



**The role of self concept in understanding brand experience, brand attachment and
brand loyalty in the consumption of premium clothing brands**

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ABSTRACT

The foremost argument of this research is that self concept is of fundamental influence in the choices consumers make when purchasing luxury clothing brands. The objective of this research was to determine the relationships between self concept and the experience, attachment and loyalty that consumers have towards brands. The research further sought to confirm the role that identity theory plays in brand consumption.

Sixty-nine respondents were surveyed via an electronic tool to understand how they view the role that self concept plays in the experiences they encounter with clothing brands. Experts were also interviewed to gain deeper insights into brands and the importance that communication and branding strategies play in developing brands for consumption. T-tests and bivariate regression was performed in order to determine relationships amongst the constructs.

The findings show that consumers place a relatively high importance on the brand experience and self concept constructs. Marketing and advertising companies have an enormous responsibility to ensure that the right messages are communicated to consumers in order to give consumer a positive brand experience. A robust brand strategy and Communications strategy plays a pivotal role in successful delivery of the essence and image of luxury brands. Identity and self concept theory are central to understanding consumer behaviour and consumption decisions.

Keywords: luxury brands, self concept, consumption, brand experience, brand loyalty



DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Date: _____

Londiwe Mkhize

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND & PROBLEM DEFINITION

Introduction

The proliferation of high-end global brands such as Burberry, Fendi, Louis Vuitton and Cartier into the local market within the past two years has challenged researchers' views on the link between consumers and their choice of brands. Power and Hauge (2008, p. 123) state “this geographic expansion and the new technologies that allowed for it, brought a need for higher levels of product standardization and easily recognizable marks of quality and identity”. Their argument suggests that high end brands symbolize quality and differentiation and the fact that globalization has in essence brought to the fore, the importance placed on brands, be it clothing and/or financial institution brands, as the world has recently witnessed during the financial meltdown. They further argue that consumers’ tastes in brands are seen as social indicators that work alongside other objects and symbols and are reflective of consumers’ identities and aspirations.

Context of the research

South Africa has a lot of room for growth into the luxury brand space given its current macroeconomic environment such as a growing middle class and increased levels of affordability. According to the Economist Intelligent Unit, household consumption will benefit from faster jobs growth, better credit availability and an expanding black middle class. An increasing purchasing power, greater access to debt and credit and an expansion

of the black middle class having higher disposable income levels has stimulated consumption (Consumption trends, 2010). In reference to increased levels of affordability, the Repo lending rate has come down to 10.5% from 15.1% in 2008 and inflation rate is currently sitting at 4.9% from a high of 11.5% in 2008 (Thaker and Walker, 2010). This has stimulated consumption due to consumers having additional discretionary income.

But, one needs to establish whether a relationship exists between a consumers' identity and the brands they consume. Guthrie and Kim (2009) argue that consumers ascribe human qualities to brand names and that they often feel they relate to brands in a personal way. The core argument for this research topic is the fact that research has shown that consumers prefer brands that reinforce their self concept. Luxury clothing brands communicate images of success and status, which may appeal to consumers in South Africa, especially the growing middle class.

Vigneron and Johnson (2004, p. 484) state that "...the supposed luxury of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self, an ideal self, or specific dimensions of the self through the use of the brand". This viewpoint, together with Guthrie and Kim's, is consistent with the fact that consumers hold personal meaning and attachment to choosing to consume a particular brand. Kamineni (2005, p.26) states "Increasingly, in fashion marketing, brands are seen as important in creating an identity, a sense of achievement and identification for consumers who are fashion conscious and materialistic".

A considerable body of empirical research has shown that consumers maintain or enhance different facets of their self-concept by purchasing and using commercial brands. Furthermore, research on self-image congruence suggests that consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards brands that match particular aspects of their self-concept will be more positive and purchase of these brands more likely (Bosnjak and Brand, 2008). Therefore the theory of self concept can assist in measuring identity and understanding consumer choice in luxury clothing brands.

Relevance of the topic to business in South Africa

The topic is relevant to business in South Africa because it will offer greater insights into the mind of a consumer. The topic will also act as market research for prospective sellers of luxury brands that wish to enter certain markets. More importantly it will expose the seller to untapped territories of the psychological and sociological aspects of consumers of luxury brands and thus assist the firm in formulating its strategy and ultimately gain a competitive advantage. This can only be achieved when marketers and brand strategists have a comprehensive understanding into building luxury clothing brands and also understanding the factors that drive luxury consumption. This research for self concept and personal identity theory will create the means for marketers to understand consumer behaviour where spending is concerned.

The retail clothing industry can design and formulate a large-scale communications strategy using self concept as the denominator for building their corporate brand and

attracting their target customers as well. They can utilize brand associations with professional success and can also depict brand images accordingly when designing their advertisements. The strategic goal of brand owners and marketers is to lock in their customers so they are loyal to a particular brand. The brand custodians can formulate processes to ensure brand attachment and eventually a customer's loyalty to a particular brand by understanding a customer's self image.

Therefore it can be observed that this topic will assist with marketing, communicating and positioning brands as well as improve the relationship that customers have with the brand.

The **significance this research** will have to marketers of high-end clothing brands is as follows:

- They will have a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour and consumption, which will help them create more relevant advertising campaigns and promotional activity about their brands.
- Marketers will have a better focus on developing the actual brand and ultimately the retail product, based on an in-depth awareness and insight of the psychological element of a consumer's self concept and the influence thereof in brand consumption.

In terms of the Communications strategy, marketers will have a better idea of how to design a holistic and effective Brand strategy and bring a brand to life in the eyes of the

consumer. Keller and Moorthi (2003) argue that improper communication results in image dysfunctionality. They further illustrate three major factors that lead to image dysfunctionality:

- The failure to communicate functional values;
- Inadequate communication about the larger good the brand delivers to society;
and
- Using home market advertising directly without any modifications and adaptations.

The above breakdown in communication can cause consumers to incorrectly perceive a brand and may not address the values and meaning of brands to prospective or current premium brand purchasers. Therefore, marketers will have the insight to develop more comprehensive, diagnostic and informed theories of marketing and consumer behaviour if they use appropriate communication strategies when developing a brand strategy.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The research study sets out to understand the role that self concept theory plays in luxury clothing brands consumption. The research sought to:

- Determine the relationship between self concept and brand experience.

- Establish whether consumers are more attached to brands that reflect their self concept via brand personality.
- Ascertain whether there is an association between brand experience and brand loyalty.
- Determine whether a relationship exists between self concept and brand loyalty.
- Determine the impact of self concept on brand loyalty.
- Establish whether an association exists between the attachment a consumer has towards a brand and self concept.

The research report presents findings on the influence of self concept on brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty of luxury clothing brands and draws conclusions based on these findings.

Research Scope

The scope will cover exploring consumer identity expression as a key driver of the consumption of global premium brands, through surveying university students, young working people and luxury brand experts so one can get a more holistic picture of the research and also global citizens (consumers) of these luxury brands that are only based in South Africa.

Motivation for the choice of topic

The aim of the research is to reiterate the role that self-concept plays in the consumption of luxury clothing brands. This will add onto the existing literature on the subject. The theory base of self concept will be researched and relationships between brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty will be explored. According to Brakus (2009), brand experience can be defined as subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are a part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environment. Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009) define brand attachment as the strong emotional bond between a consumer and a brand, as evidenced by its three dimensions – affection, passion and connection. Brand loyalty is a customer's propensity to purchase the same product over time (Davies, 2008). The reason as to why self-concept will be used as a unit of analysis is because it is a construct to measure identity. The reason why the brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty constructs, will be used as research questions is because they are fundamental elements that marketers use to design and communicate brand and communications strategies for both themselves and their clients.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Fournier (1998) people use various means to define themselves and one of those ways is establishing relationships with certain brands. Fournier argues that these relationships can affect the cultivation of one's concept of self. The relationships she refers to talk to the meanings that the webs of brands contribute to the enactment of centrally-held identity issues. She goes on further to argue that relationships that consumers form with brands are valid at the level of consumers' lived experiences with the brands. Therefore, one can attest that consumers purchase particular brands because they benefit from the meaning that the brands add to their identity and personal lives.

The objectives of this research will seek to better understand the relationships between self concept and brand experience. The research will look at other brand elements such as loyalty and attachment in order to unravel other associations.

The theory reviewed in this section is grouped in the following constructs: identity expression, self concept, brand-luxury, brand attachment and brand experience. Firstly identity expression is discussed as the overarching theory and basis of this research paper. Secondly, the self concept theory is explored flowing from identity expression. Thirdly brand luxury is discussed in terms of various definitions and perceptions that are associated with luxury brands. Brand attachment is then explored, which looks at the emotional bond, link and behavioural aspect; although there is a relationship between brand attachment and brand experience, which simply put, talks to the fact that

consumers are more likely to be attached to things that are significant to their past experiences, places and background (Belk, 1989). This relationship should exist because the positive experience a consumer has with a particular brand, such as the way French clothing brands form-fit one's body, is a driving factor in a consumer becoming attached to that particular brand. Finally, brand experience is discussed, which aims to encapsulate the emotional connection that a consumer has with a luxury brand based on numerous experiences.

2.2 Identity expression

It is argued that consumers are precisely what they consume and that they consume what they are. This view is supported by Schau (2000, p. 50) who states "...identity directly translates into consumption, and that consumption is capable of revealing identity".

It is important to note, therefore, that consumption manifests its way through 'intangible consumer identities'. This is in line with Power and Hauge's (2008) argument that brands often play the part of institutional contexts within which individual consumers construct and negotiate symbolic registers and identities. They define 'institutional contexts' as those that extend beyond brands merely being logos or marketing techniques. Brands thus transcend to 'institutions' that "lend structure to market processes". For example, branding in the fashion industry has become a strategy for competing for most companies, which encapsulates innovation, competitive strategies and communication to the market place. In terms of innovation, Power and Hauge (2008, p. 128) state, "In the fashion industry new technologies and trends are prototyped, tested and launched in

high-end markets and gradually adapted for mass consumption through successive product offerings...”

