time, access and resource limitations.

The researcher made use of both convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling, the use of elements that are both known to the researcher and easily accessible (Pascoe, 2014), was used to identify potential participants and then purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants selected for the study satisfied the research elements. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of elements that the researcher believes are important in order to answer the research question (Pascoe, 2014). Therefore a list of characteristics was drawn and then a sample was selected from the convenient sample, that is in line with the specified characteristics. An email was sent to ten (10) potential participants who had been identified from the sample, inviting them to partake in the study. All 10 potential participants were known to the researcher. The researcher had access to their email addresses as the researcher had previously been in contact with the potential participants outside of the study. The invitation email that was sent briefly explained the study, the method in which interviews would be carried out and attached the required consent forms for completion. Participants were made aware that this was a voluntary study and that they were at liberty to decline. Six (6) participants responded favourably while four (4) did not respond to the mail. Due to time limitations, only five (5) participants were interviewed for this study.

Research Question	Unit of Analysis	Data Collection	Unit of Observation
How does shock advertising impact the brand loyalty of black consumers?	Five participants.	In-depth face-to-face and online interviews.	Individuals.

Below is a list of the required characteristics:

1. Participants must fall within the age range of 21 - 34.
2. Participants must be black.

Data Collection Method

While group interviews may provide participants with comfort and may increase their willingness to partake in discussions, individual interviews are preferred for discussing more sensitive topics as they provide the privacy required (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008). In-depth interviews allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions in order to gather more details from participants about their experiences and also to allow participants to expand on their answers in their own words (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Because of the above, this study made use of individual in-depth interviews.

The first interview took place on 29 July 2022 and the last on 26 August 2022. While the intent was to carry out face-to-face interviews with each participant, two (2) out of the five (5) interviews took place online via Microsoft Teams with the participants' video cameras on. The other three (3) participants were interviewed face-to-face at their place of work. All interviews were video recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher was able to gain insight into how shocking advertisements made participants feel by observing their body language and facial expressions through transcription and review of interviews. This was especially important for this study because non-verbal cues communicated via body language can convey information like thoughts, feelings and attitudes (Patel, 2014).

Each participant was asked a set of standardised, open-ended questions. Some participants were more eloquent and descriptive than others; however, all participants experienced varying emotions, visible through their body language and facial expressions, as a result of reviewing

different examples of shock advertising. Participants were presented with selected advertisements that fall within one (1) of the three (3) identified elements of shock advertising. A fourth ad that reflects how shock advertising can be used for good was also given to participants to review and discuss as the above. All four (4) adverts were carefully selected to adhere to ethical standards and avoid bias. The selected adverts were also submitted for ethical clearance in accordance with this study. The aim was to use recent advertisements published within the past 5 years, advertisements from different brands conveying different types of shock as well as advertisements consisting from brands that South African consumers, especially the target population, would either have access to or knowledge of.

We have established that additional research is needed in order to understand whether shock advertising is effective; however studies have found that shock advertising may cause negative attitudes toward a brand resulting in reduced future purchase intentions for that brand (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). To this end, participants in this study were asked about their future intentions to engage with each brand after reviewing the shocking ads.

Non-verbal cues and reactions of participants while answering questions was considered as an additional source of data and has been included in the analysis and interpretation of findings.

The goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of the participants and gain rich data that can shed light on the impact shock advertising has on brand loyalty. Asserting the phenomenological design of this study, interview questions were centred on the participants' lived experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts and feelings relevant to this study. *Please see Annexure A for interview questions.*

Data Analysis Method

Qualitative data is textual, and its analysis is iterative, hermeneutic and subjective (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014). Maree (2007:101) explains that a hermeneutical analysis 'provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism'. Aligned with this study's research tradition, the researcher adhered to qualitative data analysis techniques to draw findings and gain insight.

An inductive approach was used in this qualitative study to summarise the raw data collected from interviews. This approach was used to see if the research findings speak to the study's objectives and whether the theory that intention drives behaviour (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975) in the context of shock advertising and brand loyalty holds true.

The thematic analysis method was used to analyse data gathered from participants. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The thematic analysis method is carried out in six (6) steps however due to the iterative nature of qualitative data analysis; the researcher did not move through the process linearly.

In order to understand how shock advertising impacts the brand loyalty of black consumers, the researcher first familiarised herself with the data, which is also the first step of a thematic analysis. After conducting all interviews, the researcher transcribed each interview. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher rewatched all the interviews for accuracy and to pick up on anything that may have been missed the first time. Once this was complete, the researcher read over all the transcribed interviews as a whole, with the sole intention of gaining familiarity with the data. The researcher made temporary notes with a pencil of the first things that jumped out while reading. Once this was complete, the researcher reread transcribed interviews individually and with greater attention.

During the second read, the researcher was able to start noticing possible codes and patterns in responses and reactions. As a result, the researcher started to highlight words or phrases that were somewhat emotional, **yellow** and those that were socially influenced, **orange**. Using the identified words and phrases, the researcher drew up a coding table, (see *Table 1*) for each shocking advert and populated each column with the words and expressions given by each participant under the relevant advert. The researcher then went back to highlight responses that related to attitudinal or behavioural loyalty in **purple**. This was the first real attempt at coding the data as well as reviewing the participant's individual experiences using their own words.

Table 2: Descriptive coding using colours for each shock advertisement.

Participants (P)	Shockvert 1: Dettol	Shockvert 2: Burger King	Shockvert 3: Tresemmé	Shockvert 4: Nike
P1	Didn't take the ad literally therefore wasn't offended. More amused. Attitudinal loyalty was slightly affected by behavioural loyalty remained the same. Participants advised that they would continue to use the brand.	Uncomfortable with the ad. Questioned the choices made indicating she believes there was a better way to make the ad. Referred to the use to sexual innuendo as "lazy" and feels desensitized to this type of advertising because it's rampant. Brand loyalty did not change. "... the food is nice, that's the problem."	Felt "disappointed" with this ad stating that there is a great deal of information available that can be used to make more racially inclusive ads. "There was no research... it feels very lost" Added that "if it's for white hair, by white hair, just show white hair." "Very glad I don't use the brand". The ad reinforced long standing beliefs of exclusion before negatively affecting brand attitude.	Finds ad to be consistent with the brand identity therefore was not shocked. Participants showed a fondness for the ad. Positive brand associations were made, improving brand loyalty. Participant advised that they'd buy more Nike products "as soon as I get my money up".
P2	Strong negative reaction to the ad, calling it "gruesome" and questioning the ad's efficacy. No change in behavioural brand loyalty because "You know Dettol gets the job done."	Tried to be clinical in analysis calling the ad "clever" but their body language was indicative of discomfort with the ad. Brand loyalty was unchanged. "Will continue buying"	Strong negative reaction to the ad that was followed by a personal story of a similar experience of racist profiling via hair. Participant was triggered and added "the only way this was approved was if there was no black person on this team". "I'm glad I've never used Tresemmé"	Found the ad inspirational. Brand impressions improved therefore improving attitudinal loyalty.

P3	Immediate discomfort toward the ad calling it "cruel". Brand loyalty was diminished. "I'll look for another brand"	"Clever". Impressed with the ad but shows empathy for female consumers who might take offence to the ad. Used the phrase "sex sells" to legitimise choices made in the ad. Improvement in attitudinal loyalty but not behavioural.	Appears to be offended however participants said they felt disrespected by the ad. "I would never use it."	"Powerful ad". Positive ad analysis and sentiment toward the ad. Brand loyalty improved, stating "it's easier for me to make more purchases of the brand"
P4	Shocked and uncomfortable. Questioned the choices made in the ad. Brand loyalty was negatively affected stating "I'll continue to not use the brand."	Loved the ad and laughed hysterically upon viewing. Attitudinal loyalty improved however this did not translate to behavioural loyalty.	Disappointed that "people still see hair that is not straight, curly hair, black people's hair as not in good condition." "Never bought from them and I don't intend on it."	Positive impression of the brand. "I'll probably buy more from them"
P5	Questioned if the ad was real. Remarked "Wow" displaying pure shock. "I'd still use it regardless"	Found the ad humorous and "smart". Brand loyalty increased stating "I'll go buy it now actually."	Wagged finger at the ad almost as if to warn and became upset. Said the ad was portraying black hair as "not normal" "I'm not buying it at all"	Admired the ad and gave positive feedback. Said "respect" which colloquially means 'big up'. "The ad is cool. Still going to buy it"

Colour	Description
yellow	Emotional responses post exposure to shocking ads.
orange	The role of cultural norms in shock advertising.
purple	Brand loyalty post exposure to shocking ads.