Brands therefore are institutions because they symbolize systemic, wide informational importance to modern society in terms of the messages they communicate through the following:

- Brands are used by firms to *differentiate* their products
- Brands can function as a *risk management strategy* by taking the focus away from the success of individual products, to less product-specific values.
- Firms that focus on brands, rather than each product, can gain *economies of scale* and other cost efficiencies when it comes to marketing and promoting new offerings; and
- Brands can help firms *diversify* into new markets and new product groups; for example, cigarette giant Marlboro moved into new product areas such as clothing, and music firm Virgin’s diversification into telephone communication and air travel.

Power and Hauge’s view ties in with Penaloza’s (1994) argument with regards to culture swapping and consumption experience among Mexicans in American culture. Power and Hauge’s contention means that brand consumption is associated with an individual’s identity construction. It is crucial to note that culture swapping is related to identity through the fact that culture forms part of what a consumer’s identity comprises. Food was used as an example of being a key ‘cultural expression,’ where Mexican Americans ate

food they used to eat in Mexico as a way of reaffirming their ties to their identities as Mexicans. Penaloza (1994) firstly defines consumer acculturation as the general process of movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another country. So, culture influences identity construction and identity. The Mexican American consumers are expressing their identity construction, both Mexican and American, through their consumption). She specifically refers to the consumption of food, clothing, automobiles, telephone, media and financial services. Penaloza (1994, p. 43) states “Clothing serves as bodily protection, but it is also a means of cultural expression that imperfectly indicates style, gender, social class, and even nationality”. She contends that people’s personal identity, whether national or cultural, is associated with the goods and services that they consume.

In line with Penaloza’s view of cultural globalization, Boli and Elliott (2008) argue that the quest for authentic difference of self, identity and culture are becoming more and more intense. This is largely due to the fact that we are operating and are a part of a larger global context. Boli and Elliott (2008, p. 543) state “...individuals must consciously construct their identities to build (or discover) authentic selves, and the identities they construct must be unique”. This perspective directly links with luxury clothing brands in the sense that these brands promise the consumer a level of exclusivity and uniqueness. Penaloza, Boli and Elliot are in agreement that consumption of any form is associated with the globalization of a consumer on a cultural level, which impels the conscious construction of distinctive personal identity.

Vigneron and Johnson (2004, p. 490) state “Consumers may use luxury brands to classify or distinguish themselves in relation to relevant others, but they may also try to integrate the symbolic meaning into their own identity”. They go on further to state that social referencing and the construction of one’s self appears to be the determinant in luxury consumption. Social referencing in the article refers to consumers’ spending behaviour being influenced by the social groups they associate with such as family, church community and social clubs. So, the desire of consumers to belong and conform to affluent lifestyles seen in these social groups affects their ‘luxury-seeking behaviour,’ which may lead them to purchase luxury clothing brands, for example, as opposed to non-branded clothing. White and Dahl (2007) argue that consumers have stronger self-brand connections to brands consistent with an in-group than without. Escalas, 2004 defines self-brand connections as the extent to which consumers have incorporated brands into their self-concepts and were representative of their identity. Therefore, consumers want to be associated with an in-group as an expression of their identity, such as teenagers will buy accessories like sunglasses in order to be associated with the “cool” group as opposed to the “Maths nerds”. The dissociative reference group is an out-group which consumers avoid being associated with; such as men do not wish to dress in clothing that make them look feminine. They further contend that this effect was more pronounced for brands that were relatively more symbolic; namely, brands that communicated something to others about the user’s self-identity.

2.3 Self concept

Belk (1988) uses the terms “self,” “sense of self,” and “identity” as synonyms for how a person subjectively perceives who he or she is. He views consumers as possessing a core self that is expanded to include items that then become part of the extended self. Swaminathan, Page and Gurhan-Canli (2007) define *self concept* as individual-level unique identity, which is based on the need for individual autonomy. Self concept has also been defined as ‘ones self –identity, a schema, consisting of an organized collection of beliefs and feelings about oneself(Bailey). Fournier 1998 cited in Swaminathan *et al.* 2007 asserts that self-concept focuses on personal identity and not on group identity through the relationship between a consumer and a brand on the basis of a connection between a consumer’s unique self and what the brand symbolizes for the consumer. Therefore, there is a well-developed theory of self-concept in the consumer behaviour literature. Fournier (1998) defines self-concept connection as the degree to which the brand delivers on concerns, tasks, or themes important to a person's identity. With this in mind, one can make the deduction that self-concept and identity relate to each other in such a way that they talk to the theory of consumers’ personality and what consumers know or can know about themselves.

Ahuvia (2005) shares Belk’s sentiment and argues that discovering one’s true preferences, navigating choice and representing the self, both to oneself and to others, has become a tremendous concern and a driving force in consumption. This is a concern in consumption because consumers face difficulties in developing and maintaining a lucid sense of self because of the wider choices about who they want to be and the kind of lives they want

to lead. This implies that brands need to consistently communicate positive messages to their market so consumers can have affirmative experiences of the brands (because of their link to being representative of their self-concept), which will ultimately drive consumption.

Swaminathan *et al.* (2007) argue that results from data collection indicate that brands are highly symbolic entities that are intricately woven into the fabric of consumers' lives and help shape and communicate their individual identities. This view of the concept of "self-identity" is arguably one of the key assumptions of identity theory. This view affirms one of Belk (1988) when he first brought together a large body of literature to support the thesis that consumers use key possessions to extend, expand and strengthen their sense of self. Swaminathan *et al* (2007, p. 250) go on to state "The self-concept connection is based on consumers' desires to express their individuality and their self as distinct from others". They can do this with luxury clothing brands; for example, looking at the Guess clothing brand, which represents young, fun and style. A teenager who wishes to embody these qualities will purchase this brand as it portrays elements of the teenager's identity.

Fournier (1998) cited in Swaminathan *et al* (2007) defines self-concept connection as a dimension of the consumer-brand relationship, which indicates the amount that the brand contributes to one's identity, values and goals. Swaminathan *et al* (2007) further argue that a high self-concept connection can symbolize a consumer's individual identity. They refer to an example where a consumer's relationship with a Mercedes (or in the case of

this research, premium clothing brands) may be based on the desire to express individual-level unique identity. Fournier argues that an individual's self-concept is primarily unique, abstracted from the social environment and is independent of others. Fournier posits that customers have relationships with their brands and that brands can be "relationship partners" for customers. Fournier (1998, p. 344) maintains that, in order for customers and brands to have a relationship with each other, there must be interdependence between them, an attribute that is enhanced to the extent that "brands are animated, humanized, or somehow personalized." Fournier (1998) observes that consumers do not merely buy brands because they like them or because they work well. She continues to argue that consumers have relationships with a collection of brands so as to benefit from the meanings these products add to their lives. Some of these meanings are functional and utilitarian; others are more psychosocial and emotional.

Belk (1988) cited in Christopher and Schlenker (2004) argues that material possessions can be used to express one's identity to others.

The current research is therefore consistent with the following claims from Belk (1988):

- Identity issues are central to consumption; and
- Possessions are a part of the self.

2.4 Brand-luxury

Vigneron and Johnson (2004) define the key components of brand luxury as a strong element of human involvement, very limited supply and the recognition of value. They go on further to say that there is an agreement in the literature to define luxury goods as goods for which the simple use or display of a particular branded product brings esteem on the owner, apart from any functional utility. Furthermore, Matthiesen and Phau (2004, p. 326) state “Luxury brands are those that are able to persistently demand considerably higher prices than goods with comparable tangible functions”. They argue that HUGO BOSS is a strong brand and as such differentiates itself from unknown brands, which results in a favourable brand image that mirrors the brand’s identity. So, consumers use these brands to bolster their self concept by purchasing them in order to emphasize the capability to induce exclusivity and a distinguished brand identity. It promotes consumer desire for covetousness and appearance.

Further to this argument, Mandel, Petrova and Cialdini (2006) argue that images of success and wealth on media platforms such as television and popular music help define consumers’ identities by painting images in their minds. One of the reasons is that luxury brands provide an opportunity for consumers to accomplish the perception of affluence and luxury, which differentiates them from other consumers of less premium brands. Ryan (2007, p. 14) states “The luxury market and its selective distribution system had created the conditions whereby a brand was to be understood in relation to others like it, and to be recognized as distinct from everything else”.

Vigneron and Johnson (2004) developed the following model framework to illustrate a brand luxury index:

- Non-personal perceptions, which comprise perceived conspicuousness, uniqueness and quality of brand; and
 - Personal perceptions, which include hedonic and extended-self qualities.
- This is also validated by Tsai (2005) who argues that for some consumers, the consumption of luxury brands is aimed at deriving hedonic experience from the use of the product and also pursuing private meanings in the product.

This model highlights the fact that different consumers will have varying perceptions of the level of luxury for the same brands. Kamineni (2005) concurs with this view and argues that consumers tend to view brand names from different perspectives such as materialism, gender and nationality.

The focus on this research paper will be on the personal perception and experience because its elements talk to the identity of the luxury brand consumer. In line with this argument, Mason cited in Kamineni (2005, p. 27) states “...people express themselves through consumption in a myriad of ways, and in this context, product and brands have the ability to communicate messages to others, in that product styles determine how

consumers who own a particular product are perceived by others” Kamineni (2005) discusses how consumers can use luxury brands and self concept by arguing that fashion clothing is consumed publicly and therefore has public meaning. He is therefore illustrating the fact that purchasing luxury fashion clothing brands satisfies needs such as the consumer’s expression of identity and self-image. Consumers believe that purchasing luxury brands will convey a strong message to the world about what and who they are (Kamineni, 2005). Belk (1988) shares Kamineni’s view and argues that people learn, define and remind themselves of who they are by their luxury possessions. He continues to argue that people seek to express themselves through luxury possessions and also use these possessions to seek happiness and remind themselves about their accomplishments.