As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) “A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question”. This was the most challenging step yet, however by continuously reviewing the data and the identified codes, three key themes emerged, (see *Table 2*), emotional responses (yellow), cultural norms (orange) and brand loyalty (purple). These themes were reviewed in conjunction with the rest of the key codes and the overall full dataset from the interviews.

Table 3: Themes, coding colours and descriptions of themes.

Overarching Themes	Colour	Description	In Vivo Code
<i>Emotional Reactions</i>	yellow	Responses post exposure to shocking ads.	“Uncomfortable” “Cruel” “Funny” “Powerful ad!”
<i>Cultural Norms</i>	orange	The role of cultural norms in shock advertising.	“Sex sells” “Another sex sells thing”
<i>Brand Loyalty</i>	purple	Brand loyalty post exposure to shocking ads.	“I’ll go buy it now actually.” “I’m not buying it at all”

The researcher tested to see if these themes can carry the key findings of the study and if they align with the objectives of the study which include a) to determine how shock advertising through gruesome images, sexual references and racist content impacts the behavioural loyalty of black consumers and b) to determine how shock advertising through gruesome images, sexual references and racist content impacts the attitudinal loyalty of black consumers. The themes proved to hold.

The researcher was then tasked with trying to see how the identified themes answer the research question and also, whether the themes provide the basis for a plausible and detailed account of the individual experiences of black consumers exposed to shocking advertising.

During this inductive process of interpretation of themes, the researcher took into account their own axiological position as an interpretivist researcher, taking into consideration the value they occasionally ascribed to the data as well as how value was defined.

Finally, the researcher compiled a write up of all the findings. After accounting for the findings the data produced, the researcher was tasked with interpreting those findings to offer unique insights that told a plausible story about the study.

The researcher weaved together their analytic narrative with the data extracts to provide a meaningful story. This final step was the culmination of the research collection, analysis and interpretation. The researcher contextualised their findings to report on the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty amongst black consumers in South Africa.

Findings

Reviewing an example of shock advertising using *gruesome images*. (See Annexure E)

After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it?	Participant 1 found the ad shocking as well as amusing, stating "for me I can just see the hyperbole and the satire behind it". Participants 2, 3 & 5 each grimaced at the sight of the ad. Participant 3 referred to the ad as "cruel" and like participant 2, was visibly uncomfortable reviewing it. Participant 4 was visibly shocked.
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And how does that ad make you feel?	Participant 2 described the ad as gruesome and "a bit too extreme". This echoes participant 3's sentiments of the ad. While participant 1 may have taken some pleasure in the ad's dark humour, they remarked "I'm scared but I'm laughing". Both participants 4 & 5 said they're shocked.
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The finding from this study is that shock advertising using gruesome images cuts across social norms to evoke negative shock.

Reviewing an example of shock advertising using *obscene sexual references*. (See Annexure F)

After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it?	Upon review of the ad, participant 1 immediately smiled and gave off an awkward expression followed by a 'yeah' and tapped the table. After this, the participant began to fix her top and laugh. These series of movements are consistent with discomfort. Participants 2 had the most neutral reaction to the advert while participants 3, 4 & 5 all chuckled when reviewing the ad. Participant 1, 2 & 3 justified this advert by using the phrase "sex sells". None of the participants were shocked by the advert and only one participant (1) was not impressed with the advert, stating "it's another sex sells thing". Participants 2 & 3 agreed that the advert was a "clever way of advertising" and although participant 5 noted it as funny, he also described the ad as "inappropriate". Participant 1 mentioned that "it's a bit awkward to know that your child or anyone younger is going to see this".
And how does that ad make you feel?	When asked to review how the ad made them feel, participant 1 described herself as desensitised to obscene sexual references in advertising because of the excessive sexual content in the media. Participant 2 described the ad as "a bit dirty" but acceptable because "sex sells" and "relatable". Participants 3, 4 and 5 were amused by the advert with participant 4 stating "it's very sexual but not explicit. I like it."

The finding from this study is that shock advertising using sexual references does not shock but rather entertains. It can also be inferred that sexual references are not found shocking due to the state of the current societal norms around sex.

Reviewing an example of shock advertising using *racist content*. (See Annexure G)

After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it?	After reviewing this advert, all participants had negative reactions to the ad and feelings toward Tresemme. Participant 1 was clinical in her analysis, stating that she believed the ad was a failed attempt at diversity. Participant 2 however was triggered by the ad, recalling an unpleasant childhood memory. Both participants 3 & 5 found this ad offensive, citing feelings of disrespect and anger respectively. Participant 3 remarked "this is a wrong way of marketing" calling into question the ethics behind racially charged marketing. Participant 4 however was visibly disappointed.
And how does that ad make you feel?	Participants 1 & 2 echoed one another's sentiments with the comment "if it's for white hair, by white hair, just show white hair." Participant 1, 2 & 3 made reference to <i>still</i> having to overcome racial prejudices against black hair despite living in the time we live in. "In 2022 our hair is still unacceptable" remarked participant 2. The same participant also said "there was no black person on this team".

The finding from this study is that shock advertising using racially charged content incites negative feelings and attitudes toward a brand. We can also see that racial marketing is considered tone deaf and unprogressive by participants.

Reviewing an example of a shock advert for good. (See Annexure H)

After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it?	Participant 1 was the only participant who knew the subject's name in the ad.
Has this advert had any impact on your impression of the shown brand?	Participants 3, 4 & 5 referred to him in varying iterations of "the knee guy". Participants 2 & 5 described the ad as inspirational, and all participants were left with a positive impression of the brand after seeing the ad.

Describe what the ads you were shown have in common?	All participants except Participant 4 could identify that all ads evoked emotion.
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The finding from this study is shock advertising used for good seems to garner the right attention and improves attitudes toward a brand. Dahl *et al.*, (2003) found that it is possible for shock appeals to have positive effects beyond attention. This study corroborates this assertion finding that positive shock appeals can have a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Unpacking Brand Loyalty

What do you understand 'brand loyalty' to mean?	All participants understood brand loyalty.
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What influences your brand loyalty?	Participants 1, 4 and 5's sense of brand loyalty hinges on her own experience or opinion of a brand rather than the behaviour of a brand in the world. In contrast, brand loyalty for participant 2 & 3 hinges on the brand's image and behaviour in society over and above its offerings.
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If you think about a brand you were once loyal to however, you no longer are, what changed your loyalty to that brand?	Participant 1 & 4's brand loyalty was changed by experience and price respectively. While participant 2 & 3's brand loyalty changed as a result of no longer being able to identify with said brands. Participant 5 experienced a life change which changed his brand preference thus loyalty.
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Investigating the impact of shock advertising on *attitudinal loyalty*

What is your attitude towards <i>Dettol</i> as a brand after seeing this advert? Has it improved or has it lessened?	Despite finding the ad shocking, participants 1 & 5's attitude of Dettol stayed the same. Participants 2 & 4 found that their attitude of the brand slightly went down and only one participant who was offended by the ad said they will "look for another brand".
What is your attitude towards <i>Burger King</i> as a brand after seeing this advert? Has it improved or has it lessened?	Participant 1 remarked that BK's advert was "a bad ad" resulting in a slightly negative attitude of the brand however not the brand's offering. All participants save for one found the BK ad clever and funny. This resulted in their attitudes toward the brand improving or staying the same.
What is your attitude towards <i>Tresemme</i> as a brand after seeing this advert? Has it improved or has it lessened?	All participants in the study had a negative reaction to the racist ad. As a result, all participants' attitudes towards Tresemme declined. Participant 1 stated, "very glad I don't use the brand. I've always known Tresemme to be a brand that's just not for me or my hair texture and then to see the ad, it definitely reinforces". Participant 3 had a stronger comment, saying "I'm glad I've never spent a penny on this brand". This participant said they felt disrespected. Only one participant described themselves as angry. Participants 1 & 4 said they were disappointed. And Participant 2 felt triggered by the ad as it drugged up an unpleasant childhood memory.