2.5 Brand attachment

Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009, p. 53) state “Brand attachment refers to a strong emotional bond i.e. hot effect between a consumer and a brand, as evidenced by its three dimension – affection, passion, and connection”. They argue that the brand attachment emanates from the brand experience that a consumer encounters, which translates to an emotional relationship. Swaminathan, Stille and Ahluwalia (2008) share this sentiment and state that by humanizing the brand, brand personality provides opportunities for building strong consumer brand relationships. What one observes about brands that reinforce self concept is the fact that consumers are more likely to be connected to brands

that are significant and representative to the self and therefore have an emotional relationship with the brand. They go on further to argue that individuals who have an anxious attachment style (negative view of self) are more likely to discriminate between brands based on their personality than those who are less anxious about relationships. Brakus *et al* (2009, p. 54) go on further to states “As with brand attachment, customer delight is characterized by arousal and positive affect; it can be considered the affective component of satisfaction”. Both these notions talk to the brand experience that a consumer undergoes when encountering and purchasing a premium brand. The suggestion being made is that there is a definite emotional link attached with a purchase of a luxury brand. This view is then affirmed by Belk (1989) who argues that attachment, if broadly construed to apply to past experiences and individual possessions, is more intimately implicated in the extended self construct and that consumers are more likely to be attached to things that are significant to individual identity.

The above-mentioned emotional link is also further explored by Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005), who argue that consumers’ emotional attachments to a brand might predict their commitment to the brand and subsequently, their motivation to make financial sacrifices in order to acquire it. Thomson *et al* (2005, p.) state “To this extent, a valid measure of emotional attachment should predict consumers’ investment in a brand, such as their willingness to pay a price premium to obtain it”.

Another dimension to brand attachment is the association with a consumer’s attitude towards a particular brand. Escalas (2004, p. 168) states “...narrative processing may

create a link between a brand and the self when consumers attempt to map incoming narrative information onto stories in memory”. This means that the meaning of a brand to a consumer is often a result of its being part of a story. So, consumers use narrative processes, which are stories they share, from their past experiences with a certain brand, to understand their world and who they are as individuals. Some brands then become more significant and valuable than others, becoming connected to consumers’ sense of self. She goes on further to state that the meaning of a brand to a consumer is in part based on the narratives/stories he or she has constructed that incorporate the brand. These narratives include stories and personal experiences that have enhanced the purchasing experience of a consumer’s particular brand and have consequently caused a memorable attachment to the brand. This perspective is consistent with Guthrie and Kim’s argument (2009) that brand personality is associated with a level of consumer emotional attachment, response, trust, loyalty and more self-expression. Guthrie and Kim (2009) define brand personality as the group of human characteristics that describe a specific brand. Therefore, the relationship one would expect between self concept and brand attachment is that consumers are more likely to be attached to things and brands that are significant to their self concept (Belk, 1989).

2.6 Brand experience

It is important to highlight the relevance of a consumer's experience of a brand as one of the trends in luxury. Morrison and Crane (2007, p. 410) state "Emotional branding is defined here as engaging the consumer on the level of senses and emotions; forging a deep, lasting, intimate emotional connection to the brand that transcends material satisfaction". They go on further to say that it involves creating a holistic experience that delivers an emotional fulfilment so that the customer develops a special bond with and unique trust in the brand. Pine and Gilmore cited in Morrison and Crane (2007) argue that global business will be forced to rethink the nature of their products and shift to selling brand experience rather than products or services *per se*, as services become more commoditized. This is a crucial driver of brand consumption because customers need to have positive feelings about a brand and also an affirmative emotional connection to the brand before, during and after a purchase.

Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003, p. 343) state "Commonalities among objects desired (e.g., luxury cars, boats and homes) point to the existence of a globalizing consumer culture with a common imagery of the material basis of the good consumer life". They go on further to claim that as perceived experiences, even these commonalities are always culturally bound and contextualized. They are basically referring to organizing consumers' experiences through how they think and feel through branded products. This view is further illustrated by Okonkwo (2009) who argues that luxury brands are regarded as

sensory in nature, which translates to the fact that the human senses of visuals, smell, touch and feel are considered imperative in selling luxury brands. The reason for this is that consumers experience the qualities of a brand as such.

The expression of today's luxury is about a celebration of personal creativity, expressiveness, intelligence, fluidity, and above all, meaning (Atwal and Williams, 2009). Atwal and Williams give different scenarios of brand experience such as the fact that flagship Gucci and Chanel stores in Tokyo have added restaurants and bistros with marquee chefs. They also mention the recently opened BMW welt (BMW World) in Munich, a cathedral-like showroom modelled on the Acropolis in Athens. Atwal and Williams (2009, p. 344) state "...evokes a marketing experience that includes a cohesive theme, an education project, engagement of the senses and the soliciting of feedback".

It should be noted that there seems to be a coherent theme in the luxury brand literature. Brakus *et al* (2009) argue that one can use brand experience to predict consumer behaviour. Their view is in line with Vigneron and Johnson's (2004, p. 486) argument which states "...luxury products enable consumers to satisfy psychological and functional needs" One could then make the prediction that self concept plays a major role in the consumption of luxury clothing brands in terms of the experience and history that a consumer has with a particular brand, where specifically the psychological needs were met by that brand.

There seems to be consistency in the literature in that experiential marketing views consumers as emotional beings that are focused on achieving pleasurable brand experiences.

2.7 Conclusion

Self concept and brand attachment do influence consumers' purchasing decision for various luxury clothing brands. Marketers and communication agencies have choices in how to respond to these pertinent constructs.

The literature highlights that relationships exist between self concept, identity and brand attachment and brand experience in the following manner:

Customers use premium brands to portray figurative significance into their own identity and to differentiate themselves from other people (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

Self concept construction is the determinant in luxury consumption (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

The experience that a consumer has with a brand leads to brand attachment, which speaks to an emotional relationship with the brand (Brakus *et al*, 2009).

In summary, marketers and communication agencies, for example, advertising agencies are well positioned to respond to elements of self concept and identity where brands are concerned. The literature shows that a need arises for this research. Subsequently,

previous researchers have undertaken to understand options of current responses to drivers of brand consumption. Furthermore it highlights that there is a need for additional research to be conducted to deepen the understanding of the relationship between self-concept and brand loyalty.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Therefore this research proposes the following:

- Proposition 1: That brand experience will be favourable and stronger when brands reinforce consumers' self concept.
- Proposition 2: Consumers are more attached to brands that reflect their self concept via brand personality.
- Proposition 3: That a relationship exists between a consumer's brand experience and the loyalty they show to the brand.
- Proposition 4: That an association exists between self concept and brand loyalty.
- Proposition 5: That self concept has an impact on brand loyalty
- Proposition 6: A relationship exists between brand attachment and self concept

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Research design

The research design that was selected to conduct this study was a combination of quantitative and descriptive in nature. “Qualitative methods allow the researcher to study selected issues in depth, openness and detail as they identify and attempt to understand the categories of information that emerge from the data” (Terr Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). Terr Blanche and Durrheim further argue that qualitative research is often used to gain a general sense of phenomena and to form theories that can be tested using further quantitative research.

Quantitative research is the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect.

The method was two tiered:

Survey research was carried out with consumers, who were the purchasers of these premium clothing brands. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) define survey research as acquiring information such as their characteristics, opinions, attitudes and experiences about one or more groups of people. Descriptive research was conducted because characteristics of a population or a phenomenon were portrayed, (Zikmund, 2003); in this case – self concept was a differentiator for driving the trend towards luxury brands. A short and to the point set of questionnaire was designed on SurveyMonkey, which is a free online survey software and questionnaire tool.

Expert interviews were conducted on brand experts in order to get depth and insight and hone in on a specific area. These expert interviews were carried out because expert interviews are knowledge-based and the experts were interviewed because of their position.

In terms of how this design was carried out, unrestricted variables sufficed, which enabled a variety of unprompted responses. Very few, open-ended questions that are also non-directional were posed in order to eradicate possible interviewer biases.

Inductive reasoning was at the centre of this research in order to build onto the readily available and current large theory base.

4.2 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the luxury brand consumer because it acted as the common denominator in terms of what was measured.

4.3 Survey

4.3.1 Population

The population was defined as consumers who only reside in South Africa. MBA students from Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS), and the young (24 to 40 years) working population that fell between LSM 6 – LSM 10 were approached. The South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) Living Standard Measure (LSM) has become the most widely used marketing research tool in Southern Africa. It divides the population into

10 LSM groups, 10 (highest) to 1 (lowest) (South African Advertising Research foundation, 2006).

SAARF LSM is a unique means of segmenting the South African market. It cuts across race and other outmoded techniques of categorizing people, and instead groups people according to their living standards using criteria such as degree of urbanization and ownership of cars and major appliances (South African Advertising Research Foundation, 2006).

The reason why this particular LSM was targeted was because the assumption being made was that this LSM group was firstly, exposed to brands and secondly that they had the discretionary income to purchase these brands. The LSMs have already proved in the early years to include the income component. In an attempt to improve this measure, an exercise was undertaken to force income and education into the index variables (South African Advertising Research Foundation, 2006).

During 2001 SAARF decided to create an improved Living Standards Measure and they launched the new SAARF UNIVERSAL LSM. Out of the original list of 20 variables used to determine a person's LSM category in the previous LSM, 15 household variables have been carried through to the SAARF UNIVERSAL LSM. In addition, the total number of variables has been extended to 29 to give finer definition to the scale (South African Advertising Research Foundation, 2006).

Continuing on the population, it included consumers who were both brand-conscious and those that were not brand-conscious.

Descriptive research often helps segment and target markets (Zikmund, 2003) in terms of LSMs, level of education and age in this report.

4.3.2 Sampling method

The sampling frame was drawn from South Africa and two different types of sampling techniques were used for the two different two tiered methods: consumers and brand experts

The simple random sampling technique was used for communicating to the consumers of the luxury brands, which were the MBA students from GIBS. The reason for using this technique was that it assured each element in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample or of being selected (Zikmund, 2003). This technique reduced the sample size. Simple random sampling is easy when the population is small and all of its members are known (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). This sample was obtained by sending out emails with a set of questionnaire designed on SurveyMonkey (see appendix 1 for the set of questionnaire administered). The researcher invented questions herself instead of simply using ones from previous research. The reason for this was firstly to guarantee originality and secondly to certify that the researcher asked questions that would answer the research questions and establish relationships established from the propositions. The

researcher did however incorporate ideas from previous questionnaire to design the survey and then adapted the questions to the current research topic.

Taking cases on the basis of their availability or access is referred to as ‘convenience’ or ‘opportunistic’ sampling (Terr Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). MBA class networks, employer and personal networks were exploited to gain access to the population.