What is your attitude towards <i>Nike</i> as a brand after seeing this advert? Has it improved or has it lessened?	All participants reported an improvement in attitude towards Nike after the ad except for participant 5 who stated their attitude of the brand was already positive.
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Investigating the impact of shock advertising on *behavioural loyalty*

Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Dettol now? How so?	Participants 1 & 5 currently use Dettol and despite the ad shocking them, they will continue to use the brand. Participant 3 who had a very strong negative response to the brand said they would make less purchases. While participants 2 & 4, who don't use the brand said they would continue not using the brand as a result of the negative impression from the ad.
Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Burger King now? How so?	Participants 1 & 2 reported that they would not discontinue or change how they interact with BK. Participants 3 & 4 said they would not change their behaviour either, however this is against BK as the two participants don't buy from the outlet. The advert did not change their minds despite both finding the ad clever or funny. Only participant 5 said they have intentions of changing their behaviour in favour of BK.
Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Tresemme now? How so?	All participants had no intention of interacting with the brand moving forward. Participant 3 goes on to say "Never used it, but if I had an opportunity to use or was asked to use this brand, I would never use it."

Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Nike now? How so?	Participants were also unanimous in their intentions to change how they interact with Nike positively as a result of the advert. Participant 3 said "it's easier for me to make more purchases of this brand". Participant 5, who advised they weren't going to change how they interact with the brand, stating "I'm still going to buy it. The ad is cool"
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The below table unpacks brand loyalty based on the findings of this study. (See *Table 3*)

Table 4: Factors affecting brand loyalty.

Factors affecting brand loyalty	Individual experience	Identification
Description	Participants' individual experience, access and opinion of a brand shapes their loyalty rather than the brand's behaviour in the world.	Participants' brand loyalty is a result of their level of identification with the brand. The brand's image, values and behaviour in society is more important than their offerings.
Participants	P1, P4 & P5 all chose which brands they engage with based on their personal convenience, taste, affordability and experience.	P2 & P3 choose brands they personally can identify with. They use brands with similar values. Brands are an extension of who they are.
Quotes	P1: "But it works for me, I'm gonna use it, sorry y'all." P4: "Quality and affordability" P5: "Lifestyle change changes the things I like."	P2: "What impact the brand is having on the world" P2: "If it's about people and not just money" P4: "If I'm loyal to a brand it has to contribute to how I identify with the brand... I see myself more in Samsung compared to seeing myself in Nokia."

Interpretation of findings

The findings of this study show that different types of shock appeals incite different levels of shock, and norm violation plays a significant role in what participants find shocking. Some ads are more shocking than others and sometimes, ads that were intended to shock, didn't shock

at all. What is important, however, is that all the ads were successful in evoking an emotional response. Participants had an unwavering negative response to shock advertising with racial undertones and an unwavering positive response to shock advertising used for good. It is a fair deduction that reactions were somewhat influenced by both race and age given the study's sample. Surprisingly, this sample was more accepting of shock advertising than expected. In line with Parry *et al.* (2013), the apparent immunity of today's youth to shock tactics was proven untrue as this study found that there are still themes that are considered inappropriate and these include gruesome or violent images and racism. The study also found that brand loyalty is more sensitive to shock advertising amongst consumers who identify with the brands they consume, in line with research by Kumar & Kaushik (2020). Finally, the study agrees with previous research asserting that shock advertising is successful in grabbing attention (Dahl *et al.*, 2003; Urwin & Venter, 2014) however, when it is not used for positive reasons, the findings of this study find that shock advertising has an overall negative impact on participants' attitudinal or behavioural loyalty.

Below are key insights derived from the study, in accordance with the identified themes:

Emotional reactions

According to (Tyng, Amin, Saad, & Malik, 2017) emotions have a strong influence on attention as well as motivating action and behaviour. Although it has been observed that shock advertising garners emotional responses, some emotions seem to have a stronger influence on motivating action than others. Shock and amusement, which were incited by Dettol and Burger King respectively, impacted attitudinal loyalty however behaviours remain unchanged.

Tresemme evoked disappointment, an emotion that is the result of an unmet expectation (Brown, 2021). According to Brown (2021), the more significant the expectation, the greater the disappointment. The negative changes in attitudinal and behavioural loyalty towards Tresemme indicates that participants experienced deep disappointment as a result of the advert. Nike's example of shock advertising for good incited admiration amongst participants. Admiration, according to Brown (2021) "leads us to wanting to improve ourselves". This emotion is therefore likely to have a strong influence on behaviour. Because of this, the advert shifted both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty positively.

This study found that although shocking ads are successful in triggering emotional responses which lead to greater attention, brand awareness, and memory (Le Blanc, McConnell & Monteiro, 2014; Waller, Fam & Erdogan, 2005) these responses are inherently unpredictable. As a result, marketers cannot be sure of the kind of responses and brand associations their shocking ads will create. Gruesome images for example, may cause shock and discomfort however still lead to sustained behavioural loyalty, as seen in the study. P1 who found the Dettol ad uncomfortable said “I am scared but I am laughing” and as a result would continue to engage with the brand. However the same ad incited a strong negative response from participant 3 whose attitudinal and behavioural loyalty was negatively affected. Therefore, from this study, it is plausible to equate shock advertising to ‘Russian roulette’ as it inevitably causes an emotional response however the degree and impact is left to chance, which is a risky gamble in the face of brand loyalty.

Cultural norms

In previous studies performed by scholars like Dahl *et al.*, (2003), it has been determined that the standards of what is deemed ‘shocking’ are constantly changing as a result of evolving social norms or moral beliefs.

The use of racist content incited significant negative emotional responses from participants, however, what was more important to note was participants’ expectation of brands to not use this form of shock advertising because of the ‘day and age’ we live in. Participants were disturbed by the Tresemme advert – which was an example to shock advertising using racist content – not so much because it was racist, they know racism exists, but because the advert made it to print without anyone finding fault with it. According to P2 “the only way this was approved was if there was no black person on this team”. P1 described the advert as “lost”. From this we can deduce that these black consumers expect brands to have more organisational diversity and to create content that is progressive and reflects the attitudes of the time and world we live in today.

This study also found that the use of sexual references in shock advertising has lost its ‘shock value’ which can largely be attributed to the advent use of nudity and sexual stimuli today’s in social marketing (Parry *et al.*, 2013). P2 and P3 used phrases like ‘sex sells’ to justify their lack

of shock, and others, their approval of an advert by Burger King using obscene sexual references to shock. P1 remarked “another sex sells thing” instead of conveying shock towards the content of the advert. Two participants appeared to be desensitised to this type of shock advertising and yet had conflicting attitudinal changes to brand loyalty. This reiterates the view that responses to shock advertising are unpredictable as they can be affected by a myriad of factors like religion, age, gender, individualism etc. (Parry *et al.*, 2013; Virvilaite & Matuleviciene, 2013) and therefore, the use of shock advertising is a gamble that may result in either negative or positive brand loyalty. Supporting the findings of Urwin & Venter (2014) the level of shock and norm violation play a significant role in the impact of shock advertising.

Thus, through this study we can deduce that shock advertising through the use of racial content, breaches shared expectations of behaviour (Dahl *et al.*, 2003), which inevitably impacts both attitudinal and behavioural loyalty negatively due to the nature of the norm violation and level of shock. Shock advertising using sexual references, garners less surprise due to the proliferation of sexual content (Parry *et al.*, 2013) and its impact on attitudinal and behavioural loyalty is ambivalent.