Convenience sampling was also used to obtain access to the adult working population that was conveniently available. Zikmund (2003) argues that this helps achieve a large number of completed questionnaires quickly and economically.

Questionnaire for constructs

The four constructs i.e. self concept, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty were represented by the following questions on the questionnaire that was created on SurveyMonkey:

Self concept

- The clothing brands I choose to purchase are extremely important to me
- I am interested in premium clothing brands
- I can tell a lot about a person from the clothing brands they purchase
- A clothing brand a person buys reflects who they are

Brand experience

The 'Guess' brand was used as a proxy in this section of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was as follows:

- I trust this brand
- I have had a positive experience with this clothing brand
- I have bought this brand
- I find the smell associated with this brand interesting
- The brand does not appeal to any of my senses
- This brand induces feelings of excitement, desire and love
- I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand

Brand attachment

- I feel strongly connected to this particular clothing brand

Brand loyalty

- I am loyal to this particular clothing brand

Justification

The overall reasons for selecting the above sampling methods were as follows:

The GIBS MBA students were affluent and aspirational. They were mostly the target market because they had the disposable income and therefore the means of affordability to purchase the clothing brands.

The working population, both young and old, also had the advantage of income and a desire to purchase premium brands. This desire tied back to their consumption of brands forming a link with images of success and definition of their self concept.

The young working population represented the aspirations of consuming premium clothing brands in the future once their careers began progressing. This young working population therefore represented future earning and career potential.

This entire sample method selection process enabled this research to pinpoint the time that self concept starts developing.

The respondent selection for interviewing the experts was through the Judgemental sampling technique. The reason for this choice of sampling method was that the most typical characteristic of the population sample needed to be studied and one that embodied the sample; in this case, the luxury brand expert and an advertising authority fulfilled that role.

In-depth interviews

Two face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain greater key insights into the luxury clothing brands space. These interviews were semi-structured and each lasted for a duration of at least an hour and an hour and a half. Gillham (2005) argues that the semi-structured interview is the most important way of conducting a research interview

because of its flexibility, balanced by structure and the quality of the data obtained.

Gillham further explains semi-structured as:

- The same questions are asked of all interviewees
- Interviewees are prompted by supplementary questions if they have not dealt spontaneously with one of the sub areas of interest
- Approximately equivalent interview time is allowed in each case
- Questions are open
- Probes are used according to whether the interviewer judges there is more to be disclosed at a particular point in the interview

The researcher made use of telephonic and email sources to make contact with the two targeted experts and also set up both interviews. The researcher relied on her professional network to gain access to the brand expert and on her MBA network to gain access to the advertising expert. The fact that the sample of experts was sourced through business contacts and relationships to ensure easy access, therefore also entailed Convenience sampling. This also made it easy for the researcher not to struggle to secure an appointment. A discussion guide was formulated by the researcher to interview the experts (see appendix 2 for the administered discussion guide).

The first interview was conducted with Ciko Thomas, Managing Executive: Nedbank Group Marketing, Communications and Strategy. Thomas is a well-respect industry expert with

vast experience in brands and Strategic Marketing. This interview was conducted at the Nedbank head office, 135 Rivonia Road in Sandton.

The second interview was carried out with Gia Callinicos, a brand strategist from Black River FC advertising agency. Black River FC is an advertising agency that is part of The Jupiter Drawing Room (TJDR), South Africa's a beyond-the-line communications company and one of the world's largest communications agency networks, which specializes in the marketing strategy around creating and building brands for customers. This interview was conducted in Stanley Avenue, Auckland Park, Johannesburg

4.3.3 Sampling size

In terms of the number of respondents, 30 respondents were targeted; although questionnaire were sent out to at least 100 or more potential respondents as the researcher assumed a 50% response rate.

30 GIBS MBA students

30 adult working professionals

Two sets of brand experts

4.4 Data collection

The collection and analysis of data that was conducted in order to achieve the required quality of results was as follows:

A survey (research instrument) designed from Survey Monkey in which information was gathered from a sample of people in the form of a set of questionnaire was sent out via E-mail (Zikmund, 2003) (see appendix 1 for the research questionnaire administered). Some of the questions were measured by a Five-point Likert scale.

Expert Interviews

The researcher interviewed two brand experts for the following reasons:

- In order to incorporate knowledge-based input into the statistical analysis.
- The researcher wanted to gather insights from their experiences in their respective fields.
- Their position and strategic marketing experience further assisted in gathering data.
- The researcher wanted to gauge the validity of the findings of her quantitative research versus the experts' conventional wisdom in the field.
- The researcher also wanted to give credibility to her quantitative research findings.
- Both experts are well-respected in their respected fields and the researcher believed they could add to the existing body of knowledge in a very deep and meaningful way.

This entire process took approximately three to four weeks to complete.

Secondary data was used to research the topic in the form of mainly academic journals and syndicated business reports. This assisted in getting extensive reviews of the literature on similar research (Zikmund, 2003).

4.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of data (Merriam, 1998). The data analysis for each proposition was as follows:

This research contained two dependent variables: it was proposed that self concept, brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty play a role in the consumption of luxury clothing brands. Zikmund (2003) argues that dependent variables are to be predicted or explained.

T-tests

The t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. This analysis is appropriate whenever you want to compare the means of two groups (Zikmund, 2003).

Regression

Regression analysis was used to test the relationships between variables.

- Standard editing sufficed to check the data collection forms legibility, omissions and consistency in classification and coding procedures was followed to establish meaningful categories and character symbols (Zikmund, 2003).
- Computer tabulation was utilized for explaining the research propositions stated above (Zikmund, 2003).

Therefore, statistical analysis was carried out.

4.6 Research limitations

The research had the following limitations:

- The population did not include people from outside South Africa, which may have created a bias and less exposure to other cultural differences, if any.
- The sample included young working adults that do not have access to email and/or internet sources.
- The quantitative research was only as good as the sample from which it was drawn.
- The success of the data collection in terms of the expert interviews and therefore the research itself was highly dependent on the interviewer's skills to probe the experts and encourage key insights without influencing the direction of conversation and causing interviewer bias (Zikmund, 2003).
- The respondents, namely one of the experts, were widely dispersed hence the costs were higher (Zikmund, 2003).

- With regards to the expert interviews, the sample wasn't representative and therefore the findings could not be generalized.
- The research had the inability to detect any changes that may have occurred over time.
- The nature of the research design did not allow the effective management of non response and response bias (Zikmund, 2003).
- The fact that the population in this research had been defined, inadvertently introduced error in the survey results.
- Due to the nature of convenience sampling used for the working population, variability and bias of estimates were not effectively controlled and the projection of the data to the population was inappropriate (Van der Lith, 2007).
- The sample of this research was only confined to individuals in the Johannesburg area due to time and cost constraints.
- Order bias may have occurred in terms of the sequencing of the questions in the questionnaire (Van der Lith, 2007).

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1.1 Introduction

Although 69 responses were received, some of the respondents did not answer all the questions. As missing values could influence the outcome of the propositions, it was decided to omit respondents that did not answer all the questions. Therefore, a sample of 64 was used to make inferences about the propositions.

This section tests various relationships between the four constructs i.e. brand experience, brand attachment, brand loyalty and self concept. Initially, descriptive statistics are provided for the four constructs. Then, the propositions are tested and the results presented. Finally, additional tests are performed to further understand some of the relationships.

5.1.2 Descriptive Statistics On The Constructs

This section will provide the descriptive statistics for the four applicable constructs (brand experience, brand loyalty, brand attachment, and self concept). The values for the constructs were calculated by averaging the responses to the questions (variables) that make up that construct. The responses to negative questions were reversed. The constructs are listed below with the number of questions from the questionnaire applicable to it.

- Brand experience – seven questions,
- Brand attachment – two questions,
- Brand loyalty – one question, and
- Self concept – five questions

5.1.2.1 Cronbach's Alpha (CA) for the Constructs

The Cronbach's alpha was calculated using NCSS 2007[®]. In order to calculate the Cronbach's alpha and standardised Cronbach's alpha, NCSS 2007[®] uses item analysis and the Cronbach's alpha formula. The result of the calculation is then reported in NCSS 2007[®], and is presented below.

Cronbach's Alphas were calculated for the brand experience and self concept constructs. It was decided that it was not necessary to calculate Cronbach's Alphas for the brand attachment and brand loyalty constructs as they have too few variables associated with it.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alphas for the constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Standardised Cronbach's Alpha
Brand experience	0,760980	0,769901
Self concept	0,868767	0,869337

The above table indicates that the responses for both constructs had good internal consistency and validity as the Cronbach's Alphas and Standardised Cronbach's Alphas were well above the 0,65 to 0,7 benchmark. Further examination of the results indicates that the self concept had a higher internal consistency and validity than the brand experience construct.

5.1.2.2 Measures of Central Tendency for the Constructs

The table below summarises the measures of central tendency for the different constructs.

Table 2: Measures of Central Tendency for the Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Standard Error
Brand experience	3,57589	0,65489	3,57143	0,08186
Brand attachment	3,00000	0,79182	3,00000	0,09898
Brand loyalty	2,70313	1,23030	3,00000	0,15379
Self concept	3,39688	0,92547	3,00000	0,11568

The results show that the respondents place a relatively high importance on brand experience and self concept with the means of over 3,3. Brand attachment has a mean of 3,0 while brand loyalty has the lowest mean of 2,7. Therefore, the respondents indicated that of the four constructs, they placed the least importance on brand loyalty. Also, for brand experience and brand attachment, the means and medians are the same, while the other constructs exhibited differences.

5.1.2.3 Histograms for the Constructs

The figures below present the histograms for the four main constructs.

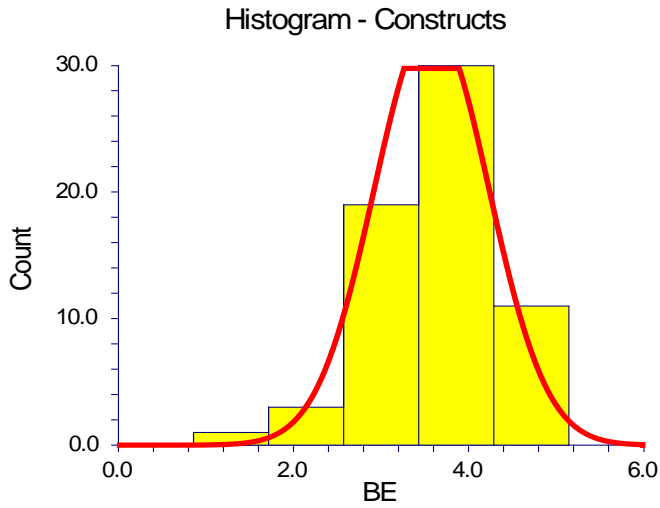


Figure 1: Distribution of the Brand Experience Construct

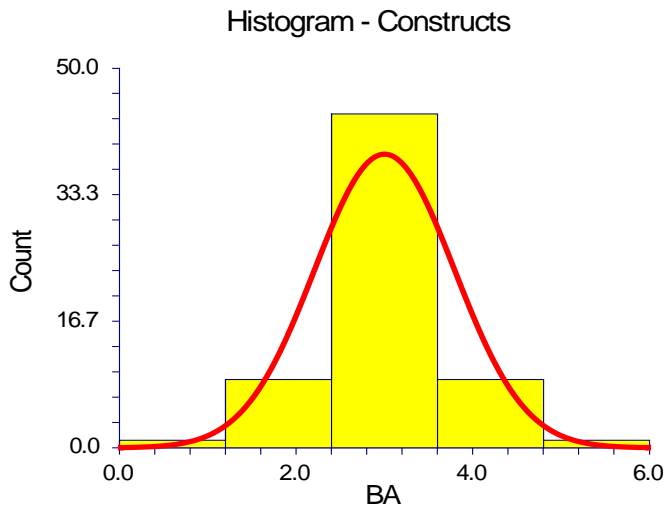


Figure 2: Distribution of the Brand Attachment Construct

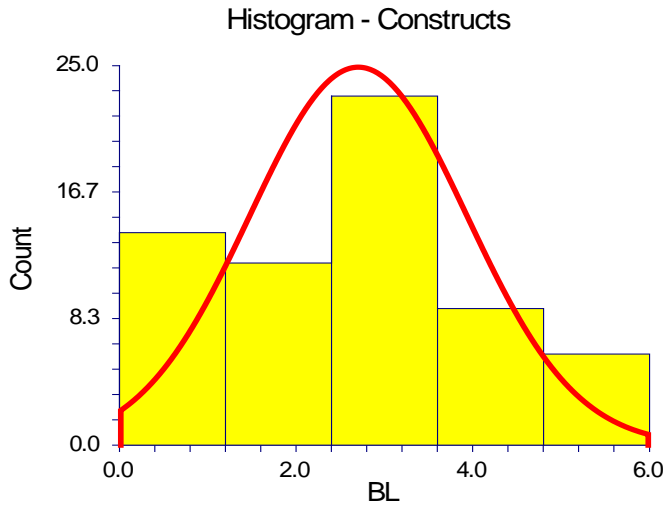


Figure 3: Distribution of the Brand Loyalty Construct

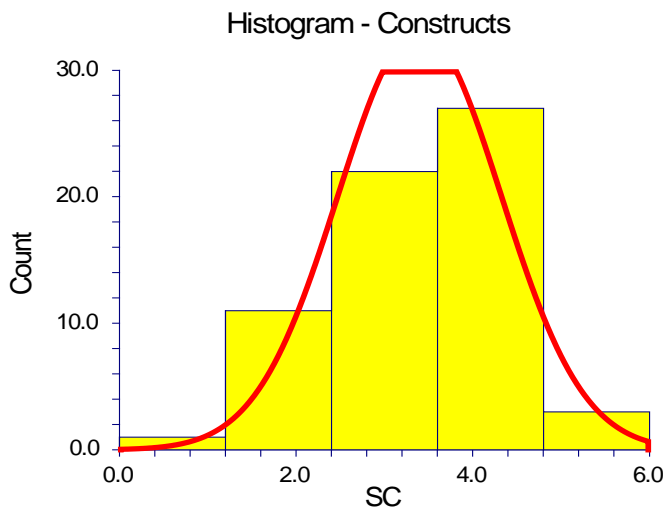


Figure 4: Distribution of the Self Concept Construct

These plots indicate that the distribution for the brand experience and brand loyalty constructs is approximately normal, while the distribution for the self concept construct is

skewed to the right. The distribution for the brand loyalty construct does not have a distinct characteristic.

The relationships between the different constructs were tested using inferential statistics, and the results are presented in the following section. The results of each proposition will be presented separately.

SAMPLE PROFILE

Description of sample profile

All 69 respondents that completed the survey were included in the statistical analysis of the demographics.

Demographics

Demographics questions providing information on age, gender, level of education and income were tested.

Age – the majority of the respondents i.e. 81.2% were the working population between the ages of 25 to 34. 18.8% of the respondents were < 35 year old category.

Gender – 66.7% of the respondents were female and 33.3% of the respondents were male.

Highest Qualification – there was an even split of 30.9% between respondents with honours and masters degree qualifications. 26.5% of the respondents had a junior degree, while 10.3% had a diploma. 1 person had completed a doctorate degree. 2.9% had completed high school.

Occupation – 68.8% of the respondents are managers, while 18.8% are accountants. 7.8% are engineers and 6.3% are lawyers.

Monthly income – the majority of respondents i.e. 94.1% earned R10 000 and had the income that allowed them to afford luxury clothing brands. Only 1 respondent earned less than R5 000 and had less purchasing power to afford the brands. 4.4% of the respondents earned between R5 000 and R10 000.

Description of brand awareness

Question 1

Brand consciousness

Respondents were aware of all the brands that were mentioned on the question, with the lowest score noted for the Morgan, Gant and Zara brands

Question 2

The purchasing activity of certain brands

58 respondents have bought Guess clothing before, 53 have bought Hilton Weiner and 47 had bought the Diesel brand.

Question 3

Purchasing of brands in the past year

The top three brands that were purchased in 2009 were Guess, Hilton Weiner and Mango. 35 respondents purchased Guess, 27 respondents purchased Hilton Weiner and 19 respondents purchased Mango. However, the researcher noted some nice variations in the responses on this particular question. There was a good disparity between all the brands that were mentioned and used as proxies.

Question 4

Clothing brands used most often

The top three clothing brands that our respondents used most often were Guess (29 respondents use the brand), Hilton Weiner (17 respondents use the brand) and Other brands (16 respondents use other brands). Both Guess and Hilton Weiner cater for males and females.