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a multidimensional concept that can be defined in a variety of ways namely, attitudinal, behavioural, and composite (Rather, 2018). Behavioural brand loyalty is marked by repeated purchases while attitudinal brand loyalty is marked by affection and emotional attachment to a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). According to the evidence collected in this study, shock advertising can negatively impact one aspect of brand loyalty while the other remains intact or completely damage both forms of brand loyalty depending on the degree of shock and the norm violation, consistent with Urwin and Venter (2014).

Despite P1 & P5 being shocked by the example of shock advertising using gruesome images by Dettol, both participants had no change in their attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. This means shock advertising through gruesome images may not always have an impact on brand loyalty. P3, however, had a visceral reaction to the same gruesome advert, resulting in an attitudinal as well as behavioural loyalty change. This difference could be attributed to the

conditions participants use to determine their brand loyalty potentially indicating another variable affecting brand loyalty outside of shock advertising content.

Participants 2-5 found Burger King's example of shock advertising using obscene sexual references funny and subsequently reported improvement in their attitude towards the brand however, only P5 reported a positive change in behavioural loyalty. Therefore, according to this study, shock advertising using sexual references may see attitudinal gains in brand loyalty however these gains do not proportionally spill over to behavioural loyalty. This conflicts with the TRA which asserts that attitudinal intentions predetermine behavioural actions.

The example of shock advertising using racist content by Tresemme as well as the example of shock advertising used for good by Nike, were the only two advertisements that equally affected both attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty either negatively or positively. Participants' responses to shock using racist content and shock for good, agree with the TRA that asserts that participants intentions were influenced by their individual attitudes and beliefs as well as the perceived attitudes and beliefs of society around them (Bhalla, 2021). Therefore, according to this study, shock advertising using racist content has a negative impact on brand loyalty while shock advertising for good, has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

The conditions to which participants attribute their brand loyalty are important to recognise because they may provide a better understanding of the degree to which shock advertising impacts brand loyalty. Participants whose brand loyalty is purely based on personal preference (taste, style, accessibility, price etc.) rather than the brand's values or behaviour in society, are less likely to stop using the brand based on shock advertising. We see this with P1 who had a negative reaction to Burger King's ad however remarked "I don't know why they would advertise like this but their fries are delicious so, I'll still buy Burger King and that's me being loyal."

Participants whose brand loyalty is based on what a brand stands for and their behaviour in society are more inclined to attitudinal and behavioural changes as a result of shock advertising. We can see this with P3 who said the Dettol ad made them not want to buy the product "because it's not taking consideration of the sensitivity of human life" in its ad. Participants whose loyalty is dependent on what a brand stands for, identify with brands. These participants see the brands they choose as an extension of themselves. Making them more sensitive to shock advertising.

Although studies by Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) do not agree with this assertion, suggesting that brand identification has no role in influencing important dimensions of consumer–brand relationship such as brand loyalty. Further studies by Elbedweihi, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby and Elsharnouby (2016), Tuškej, Golob and Podnar (2013) and Kumar and Kaushik (2020) found that brand identification enhances the likeliness of developing strong and favourable relationships between consumers and brands, confirming the findings of this study.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

It is plausible to posit that emotional reactions, as a result of shock advertising, are inevitable but unpredictable. Although TRA states that action follows intention and intention is product of attitudes and beliefs (Bhalla, 2021), this study found that some shocking ads incited positive reactions however those positive attitudes did not translate into positive behaviours. This study also found that changes in attitudinal and behavioural loyalty as a result of shock advertising occur in varying degrees, depending on the norm violation and type of shock. As a result, the TRA cannot be used to explain the impact shock advertising has on brand loyalty.

Having said that, how participants attribute brand loyalty influences the extent to which shocking advertisements affect their brand loyalty. Understanding this is important for brand managers and marketers especially when reviewing contents and the message of shocking advertisements.

Contribution & Conclusion

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact shock advertising has on brand loyalty and according to the findings of this study, shock advertising is successful in grabbing attention; however, when it is not used for good, it has an overall negative impact on participants' attitudinal or behavioural brand loyalty. Through open-ended individual interviews, participants were exposed to advertisements that each had a distinct shock factor. By asking participants to review different advertisements displaying varying shock appeals, the researcher was able to explore the attitudes and behavioural intentions of participants. It was also determined that

different types of shock appeals incite varying levels of shock from participants or garner no shock at all. All the adverts, however, were successful in evoking an emotional response amongst all participants.

This study found that gruesome images and racist content are considered inappropriate themes thus successful in creating shock and however sexual references did not solicit shock at all because it is common knowledge that “sex sells”. The use of gruesome images garnered negative emotional responses whilst the use of sexual references provided entertainment. Participants had an unwavering negative response to shock advertising with racial undertones however the study found that participants had an unwavering positive response to shock advertising used for good with an inspirational undertone. This sample however, was surprisingly more accepting of shock advertising than expected.

The key objective of this study was to provide insight to the impact of shock advertising has on brand loyalty amongst black consumers. This objective, along with the research question has been addressed. This study contributes to academic literature analysing and unpacking shock advertising as well as marketplace knowledge for marketers, brand managers and advertisers. With provision to future studies, this paper offers a basic understanding of shock advertising and its impact on brand loyalty for the consideration of organisations and academics. This research also addresses the paucity of research in shock advertising literature by assessing the attitudinal and behavioural responses of black consumers to a range of shocking advertisements.

Whilst research into shock advertising is growing with inquiry into how shock advertisements affect more conservative consumers like Asians (Prendergast, Ho & Phau, 2011) this research responds to calls to compare and contrast the reactions of cross-cultural consumers to shock advertising (Sandicki, 2011) by providing reactions from black South African consumers.

This study contributes to addressing how shock advertising impacts attitudinal and behavioural brand loyalty amongst black consumers by providing detailed accounts of emotional reactions and behavioural intentions after reviewing shock advertising containing gruesome images, obscene sexual references and racist content.

Trustworthiness

In order to safeguard the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher followed the principle of design coherence, ensuring that the data collection, analysis and interpretation methods all align to the research question and objectives of the study.

Qualitative researchers use the concept 'trustworthiness' which is made up of four dimensions, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to measure the reliability and validity of their study (Koonin, 2014).

Credibility refers to how accurately the researcher interpreted the data provided by the participants of the study (Koonin, 2014). In order to ensure credibility, the researcher allowed participants to fully expand on their answers and asked follow-up questions where necessary in order to understand participants better and gain insight into their experiences. The researcher also reviewed each recording after transcription to verify accuracy and to ensure that all the necessary data has been captured.

The interpretivist paradigm does not lend itself to generalisation as the aim of the research tradition is to understand participants' experiences not to predict or control them (Davis, 2014). However transferability, in qualitative research, allows for generalisation (Koonin, 2014). Therefore in order to prove transferability, the researcher has provided evidence that the study's findings can be extrapolated to other contexts or generations.

Dependability refers to the process of consolidating the data collection method with the data analysis and theory generated from the study (Koonin, 2014). In order to ensure that the research findings are dependable, the researcher documented each step of the research process in order for potential future researchers outside the study to "follow, audit and critique" the research processes (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams & Blackman, 2016).

Confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the researcher (Koonin, 2014). The researcher has shown that their conclusion of the study is aligned to the findings of the study in a way that can be followed and replicated (Moon, et al., 2016). In an effort to ensure confirmability and that the results of the study are based on the

experiences of the research participants rather than those of the researcher, a secondary professional opinion, from the research supervisor, who acts as an ethical research partner for this investigation has been enlisted.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations provide a moral or professional code of conduct that establishes a standard for one's attitudes and behaviour while conducting research (Louw, 2014).

This study deals with sensitive and controversial topics such as racism and sexual references in an attempt to analyse shock advertising. Because of this, participants will be made aware of the topics of discussion in the study and the material that they will be expected to engage with, within the study. Participants will have the option to decline being a part of the study post being fully briefed on the intention of the study and the material they will be expected to engage with as well as the experiences they will be required to share.

No participant was coerced into being a part of the study.

No participant was manipulated into being a part of the study.

No participant was forced into being a part of the study.

All participants were a part of this study in accordance with their free will.

All participants were able to stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable.