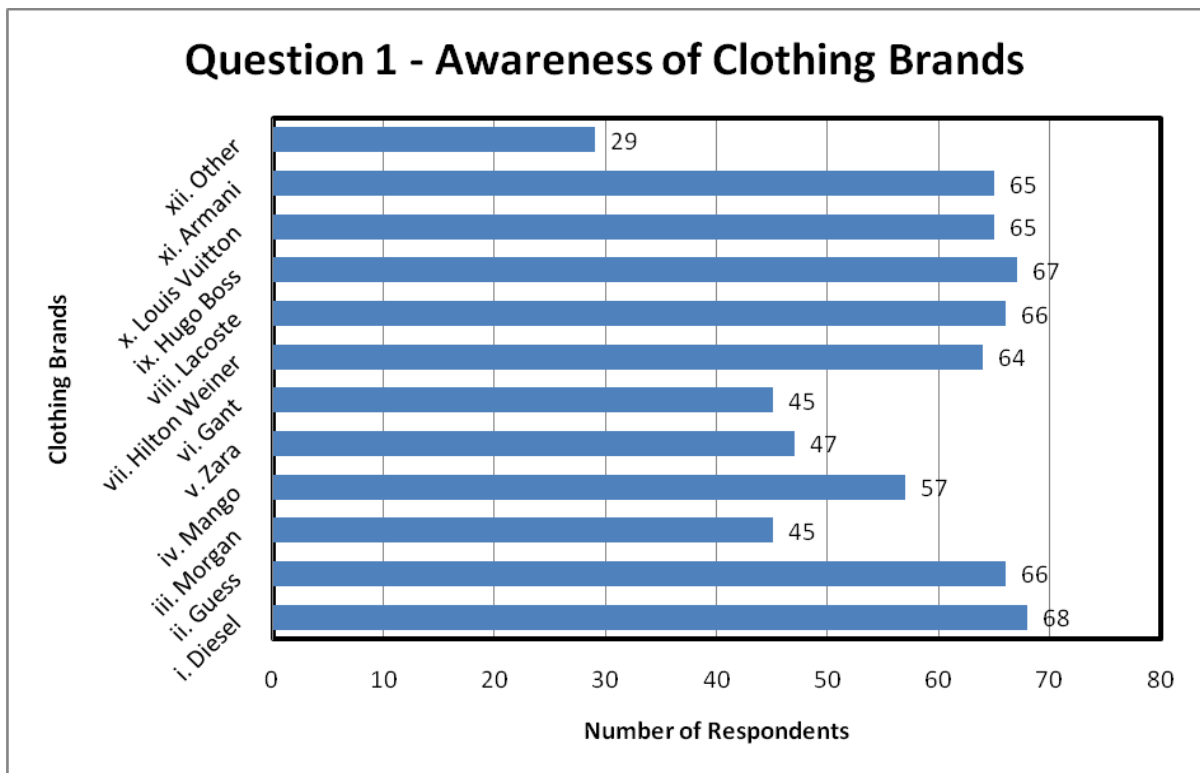
Analysis of data

T-tests were used for the following propositions

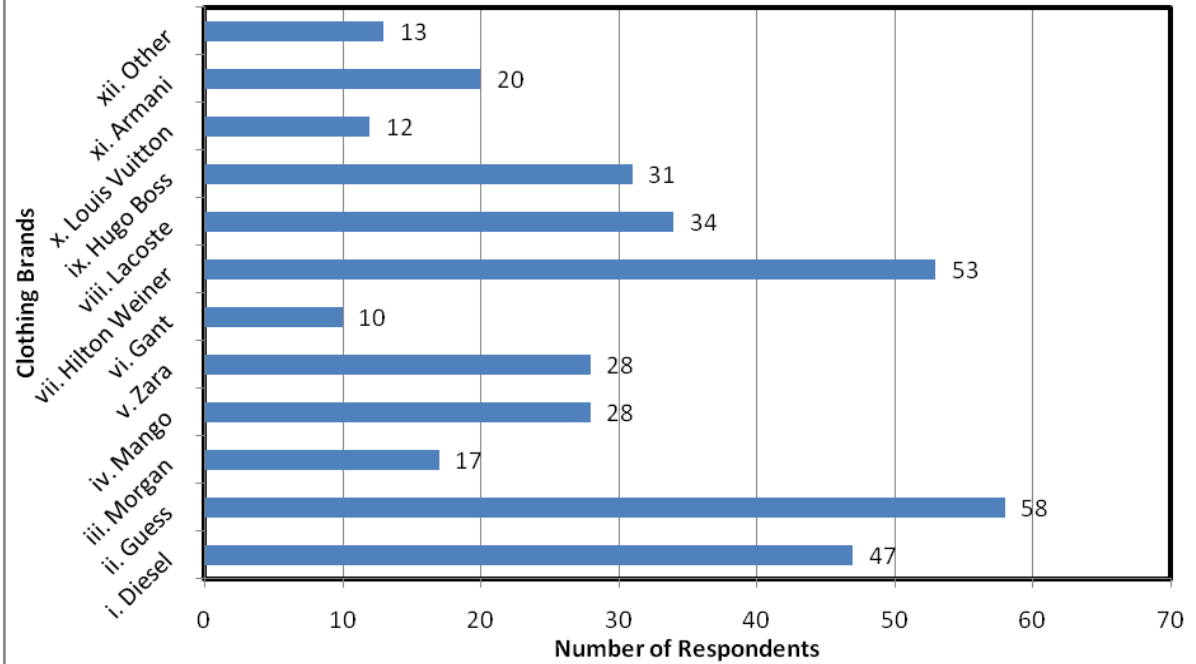
Proposition 1, 2 and 5

Linear Regression analysis was used for the following propositions

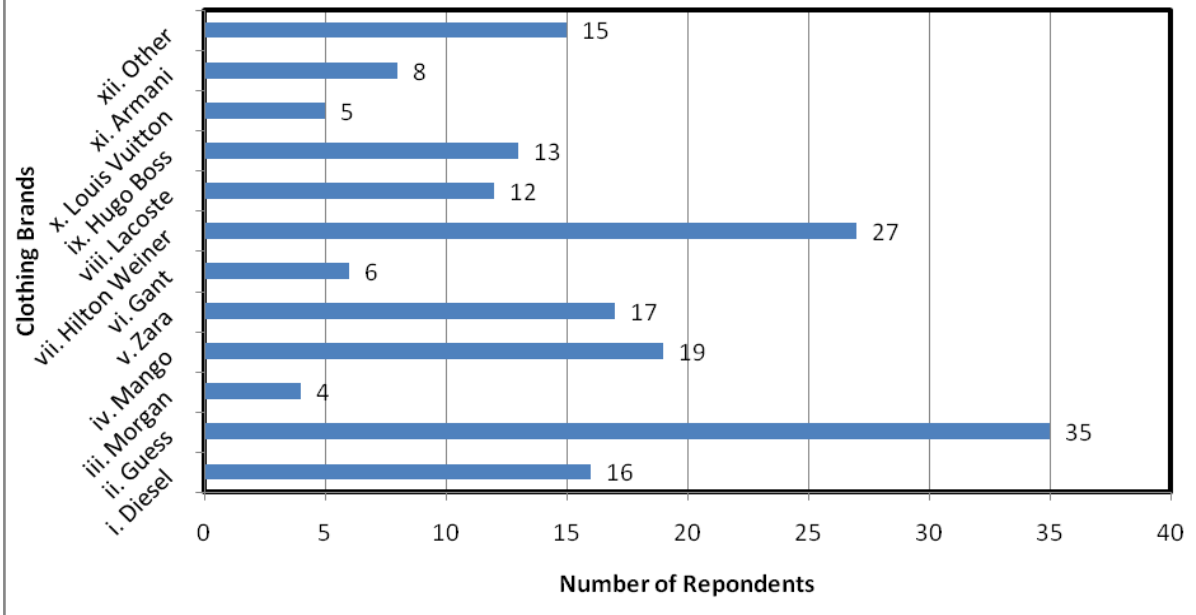
Proposition 3, 4 and 6



Question 2 - Purchase of Clothing Brands



Question 3 - Purchase of Clothing Brands in the Past Year





5.1.3 Research Proposition Tests

The research propositions presented in chapter 3 were tested using two sample t-tests (for propositions 1 and 2) and linear regression (for propositions 3 and 4). The tests were performed using the standard features of NCSS 2007® at a 95 percent confidence level (five percent significance level).

For two sample t-tests, NCSS 2007® reports the results of four different tests. Based on the characteristics of the data, the results of the appropriate test was utilised to make the

statistical inference. The different combinations of data and the statistical tests that were used to make the statistical inferences are reported in the table below. The table also reports the relevant test statistic.

Table 3: Selection of the appropriate difference test

Data Characteristics		Appropriate difference test reported by NCSS 2007®	Appropriate test statistic reported by NCSS 2007®
Normal	Equal Variance		
Yes	Yes	Equal-Variance T-Test	T-value
Yes	No	Aspin-Welch Unequal-Variance Test	T-value
No	Yes	Mann-Whitney U or Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test for Difference in Medians	Z-value
No	No	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test For Different Distributions	Dmn criterion value*

* Maximum difference between the two empirical distribution functions

It must be noted that the independent variable was used to determine the samples used in the t-tests. This resulted in two equal samples being tested. These t-tests were then used to make statistical inferences about the research propositions.

For the linear regression, NCSS 2007[®] estimates a model that approximates the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. The results of the tests are presented below.

5.1.3.1 Research proposition 1: brand experience will be favourable and stronger when brands reinforce consumers' self concept.

For this proposition, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand experience. The samples to be tested were obtained as follows. The responses for the self concept were ranked in order of decreasing levels of self concept. The sample was then split in approximately half (mean split). The levels of brand experience in respondents with higher levels of self concept was then compared with the levels of brand experience in respondents with lower levels of self concept in order to test if there was a significant difference. The results are tabulated below.

Table 4: Test results for Proposition 1

Variables	BE with High SC	BE with Low SC	Difference
Sample Size	32	32	
Mean	3,93304	3,21875	0,71429
Std. Dev.	0,51697	0,58395	0,55148
Normality	Cannot reject normality		
Variance	Cannot reject equal variances		
Degrees of Freedom	62		
Test	Equal-Variance T-Test		
Test Statistic	5,1809 (T-value)		
p-value	0,000001		
Power	0,996924		
Decision	Reject H_0		

The p-value of this proposition is equal to 0, 000001, which denotes an unbelievably significant relationship. Assuming a significance level of 95%, then this relationship is very strong because $p < 0, 05$, which means the Null hypothesis can be rejected.

Therefore, consumers with higher self concept will have a higher brand experience.

5.1.3.2 Research proposition 2: consumers are more attached to brands that reflect their self concept via brand personality.

For this proposition, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand attachment. The samples to be tested were obtained as follows. The responses for the self concept were ranked in order of decreasing levels of self concept. The sample was then split in approximately half (mean split). The levels of brand attachment in respondents with higher levels of self concept was then compared with the levels of brand attachment in respondents with lower levels of self concept in order to test if there was a significant difference. The results are tabulated below.

Table 5: Test results for Proposition 2

Variables	BA with High SC	BA with Low SC	Difference
Sample Size	32	32	
Mean	3,32813	2,67188	0,65625
Std. Dev.	0,82900	0,60388	0,72523
Normality	Reject normality		
Variance	Cannot reject equal variances		
Degrees of Freedom	62		
Test	Mann-Whitney U or Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test for Differences in Medians		
Test Statistic	3,1340 (Z-value)		
p-value	0,000862		
Significance	0,05		
Decision	Reject H_0		

The results indicated that H_0 can be rejected. Therefore, consumers with higher self concept will have a higher brand attachment.

5.1.3.3 Research proposition 3: a relationship exists between a consumer’s brand experience and the loyalty they show to the brand.

For this proposition, the independent variable was brand loyalty and the dependent variable was brand experience. A linear regression was performed using these variables.

The estimated model for the relationship was:

$$\text{Brand Experience} = 0,30780 * \text{Brand Loyalty} + 2,74333$$

With: $R^2 = 0,3348$

The above shows that there is a very modest linear relationship between brand experience and self concept, as R^2 was 0,3348. Brand loyalty can only partially explain brand experience. This relationship is not very strong. This relationship is displayed graphically below.

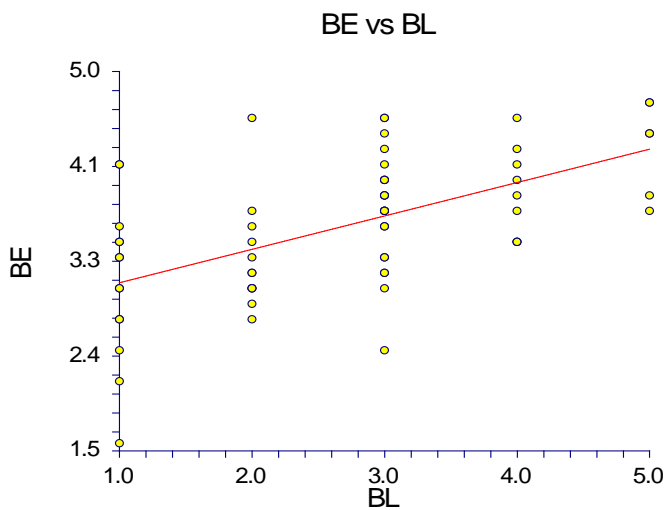


Figure 5: Linear Regression – Brand Experience vs. Brand Loyalty

The scatter plot of the responses also indicates that the relationship is not very strong.

5.1.3.4 Research proposition 4: an association exists between self concept and brand loyalty.

For this proposition, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand loyalty. A linear regression was performed using these variables.

The estimated model for the relationship was:

$$\text{Brand Loyalty} = 0,43256 * \text{Self Concept} + 1,23378$$

$$\text{With: } R^2 = 0,1059$$

The above shows that there is no linear relationship between brand loyalty and self concept, as R^2 was 0,1059. This relationship is quite weak, even weaker than that between brand experience and brand loyalty. This relationship is displayed graphically below.