Ethical considerations for participants

Informed consent: Participants were informed that they are part of a research study and each signed consent forms to that effect. See Annexure B.

Collecting data from participants: Interviews were arranged in advance. Participants answered standard open-ended questions as per the approved interview questions document. Interviews were recorded and participants signed to the consent (see Annexure C) of this data collection method prior to the commencement of the interview.

Dealing with sensitive information: Participants' data has remained confidential and was used strictly for data analysis purposes in accordance with the POPI Act.

Considering the sensitivity of certain topics within the research, it is important for the researcher to make commitments that will not only ensure transparency but ethical behaviour. Ethical commitments for the researcher include but are not limited to the following:

- Not falsifying information or results of the research.
- Not distorting results.
- Not allowing bias to influence interpretation.
- Not misusing information for personal gain.
- Not using inappropriate research methods

The above has been enforced by the following precautions:

1. All personal information of participants has been disposed of post research submission.
2. Recorded interviews have been transcribed and footage was used as evidence.

Limitations & Recommendations

After receiving favourable responses from six (6) participants, interview dates were scheduled for five participants. Only five (5) of the six (6) participants were interviewed due to scheduling conflicts and two (2) of those participants' interviews were carried out online.

Only 3, namely, disgusting images, sexual references & racist content, of Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchanda's (2003) seven types of shock were used and four (4) (religious taboos, profanity/obscenity, vulgarity and gratuitous violence) were not as a result of time constraints. I recommend conducting further research into the impact of brand loyalty using the full spectrum of types of shock as this may offer greater insights. The names of the brands responsible for each ad were not hidden, to rule out any existing attitudes toward a brand, I recommend that brand names be hidden in further research to see if it may impact outcomes.

This study was a qualitative study that used in-depth face-to-face interviews, for further research perhaps quantitative research with a larger sample in order to achieve generalizability of findings may be used. This study exclusively reviewed how black consumers are affected by

shock advertising, future studies may include different races within the same age range to compare findings.

Despite these limitations, this study is still valid as it offers thought provoking insights from the use of in-depth individual interviews. It has provided insight into the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty and the researcher was able to collect enough data to achieve data saturation and answer the research question.

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List of Figures

Figure 1: PETA. [2003]. *To animals all people are Nazis*.

Figure 2: Burger King. [2009]. *It will blow your mind away*.

Figure 3: Dove. [2017].

Figure 4: Toscani, O. [1990]. *Blanket*.

List of Tables

Table 1: Key Concepts

Table 2: Descriptive coding using colours for each shockvertisements.

Table 3: Themes, coding colours and descriptions of themes.

Table 4: Factors affecting brand loyalty.

List of Annexures

Annexure A: In-depth Interview Schedule

Annexure B: Consent form for respondents and participants

Annexure C: Consent form for Audio or Video Recording

Annexure D: 2022 Ethics Letter approval

Annexure E: Dettol shock advertisement

Annexure F: Burger King shock advertisement

Annexure G: Tresemme shock advertisement

Annexure H: Nike shock advertisement

Annexure A

Exploring the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty

In-depth Interview Schedule

Interviewer: Phemelo Segoe

Institution: Vega School

Date: June 2022

Focus Area	Example of questions and probes
Study and participation introduction	What do you understand about this study? In your own words, can you explain why you chose to be part of this study?
Shock advertising	<i>[participant to review shock advertising example that makes use of shocking/gruesome images]</i> After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it? May you describe how this advert made you feel? Why is that? <i>[participant to review shock advertising example that makes use of obscene sexual references]</i> After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it? May you describe how this advert made you feel? Why is that? <i>[participant to review shock advertising example that makes use of racist content]</i> After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it? May you describe how this advert made you feel? Why is that? <i>[participant to review shock advertising example that is used for good]</i> After reviewing this advert, what can you tell me about it? Has this advert had any impact on your impression of the shown brand?

	In your own words, how would you describe what the ads you were shown have in common?
Brand Loyalty	What do you understand 'brand loyalty' to mean? In your own words, what influences your brand loyalty? If you think about a brand you were once loyal to however, you no longer are, what changed your loyalty to that brand?
Impact of shock advertising on attitudinal loyalty	How do you feel about Dettol as a brand after seeing that advert? How do you feel about Burger King as a brand after seeing that advert? How do you feel about Tresemmé as a brand after seeing that advert? How do you feel about Nike since you reviewed that advert?
Impact of shock advertising on behavioural loyalty	Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Dettol now? How so? Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Burger King now? How so? Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Tresemme now? How so? Do you have any intentions to change how you interact with Nike now? How so?
Theory of Reasoned Action	What actions have you taken in the past against a brand that has used shocking/gruesome images in their advertising? What actions have you taken in the past against a brand that has used obscene sexual references in their advertising? What actions have you taken in the past against a brand that has used racist content in their advertising?
Closing	Thank you for partaking in this study.

Adverts for Review

1. Example of shock advertising that makes use of ***shocking/gruesome images***.



2. Example of shock advertising that makes use of ***obscene sexual references***.

IT JUST TASTES BETTER 



IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND AWAY

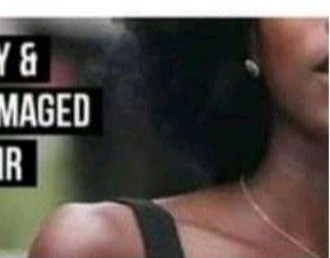



\$6.25 MEAL

BK SUPER SEVEN INCHER

Fill your desire for something long, juicy and flame-grilled with the **NEW BK SUPER SEVEN INCHER**. Yearn for more after you taste the mind-blowing burger that comes with a single beef patty, topped with American cheese, crispy onions and the A.1.[®] Thick & Hearty Steak Sauce.

3. Example of shock advertising that makes use of ***racist content***.

FRIZZY & DULL HAIR 	DRY & DAMAGED HAIR 
NORMAL HAIR 	FINE & FLAT HAIR 

4. Example of shock advertising used for good.



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Phemelo Segoe and I am a student at Vega School of Branding. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of (Amalia van Schalkwyk) about <i>the impact of shock advertising n brand loyalty</i>. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the effects of shock in advertising. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because I would like to understand the impact of shock advertising through the lens of your experiences. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to have a one-on-one interview with you where you will answer questions that will help me understand your experiences pertaining to shock advertising. As part of the interview, you will be exposed to adverts that are considered shocking for your review and discussion. You will review three (3) adverts with the following characteristics: 1. The first ad will contain images that are deemed shocking or gruesome. 2. The second ad will contain obscene sexual references. 3. The third ad will contain racist content. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about how shocking advertising has influenced your attitudes, opinions, or behaviours. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my

supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

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

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

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

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

My contact details are as follows:

Phemelo Segoe

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Amalia van Schalkwyk

[INSERT TELEPHONE NUMBER OF SUPERVISOR]

[INSERT E-MAIL ADDRESS OF SUPERVISOR]

Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Phemelo Segoe about the *impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty*.

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

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

Signature	Date

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Phemelo Segoe to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

Date: 15/7/2022

Student name: Segoe Phemelo Charity

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega School (online)

Re: Approval of RESE8419 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!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

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

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

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

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

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

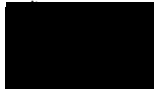
Supervisor name: Amalia van Schalkwyk

Signature:



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Dr Tish Taylor

Signature:



WHEN ORDINARY SOAP JUST WON'T DO...



Warish 1000.com

Kills 99.9% of bacteria. For clean hands every day!



IT JUST
TASTES
BETTER



IT'LL BLOW YOUR MIND AWAY



BK SUPER SEVEN INCHER



\$6.25
MEAL

Fill your desire for something long, juicy and flame-grilled with the **NEW BK SUPER SEVEN INCHER**. Yearn for more after you taste the mind-blowing burger that comes with a single beef patty, topped with American cheese, crispy onions and the A.1.[®] Thick & Hearty Steak Sauce.





Concept Document

<u>Project details</u>		
Your Name: Phemelo Segoe	Student Number: [REDACTED]	
Supervisor: Amalia van Schalkwyk	Date: 04.09.2022	Version: V6

<u>Proposed Title</u>	
Title	Exploring the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty.

<u>Research details</u>	
Problem statement	Phrases like “the attention economy” have gained popularity with more and more scholars looking to understand the currency of attention and its limitations in a world overflowing with information (van Krieken, 2018). According to Simon Herbert, as shared by van Krieken (2018) the proliferation of social media and the internet as a whole has raised the supply of information and diminished the availability of attention needed to consume it. As a result, attention has become a limited resource, a currency, if you will, that marketers are constantly trying to exchange for their content (Romaniuk and Nguyen, 2017). According to Georg Franck (2019), attention begets attention, the same way money creates its own interest. Marked by engagement, attention is more easily given to a previous holder than a new attention seeker (van Krieken, 2018) and once chaptered, is often fragmented or fleeting (Romaniuk and Nguyen, 2017). To this end, marketers have had to become more innovative, perhaps even, bolder in their attempts to ‘cut through the clutter’ and reach target audiences (Vezina and Paul, 1997). This is the justification used for shock advertising. In 2017, Dove was accused of creating a racist online ad which the brand quickly apologised for, admitted to “missing the mark” and removed from Facebook however not before this ad trended and caused severe outrage (CNBC, 2017). In this ad, a black woman removes her brown top to transform into a white woman wearing a white top after using Dove’s body wash (Astor, 2017). In 2018, Procter and Gamble produced a television advertisement titled ‘The Talk’ which shows an African-American mother coaching her young son on how to handle the racism and verbal abuse he may someday experience as an African American male (Bahrapour, 2017). Similar to the Dove, P&G’s commercial was also seen as a controversial ad however it was met with praise from black consumers who claimed to have found the ad relatable (Bahrapour, 2017). Unlike Dove, P&G used shock advertising to bring attention to an important yet ‘taboo’ topic, racism in America and police brutality, in a meaningful and consumer-centric way. Former Race Discrimination Commissioner of Australia, Tim Soutphommasane spoke up against sections of the Australian media whom he claimed to be “monetising” racism in an attempt to retain audiences (Grattan, 2018). Racism, as per the Cambridge dictionary, refers to “policies,

	behaviours, rules, etc. that result in a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race”, which is what we can observe from multiple forms of shock advertisements. However, not all examples of shock advertising use race to shock, some use shocking images to try and change behaviours like PETA (Teather, 2003) or obscene sexual references like Burger King’s “Super-Seven Incher” ad (Parry, et. at, 2013; Stransky, 2019). While it is clear that more research is needed in order to understand whether shock advertising is indeed effective, it is important to note that some examples of shock advertising are only ‘shocking’ because they address important social issues with a bluntness that is simply jarring to audiences that prefer to look away like Benetton’s most recent ad, placing a spotlight on immigration (BBC, 2018). With the above in mind, this study aims to explore the impact shock advertising has on the attitudinal and behavioural loyalty of black consumers.
Purpose statement	Although shock advertising has been studied, its impact on brand loyalty has not been well documented. Therefore the purpose of this study is to explore how shock advertising through language, imagery and racist content impacts the behavioural and attitudinal brand loyalty of black consumers. Shock advertising, however, is not all bad and therefore the intent of this study is merely to understand its impact not to discourage its use. By exploring the nuanced changes in behaviour and attitude in black consumers, this study will offer insight to the value or danger of shock advertising to present day marketers.
Research question/s	<i>Primary Question</i> How does shock advertising impact the brand loyalty of black consumers? <i>Secondary Question</i> 1. How does shock advertising, specifically i) images ii) obscene sexual references iii) racist content, influence attitudinal loyalty? 2. How does shock advertising, specifically i) images ii) obscene sexual references iii) racist content, influence behavioural loyalty?
Objectives	To determine how shock advertising impacts the brand loyalty of black consumers. To determine how shock advertising through obscene language, shocking imagery or racially charged content impacts the behavioural loyalty of black consumers. To determine how shock advertising through obscene language, repulsive images or racially charged content impacts the attitudinal loyalty of black consumers.
Research rationale	While marketers may claim to be fighting for attention to motivate their use of shockvertisements, we cannot ignore the possible negative ramifications of the use of shock advertising (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). Research looking at the effects of shock advertising on consumer behaviour are limited and therefore, this study will look at three (3) elements used to create shock, namely sex, images and racist content. This study aims to understand how shock advertising affects brand loyalty of black consumers in South Africa. Black consumers were chosen as

	the focus for this study because racially charged advertisements directly impact South African black consumers living in a country that has a legacy of racial discrimination and finally, studies centering the experiences of this audience are scant. Brand loyalty is considered as a marker for marketing success (Rather, 2019) therefore studying how shock advertising affects it is important in order for marketers to make informed decisions on whether to use this tactic or not. This study will provide much needed insight to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of shock advertising in grabbing consumer attention and the subsequent effects on consumer attitudes and behaviour towards a brand.
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<u>Literature overview</u>		
Key theories	Developed by Fishbein and Azjen in 1975 and discussed by Bhalla (2021), the theory of reasoned action (TRA) proposes that an individual's actions can be attributed to their behavioural intention. Fishbein and Azjen (1977) posit that a person's intentions are influenced by their individual attitudes and beliefs as well as the perceived attitudes and beliefs of society around them. In their TRA model, attitude and subjective norms create intention and intention creates behaviour (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975). "Intention" refers to a person's willingness or readiness to engage in a specific action (Ajzen, 1985). Therefore, the core concept of TRA is, the intention of an individual to engage in a certain activity will drive their behaviour. As applied to this study, it is suggested that ever so often, consumers may be exposed to an offensive or insulting ad. As a result of the offence taken or insult felt, consumers may decide to boycott said brand that is responsible for the offensive advertisement. While the intention to boycott the brand may be felt strongly in the heat of the moment, seeing whether or not consumers actually follow through with their intentions is important to this study. In most cases, is it the case that people will behave accordingly? This is why the theory of reasoned action is best suited for this study as it looks at the relationship between attitude and behaviour (Fishbein, 1980). The TRA model will be used to see what kind of intentions shock advertising creates in the minds of black consumers and whether those intentions translate into behaviours impacting brand loyalty.	
Seminal authors/ sources	- David Aaker's brand equity model will be used to unpack how brand loyalty helps create brand equity. - Keller's definition of brand equity will be used in the study and extracts of his brand management theory. - Fishbein and Azjen's theory of Reasoned Action will be used for the study's theoretical concept.	
Literature review themes	<u>Theme 1</u> Shock Advertising a) Gruesome Images b) Obscene Sexual references c) Racist content	<u>Theme 2</u> Brand Loyalty a) Attitudinal loyalty b) Behavioural loyalty
Sources	A list of identified journals to be used for this research: Aaker, D. 1996. Building Strong Brands. New York: The Free Press. Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. 2006. Antecedents and purchase consequences of customer participation in	

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Key concepts	Brand Equity Brand Loyalty Shock Advertising