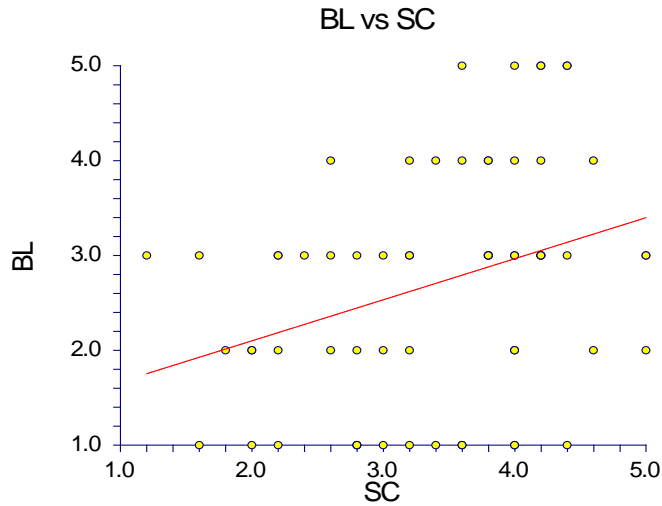


Figure 6: Linear Regression – Brand Loyalty vs. Self Concept

The scatter plot of the responses also indicates that the relationship is relatively weak.

5.1.4 Correlations

It was decided to test the strength of the relationship between the different constructs by performing correlations between the constructs. The table below depicts the correlation matrix for between the constructs (brand experience, brand attachment, brand loyalty, and self concept).

Table 6: Correlation Matrix for the Constructs

	Brand Experience	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Self Concept
Brand Experience	1,000000	0,575034	0,578621	0,573204
Brand Attachment	0,575034	1,000000	0,562133	0,396387
Brand Loyalty	0,578621	0,562133	1,000000	0,325385
Self Concept	0,573204	0,396387	0,325385	1,000000

The correlation matrix above shows that none of the correlations are very strong (i.e. all below the 0,7 benchmark). Brand experience exhibited similar moderately strong correlations to all of the constructs, while brand attachment and brand loyalty exhibited relatively weak correlations to self concept.

5.1.5 Other Tests

In order to further analyse and understand the data, it was decided conduct further tests on the data. The results of these tests are presented below.

5.1.5.1 T-Test – the impact of self concept on brand loyalty

It was decided to test the relationship between brand loyalty and self concept, in order to test the independent variable against all dependent variables. For this test, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand loyalty. The

samples to be tested were obtained as follows. The responses for the self concept were ranked in order of decreasing levels of self concept.

The brand loyalty sample was then split in approximately half (mean split). The levels of brand loyalty in respondents with higher levels of self concept was then compared with the levels of brand loyalty in respondents with lower levels of self concept in order to test if there was a significant difference. The results are tabulated below.

Table 7: Test results for Brand Loyalty

Variables	BL with High SC	BL with Low SC	Difference
Sample Size	32	32	
Mean	3,15625	2,25	0,90625
Std. Dev.	1,247174	1,04727	1,151568
Normality	Reject normality		
Variance	Cannot reject equal variances		
Degrees of Freedom	62		
Test	Mann-Whitney U or Wilcoxon Rank-Sum Test for Differences in Medians		
Test Statistic	2,8425 (Z-value)		
p-value	0,002238		
Significance	0,05		
Decision	Reject H_0		

The results indicated that H_0 can be rejected. Therefore, consumers with higher self concept will have a higher brand loyalty.

In order to test the strength of the relationship that exists between the independent variable (self concept) and the other dependent variables (brand experience and brand attachment), linear regressions were performed. The results are reported below.

5.1.5.2 Relationship between brand experience and self concept.

For this test, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand experience. A linear regression was performed using these variables.

The estimated model for the relationship was:

$$\text{Brand Experience} = 0,40561 * \text{Self Concept} + 2,19808$$

$$\text{With: } R^2 = 0,3286$$

The above shows that there is a very modest linear relationship between brand experience and self concept, as R^2 was 0,3286. Therefore, there are other variables which may add to the understanding of the behaviour of brand experience. This relationship is moderately strong, and much stronger than the relationship between brand loyalty and self concept. This relationship is displayed graphically below.

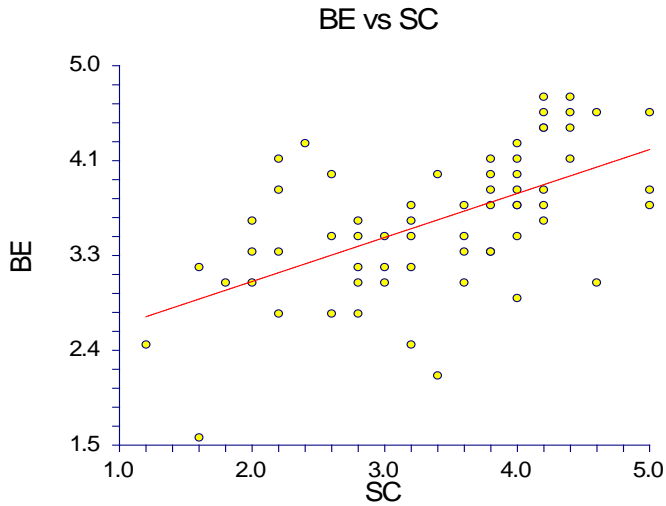


Figure 7: Linear Regression – Brand Experience vs. Self Concept

The scatter plot of the responses also indicates that the relationship is moderate, but stronger than that between brand loyalty and self concept.

5.1.5.3 Relationship between brand attachment and self concept.

For this test, the independent variable was self concept and the dependent variable was brand attachment. A linear regression was performed using these variables.

The estimated model for the relationship was:

$$\text{Brand Experience} = 0,33914 * \text{Self Concept} + 1,84797$$

$$\text{With: } R^2 = 0,1571$$

The above shows a poor linear relationship between brand experience and self concept, as R^2 was 0,1571. This value is a close approximation of value for brand experience. The

results seem to indicate that there are other factors that also influence brand attachment. This relationship is relatively weak, much weaker than the relationship between brand experience and self concept but stronger than the relationship between brand loyalty and self concept. This relationship is displayed graphically below.

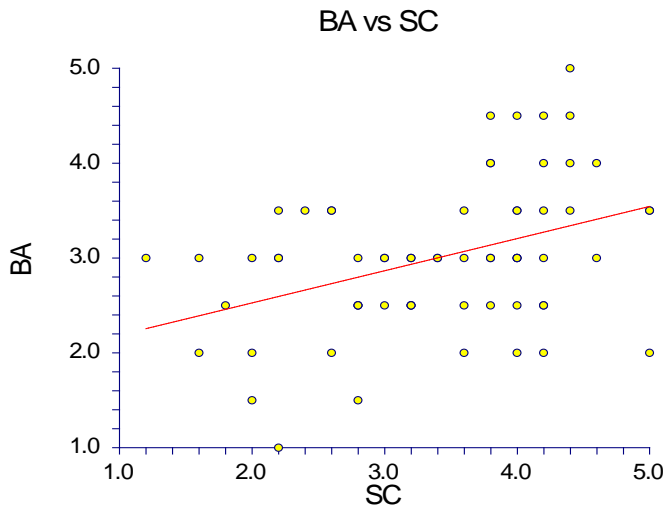


Figure 8: Linear Regression – Brand Attachment vs. Self Concept

The scatter plot of the responses also indicates that the relationship is weak, but stronger than that between brand loyalty and self concept.

In order to further understand the four main constructs (brand experience, brand attachment, brand loyalty, and self concept) it was decided to test the effect that demographics have on them. They were therefore designated as dependent variables and their dependence on gender, age and occupation was tested. It must be noted that in the interests of space, only summaries of the results are provided. The detailed results can be obtained from the author on request.

5.1.5.4 Relationship between the four constructs and gender.

For this test, four two sample t-tests were performed between each of the constructs and gender, to see if there were significant differences between male and female respondents. The results were analysed as in the same way as the earlier t-tests. The results are summarised in the table below.

Table 8: T-Test results for Brand Exp, Brand Attention, Brand Loyalty and Self Concept vs. Gender

Constructs	Brand Experience	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Self Concept
Mean Male (Sample 23)	3,32298	2,82609	2,39130	3,28696
Mean Female (Sample 41)	3,71777	3.09756	2,87805	3,45854
Appropriate Test	Equal Variance T-Test	Equal Variance T-Test	Mann-Whitney U/ Wilcoxon	Mann-Whitney U/ Wilcoxon
p-Value	0,012999	0,170641	0,173343	0,593820
Decision	Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀

From the above table, it can be seen that in all cases, the female sample had higher means when compared to the male sample. However, this difference was only significant for the brand experience construct, and not significant for the other constructs. Therefore, for

this sample there seems to be an indication that females experience higher levels of brand attachment, brand loyalty and self concept, but one cannot generalise this for the population. However, one can state that to a 5% significance level, females do experience higher levels of brand experience when compared to males.

5.1.5.5 Relationship between the four constructs and age.

For this test, four two sample t-tests were performed between each of the constructs and age, to see if there were significant differences between the different age groups. It must be noted that there were only two age groups, i.e. 25 – 34 years (lower age) and 35 years plus (higher age). The results were analysed as in the same way as the earlier t-tests. The results are summarised in the table below.

Table 9: T-Test results for Brand Exp, Brand Attention, Brand Loyalty and Self Concept vs. Age

Constructs	Brand Experience	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Self Concept
Mean Low Age (Sample 52)	3,61264	3,02885	2,73077	3,45000
Mean High Age (Sample 12)	3,41667	2,87500	2,58333	3,166667
Appropriate Test	Equal Variance T-	Equal Variance T-	Equal Variance T-	Equal Variance T-

Constructs	Brand Experience	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Self Concept
	Test	Test	Test	Test
p-Value	0,354217	0,548303	0,715135	0,343141
Decision	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀

From the above table, it can be seen that in all cases, the younger sample (aged between 25 and 34 years) had higher means when compared to the older sample (aged 35 years and over). However, this difference was not significant for any of the constructs. Therefore, for this sample there seems to be an indication that younger people experience higher levels of brand experience, brand attachment, brand loyalty and self concept, but one cannot generalise this for the population.