<u>Provisional Research Approach</u>				
Paradigm	<u>Paradigm</u> A paradigm is a set of beliefs that guides what should be examined, how research should be conducted, and, most importantly, how the results should be interpreted (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism is the most suitable paradigm for this study because interpretivists believe individual experiences shape multiple realities that change as people's views change (Davis, 2014). Outrage marketing depends on culture and social context (Chan, Li, Diehl and Terlutter, 2007) to shock or trigger audiences. Exploring how black people experience outrage marketing individually will shed light on the cultural and social norms that brands violate through outrage marketing. With the sole purpose of understanding subjective human behaviour instead of trying to control it like positivists or emancipation like critical realists (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014), interpretivism is the best paradigm to achieve this.	<u>Epistemology</u> Interpretivists believe facts are unfixed and ever-changing since they are related to meaning systems that grow with the discovery of new information and context (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This is especially important for this research as consumer attitudes to brands are ever changing along with expectations of acceptable behaviour. Outrage marketing, a product of defying social norms or violating moral beliefs or standards (Dahl, et al., 2003) is therefore also constantly changing. To this end, this research aims to understand how black people relate to outrageous content from brands and what beliefs they are left with.	<u>Ontology</u> According to interpretivists, reality is subjective, and people have varied experiences based on their cultures, value systems, and personal experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Black people experience the world quite differently to white people (see CUNY Special: "Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority", 2011). Using this paradigm, the study aims to offer insight into the subjective experiences of black consumers as well as understand how these experiences shape or affect their relationships with the brands they consume.	<u>Axiology</u> The goal of interpretivism is to get an in-depth understanding of the values and concepts that form people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, hence interpretivists do not undertake value-free research (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Understanding the thoughts and feelings of black people when exposed to deliberate offensive marketing as well as their attitudes post exposure will offer insight as to the impact outrage marketing may have on their sense of brand loyalty. The researcher's subjective perspective and values as a person of colour will also be taken into consideration when evaluating the study's observations.
Approach/ design	'Methodology' is a guiding system for collecting and analysing data in order to solve problems in research (Davis, 2014). The most suited methodological position for this study is qualitative research. A qualitative research approach is most suited for getting rich, subjective accounts of experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) from this study's participants. Qualitative research deals with significant but not obvious causes of individual experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Through a qualitative research approach, this study will be able to get a better understanding of 'what' shock advertising is to black consumers, 'how' it makes them feel and behave in terms of brand loyalty towards brands and 'why' (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This approach is aligned with this study's paradigm, interpretivism.			

	This study follows a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was used as the theoretical standpoint of this study because it aims to understand and describe the lived experiences of people (Van Manen, 2017). This study aims to understand and describe how black consumers experience shock advertising and the subsequent impact it has on their behavioural or attitudinal brand loyalty. The researcher carried out this study with the intention of understanding the above mentioned phenomena while describing the experience from the point of view of black consumers.
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<u>Provisional Research Plan</u>	
Population	As defined by Wiid and Diggines (2013:186) population refers to the “total group of people or entities from whom information is required”. The population for this study was individuals between the ages of 21 - 35. Target population refers to people or things that fall within the population parameters (Nieuwenhuis, 2020) therefore the target population for this study was black consumers aged 21 - 35, colloquially known as Gen-Zers & Millennials. This age group is the target of most advertising (Huberman, 2021) due to their buying power, making their experience of shock advertising and the subsequent impact on their attitude and behaviour towards brands important. This age group falls within the most socially conscious generation who are willing to act in accordance with their beliefs (Blake & Callahan, 2019) and live online with 50% of gen-zers and 44% of millennials reporting daily usage respectively (Statista, 2022). This is important to this study as it will offer insight to marketers on the potential risks or rewards associated with shock advertising. Accessible population refers only to the section of the population that the researcher has access to and can actually include in their study (Nieuwenhuis, 2020). The accessible population for this research was black males and females aged 24 - 30, living or working in and around northern Johannesburg and Centurion, Gauteng, South Africa. The target unit of analysis for the study was 4 however the researcher was able to interview 5 participants. This was a result of the accessible population responding more favourably than expected to the invitation to partake in the study.
Sampling	Including the entire accessible population in this study would not be impossible as the number would be too great, therefore the researcher must scale down the accessible population to a more manageable number of participants (Pascoe, 2014). This process of reducing the accessible population to researchable quantities is called sampling (Pascoe, 2014). The sample for this study was black consumers aged 21 - 35 living in or around northern-Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. The sample size was five (5) participants. Non-probability sampling was used for this study as every individual who is part of the accessible population did not have an equal opportunity to be a part of this study due to time and resource limitations. Purposive sampling was the selected sampling method of choice in order to ensure that participants who took

	part in the study satisfied the research elements. Purposive sampling is the intentional selection of elements that the researcher believes are important in order to answer the research question, thus a set list of characteristics is drawn and then a sample is carefully identified from the population that has the specified characteristics (Pascoe, 2014). An email was sent to ten (10) potential participants who had been identified from the sample, inviting them to partake in the study. All 10 potential participants were known to the researcher. The researcher had access to their email addresses as the researcher had previously been in contact with the potential participants outside of the study. The invitation email sent briefly explained the study, the method in which interviews would be carried out and attached the required consent forms for completion. Participants were made aware that this was a voluntary study and that they were at liberty to decline. Six (6) participants responded favourably while four (4) did not respond to the mail. Due to time limitations, only five (5) participants were interviewed for this study.
Data collection method(s)	While group interviews may provide participants with comfort and may increase their willingness to partake in discussions, individual interviews are preferred for discussing more sensitive topics as they provide the privacy required (DeRoche & Lahman, 2008). In-depth interviews allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions in order to gather more details from participants about their experiences and also to allow participants to expand on their answers in their own words (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Because of the above, this study made use of individual in-depth interviews. The first interview took place on 29 July 2022 and the last on 26 August 2022. While the intent was to carry out face-to-face interviews with each participant, two (2) out of the five (5) interviews took place online via Microsoft Teams with the participants' video cameras on. The other three (3) participants were interviewed face-to-face at their place of work. All interviews were video recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher was able to gain insight into how shocking advertisements made participants feel by observing their body language and facial expressions through transcription and review of interviews. This was especially important for this study because non-verbal cues communicated via body language can convey information like thoughts, feelings and attitudes (Patel, 2014). Each participant was asked a set of standardised, open-ended questions. Some participants were more eloquent and descriptive than others; however, all participants experienced varying emotions, visible through their body language and facial expressions, as a result of reviewing different examples of shock advertising. Participants were presented with selected advertisements that fall within one (1) of the three (3) identified elements of shock advertising. A fourth ad that reflects how shock advertising can be used for good was also given to participants to review and discuss as the above. All four (4) adverts were carefully selected to adhere to ethical standards and avoid bias. The selected adverts were also submitted for ethical clearance in accordance with this study. The aim was to use recent advertisements published within the past 5 years, advertisements from different brands conveying different types of shock as well as advertisements consisting from brands that South African consumers, especially the target population, would either have access to or knowledge of.

	We have established that additional research is needed in order to understand whether shock advertising is effective; however studies have found that shock advertising may cause negative attitudes toward a brand resulting in reduced future purchase intentions for that brand (Sabri & Obermiller, 2012). To this end, participants in this study were asked about their future intentions to engage with each brand after reviewing the shocking ads. Non-verbal cues and reactions of participants while answering questions was considered as an additional source of data and has been included in the analysis and interpretation of findings. The goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of the participants and gain rich data that can shed light on the impact shock advertising has on brand loyalty. Asserting the phenomenological design of this study, interview questions were centred on the participants' lived experiences in order to gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts and feelings relevant to this study.
Data analysis method(s)	Qualitative data is textual, and its analysis is iterative, hermeneutic and subjective (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014). Maree (2007:101) explains that a hermeneutical analysis 'provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism'. Aligned with this study's research tradition, the researcher adhered to qualitative data analysis techniques to draw findings and gain insight. An inductive approach was used in this qualitative study to summarise the raw data collected from interviews. This approach was used to see if the research findings speak to the study's objectives and whether the theory that intention drives behaviour (Fishbein & Azjen, 1975) in the context of shock advertising and brand loyalty holds true. The thematic analysis method was used to analyse data gathered from participants. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The thematic analysis method is carried out in six (6) steps however due to the iterative nature of qualitative data analysis; the researcher did not move through the process linearly. In order to understand how shock advertising impacts the brand loyalty of black consumers, the researcher first familiarised herself with the data, which is also the first step of a thematic analysis. After conducting all interviews, the researcher transcribed each interview. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher rewatched all the interviews for accuracy and to pick up on anything that may have been missed the first time. Once this was complete, the researcher read over all the transcribed interviews as a whole, with the sole intention of gaining familiarity with the data. The researcher made temporary notes with a pencil of the first things that jumped out while reading. Once this was complete, the researcher reread transcribed interviews individually and with greater attention. During the second read, the researcher was able to start noticing possible codes and patterns in responses and reactions. As a result, the researcher started to highlight words or phrases that were somewhat emotional, yellow and those that were socially influenced, orange. Using the identified words and phrases, the researcher drew up a coding table, (see <i>Table 1</i>) for each shocking advert and populated each column with the words and expressions given by each participant under the relevant advert. The researcher then went back to highlight

responses that related to attitudinal or behavioural loyalty in purple. This was the first real attempt at coding the data as well as reviewing the participant's individual experiences using their own words.

Table 2: Descriptive coding using colours for each shock advertisement.

<i>Participants (P)</i>	<i>Shockvert 1: Dettol</i>	<i>Shockvert 2: Burger King</i>	<i>Shockvert 3: Tresemmé</i>	<i>Shockvert 4: Nike</i>
P1	Didn't take the ad literally therefore wasn't offended. More amused. Attitudinal loyalty was slightly affected by behavioural loyalty remained the same. Participants advised that they would continue to use the brand.	Uncomfortable with the ad. Questioned the choices made indicating she believes there was a better way to make the ad. Referred to the use to sexual innuendo as "lazy" and feels desensitized to this type of advertising because it's rampant. Brand loyalty did not change. "... the food is nice, that's the problem."	Felt "disappointed" with this ad stating that there is a great deal of information available that can be used to make more racially inclusive ads. "There was no research... it feels very lost" Added that "if it's for white hair, by white hair, just show white hair." "Very glad I don't use the brand". The ad reinforced long standing beliefs of exclusion before negatively affecting brand attitude.	Finds ad to be consistent with the brand identity therefore was not shocked. Participants showed a fondness for the ad. Positive brand associations were made, improving brand loyalty. Participant advised that they'd buy more Nike products "as soon as I get my money up".
P2	Strong negative reaction to the ad, calling it "gruesome" and questioning the ad's efficacy. No change in behavioural brand loyalty because "You know Dettol	Tried to be clinical in analysis calling the ad "clever" but their body language was indicative of discomfort with the ad. Brand loyalty was unchanged. "Will continue buying"	Strong negative reaction to the ad that was followed by a personal story of a similar experience of racist profiling via hair. Participant was triggered and added "the only way this was approved was if there was no black person on this team".	Found the ad inspirational. Brand impressions improved therefore improving attitudinal loyalty.

		gets the job done."		"I'm glad I've never used Tresemme"	
P3		Immediate discomfort toward the ad calling it "cruel". Brand loyalty was diminished. "I'll look for another brand"	"Clever". Impressed with the ad but shows empathy for female consumers who might take offence to the ad. Used the phrase "sex sells" to legitimise choices made in the ad. Improvement in attitudinal loyalty but not behavioural.	Appears to be offended however participants said they felt disrespected by the ad. "I would never use it."	"Powerful ad". Positive ad analysis and sentiment toward the ad. Brand loyalty improved, stating "it's easier for me to make more purchases of the brand"
P4		Shocked and uncomfortable. Questioned the choices made in the ad. Brand loyalty was negatively affected stating "I'll continue to not use the brand."	Loved the ad and laughed hysterically upon viewing. Attitudinal loyalty improved however this did not translate to behavioural loyalty.	Disappointed that "people still see hair that is not straight, curly hair, black people's hair as not in good condition." "Never bought from them and I don't intend on it."	Positive impression of the brand. "I'll probably buy more from them"
P5		Questioned if the ad was real. Remarked "Wow" displaying pure shock. "I'd still use it regardless"	Found the ad humorous and "smart". Brand loyalty increased stating "I'll go buy it now actually."	Wagged finger at the ad almost as if to warn and became upset. Said the ad was portraying black hair as "not normal" "I'm not buying it at all"	Admired the ad and gave positive feedback. Said "respect" which colloquially means 'big up'. "The ad is cool. Still going to buy it"
Colour		Description			
yellow		Emotional responses post exposure to shocking ads.			
orange		The role of cultural norms in shock advertising.			

	purple	Brand loyalty post exposure to shocking ads.	
As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) “A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question”. This was the most challenging step yet, however by continuously reviewing the data and the identified codes, three key themes emerged, (see <i>Table 2</i>), emotional responses (yellow), cultural norms (orange) and brand loyalty (purple). These themes were reviewed in conjunction with the rest of the key codes and the overall full data-set from the interviews.			
Table 3: Themes, coding colours and descriptions of themes.			
Overarching Themes	Colour	Description	In Vivo Code
<i>Emotional Reactions</i>	yellow	Responses post exposure to shocking ads.	“Uncomfortable” “Cruel” “Funny” “powerful ad!”
<i>Cultural Norms</i>	orange	The role of cultural norms in shock advertising.	“Sex sells” “Another sex sells thing”
<i>Brand Loyalty</i>	purple	Brand loyalty post exposure to shocking ads.	“I’ll go buy it now actually.” “I’m not buying it at all”
The researcher tested to see if these themes can carry the key findings of the study and if they align with the objectives of the study which include a) to determine how shock advertising through gruesome images, sexual references and racist content impacts the behavioural loyalty of black consumers and b) to determine how shock advertising through gruesome images, sexual references and racist content impacts the attitudinal loyalty of black consumers. The themes proved to hold. The researcher was then tasked with trying to see how the identified themes answer the research question and also, whether the themes provide the basis for a plausible and detailed account of the individual experiences of black consumers exposed to shocking advertising. During this inductive process of interpretation of themes, the researcher took into account their own axiological position as an interpretivist researcher, taking into consideration the value they occasionally ascribed to the data as well as how value was defined. Finally, the researcher compiled a write up of all the findings. After accounting for the findings the data produced, the researcher was tasked with interpreting those findings to offer unique insights that told a plausible story about the study.			

	The researcher weaved together their analytic narrative with the data extracts to provide a meaningful story. This final step was the culmination of the research collection, analysis and interpretation. The researcher contextualised their findings to report on the impact of shock advertising on brand loyalty amongst black consumers in South Africa.
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<u>Ethical considerations and limitations</u>	
Ethics	Ethical considerations provide a moral or professional code of conduct that establishes a standard for one's attitudes and behaviour while conducting research (Louw, 2014). This study deals with sensitive and controversial topics such as racism and sexual references in an attempt to analyse shock advertising. Because of this, participants will be made aware of the topics of discussion in the study and the material that they will be expected to engage with, within the study. Participants will have the option to decline being a part of the study post being fully briefed on the intention of the study and the material they will be expected to engage with as well as the experiences they will be required to share. No participant was coerced into being a part of the study. No participant was manipulated into being a part of the study. No participant was forced into being a part of the study. All participants were a part of this study in accordance with their free will. All participants were able to stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Ethical considerations for participants <i>Informed consent:</i> Participants were informed that they are part of a research study and each signed consent forms to that effect. See Annexure B. <i>Collecting data from participants:</i> Interviews were arranged in advance. Participants answered standard open-ended questions as per the approved interview questions document. Interviews were recorded and participants signed to the consent (see Annexure C) of this data collection method prior to the commencement of the interview. <i>Dealing with sensitive information:</i> Participants' data has remained confidential and was used strictly for data analysis purposes in accordance with the POPI Act. Considering the sensitivity of certain topics within the research, it is important for the researcher to make commitments that will not only ensure transparency but ethical behaviour. Ethical commitments for the researcher include but are not limited to the following:

	- Not falsifying information or results of the research. - Not distorting results. - Not allowing bias to influence interpretation. - Not misusing information for personal gain. - Not using inappropriate research methods The above has been enforced by the following precautions: 1. All personal information of participants has been disposed of post research submission. 2. Recorded interviews have been transcribed and footage was used as evidence.
Limitations	After receiving favourable responses from six (6) participants, interview dates were scheduled for five participants. Only five (5) of the six (6) participants were interviewed due to scheduling conflicts and two (2) of those participants' interviews were carried out online. Only 3, namely, disgusting images, sexual references & racist content, of Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchanda's (2003) seven types of shock were used and four (4) (religious taboos, profanity/obscenity, vulgarity and gratuitous violence) were not as a result of time constraints. I recommend conducting further research into the impact of brand loyalty using the full spectrum of types of shock as this may offer greater insights. The names of the brands responsible for each ad were not hidden, to rule out any existing attitudes toward a brand, I recommend that brand names be hidden in further research to see if it may impact outcomes.

[TOTAL MARKS: 100]