5.1.5.6 Relationship between the four constructs and education level.

For this test, four ANOVAs were performed between each of the constructs and education level, to see if there were significant differences between the different education levels.

It must be noted that there were six different education levels identified (high school, diploma, degree, honours, masters, doctorate). Inspection of the sample indicated that there was only one respondent that completed high school and only one respondent that completed a doctorate. Due to these small sample sizes, it was decided to exclude them from the tests. In order to conduct meaningful analysis with these two education levels, one needs a larger sample.

The distribution of the data for all four constructs did not violate normality. Therefore parametric tests could be used. The results of the ANOVAs conducted are summarised in the table below.

Table 10: ANOVA results for Brand Experience, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty and Self Concept vs. Education Levels

Constructs	Brand Experience	Brand Attachment	Brand Loyalty	Self Concept
Mean Diploma (Sample 6)	4,14286	3,58333	3,50000	3,43333
Mean Degree (Sample 16)	3,35714	2,84375	2,37500	3,21250
Mean Honours (Sample 20)	3,70714	3,02500	2,90000	3,45000
Mean Masters (Sample 20)	3,37143	2,75000	2,35000	3,40000
F-Ratio	1,27853	1,16574	2,86452	0.18897
p-Value	0,024041	0,088043	0,111776	0.888489
Significance Level	0,05	0,05	0,05	0,05
Decision	Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀	Do Not Reject H ₀

From the above table, it can be seen that in almost all cases, the diploma sample had higher means when compared to the other samples. The group with the second highest means is the honours sample. However, this difference of means was only significant for the brand experience construct, and not significant for the other constructs. Therefore, for this sample there seems to be an indication that people with diplomas and honours experience higher levels of brand attachment, brand loyalty and self concept, but one cannot generalise this for the population. However, one can state that to a 5% significance level there is a difference in the means of the various education levels in terms of brand experience.

In order to understand the differences in the means, it was decided to perform a Tukey-Kramer Multiple-Comparison Test on the brand experience construct with all the educational categories. The results are summarised in the table below.

Table 11: Tukey-Kramer Multiple-Comparison Test for Brand Experience vs. Education Level

Education Level Groups	Count	Brand Experience Mean	Different from Groups
Diploma	6	4,14286	Degree; Masters
Degree	16	3,35714	Diploma
Honours	20	3,70714	
Masters	20	3,37143	Diploma
Significance Level (alpha)		0,05	
Degrees of Freedom		58	
Mean Square Error (MSE)		0,37781	
Critical Value		3,74080	

The above table indicates that the people with diplomas have the highest level of brand experience. It also confirms that mean of the diploma group is significantly more than that of the degree and masters group.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Two expert interviews were conducted with the following experts:

1. Ciko Thomas

Thomas is currently Group Executive Marketing, Communications and Corporate Affairs at Nedbank Ltd. He is a marketing professional who has spent more than 18 years in the field, with specialization in strategic marketing, brand management, trade and sales operations, innovation and new product development. Thomas built his marketing career in organizations such as Unilever, M-Net, South African Breweries and ABSA Bank. This is demonstrated by his reputation in business innovation, entrepreneurship and strategic marketing management.

2. Gia Callinicos

Callinicos is currently a Brand Strategist at Black River FC advertising agency. She is a marketing professional who has spent over six years in Advertising specializing in strategic planning, brand management and marketing communication. Callinicos has built her marketing career in organizations such as Virgin Money Insurance, Telesure and the Jupiter Drawing Room. She has worked with brands like Mini, Virgin, ABSA Bank, Coca Cola Juices and Discovery.

Review of emergent themes

Identity

The first expert interviewed was Ciko Thomas. When asked whether brands are a function of a consumer's identity construction, he answered yes. He went on to say that this is especially the case where consumer brands talk to personalities of their customers.

The second expert interviewed was Gia Callinicos. She shared the same sentiment. She further stated that people use brands to establish their "brand-self". Callinicos defined brand-self as *"...people have something that resonates with the brand, whether it's image, essence, personality, tonality"*. Examples of brand tonality are: Nandos is humorous and Volvo is about trust. An example of brand essence is: the cellular network service provider, MTN. Their brand essence is "Go".

Intrinsic and Extrinsic brand value

The researcher asked the experts what marketing and communications strategies they had embarked upon in their professional experience to ensure that consumers stay loyal to the brands they have managed. Both experts mentioned the fact that they took into account both intrinsic and extrinsic brand qualities.

Thomas explained that the intrinsic quality of a brand talks to the *'...physical properties that the brand represents'*. An example of this is Carling Black Label beer packaging with strong masculine red and black colours. He explained extrinsic experience of the brand to talk to the image that Carling Black label represents. Callinicos explained that intrinsic are what a brand is made up of, for example, Nandos is flame-grilled and another example is

the high-tech performance in the Mini Cooper brand. She further stated that brand loyalty is ultimately earned by delivery on the intrinsics. She defined extrinsics as “...everything a brand exudes”. She made reference to the Mini Cooper brand as representing an image of being sexy, safe and very cheeky.

Brand personality

Thomas pointed out that Carling represents “masculine fullness” in terms of how they positioned the brand in the market. This is consistent with the literature where Guthrie and Kim (2009) argue that brand personality is associated with a degree of consumer emotive attachment, retort, trust and self-expression. In essence, identity and brand personality have a relationship because consumer identity, in terms of how consumers defines themselves is related to the type of brand they aspire to purchase. Thomas went on further to say that their target market was not apologetic about wanting to consume the brand at a given point in time. He states, “Beer is an expression of men’s masculinity and the drinking experience is about sociability”.

Reason to believe

Callinicos explained the ‘reason to believe’ concept as talking to why people buy into a company’s product or brand. She further stated that advertising agencies must give consumers a reason to purchase their brand. In other words, advertising agencies must reinforce what that reason to believe is through their advertising campaigns.

Thomas defined the reason to believe as “...*intrinsic quality or product feature that supports your advertising claims as an advertising agency*”. He further stated that this intrinsic quality must be readily communicated at all touch points.

Brand experience

Another question that was posed by the researcher was the role that the experts think brand experience plays in consumers’ consumption of particular brands.

Callinicos first defined brand experience as “...every single touch point of the brand such as service, interaction with company employee, advertising, the website one uses and the actual product”. She illustrated her point by pointing out that if the Mini brand stands for high-tech performance, then both the extrinsic and intrinsic part of the brand must be included. She stated that brand custodians and representatives mess with a consumer’s brand experience if they mess up on one of the above-mentioned touch points.

Thomas says, “Brands are important key drivers of choice in a world of parity and there are a few product choices that can reach product differentiation”. Thomas made an example of the Louis Vuitton (LV) and Tom Ford brands and said that consumers can choose to put their contents in any handbag; but they sometimes choose one over the other because of the experience they have had with that particular brand. Brand experience does become more intense as one gets a more complicated and sophisticated brand, which impels brand owners to have more of a strategic approach to managing the brand and the consumer’s experience of the brand.

Relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty

The researcher posed the question about how brand attachment and brand loyalty influence brand consumption. Thomas first defined loyalty as “...means sticking to that particular brand time and time again every time you make a product decision”. In terms of brand attachment, he made the distinction that one can be fond of and attached to a brand without actually repeatedly buying and using that particular brand.

Callinicos stated that brand loyalty is a significant part of consumption. She mentioned that “...if you get people to be loyal to my brand, then you’re driving constant purchase”. She added that “*Brand loyalty is earned by delivery on intrinsics*”.

Her response to brand attachment was that a consumer may like and aspire to the brand; but not necessarily be loyal to it and that the consumer will in that case try other brands. So, the association between the two constructs is the distinction that one can be fond of and attached to a brand without actually repeatedly buying and using that particular brand.

Functional utility

The researcher asked the experts whether the functional utility of a brand overrides the attachment that a consumer has with a brand. Thomas responded by saying he believes that it does but in a very few instances. He mentioned two examples where this might be the case, namely the Amazon E-reader and the human X-ray machine. The full-body scanner machine, which produces “naked” images of passengers enabling staff to instantly

spot any hidden weapons or explosives, was installed at some European airports, border check-points and high-risk security environments such as court buildings.

Callinicos added that functional utility and brand attachment work together. She illustrated her view by referring to the Mini Cooper brand. She stated that a consumer buys a Mini because they like what it does and the fact that it is put together nicely. *“Consumers don’t ever de-attach from the brand”*. She argues that if a consumer gets disappointed, then it is a reflection of that particular brand and one cannot separate the product from the brand. She further commented that with high-end brands such as an LV bag, consumers are looking for perfect stitching and that is what they expect from the brand.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 RESULTS DISCUSSION

Introduction

The theory described in this chapter will cover the theory base and literature review explored in chapter 2, answer the research questions posed in chapter 3, in light of the results presented in chapter 5.

The discussion explores the relationship between the theory and the empirical reality that is based from the results in chapter 5.

The discussion further dissects the results to expose any critical ideas required to establish further relationships pertaining to brand elements that influence the consumption of luxury clothing brands.

The results of each hypothesis will be analysed and grouped in terms of the six research propositions. In the analysis of each proposition, the results are discussed to address the following points (Roux, 2008):

Is the question answered?

What are the implications for the research?

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

6.1.1. PROPOSITION 1

Proposition 1:

That brand experience will be favourable and stronger when brands reinforce consumers' self concept.

The findings in chapter 5 indicate that the respondents place high importance on both the brand experience and self concept constructs. A linear regression model was run and the result was $R^2 = 0,3286$. There is a weak linear relationship between brand experience and self concept, which means that the level of brand experience is not significantly greater for brands that reinforce consumer self concept.

In terms of brand experience, this response has reaffirmed the notion that customers' positive feelings about particular brands together with an affirmative emotional connection to these brands may be drivers of brand consumption.

In terms of self concept, these findings can be compared to Atwal and Williams (2009) who argue that the expression of today's brand luxury from retailers offering brand experience to consumers is also about a celebration of person identity and self-expression. This brings to the fore the role of brands in identity construction. It represents how people want others to see them and how they use brands to project the concept of the self.

6.1.2. PROPOSITION 2

Proposition 2:

Consumers are more attached to brands that reflect their self concept via brand personality

The p-value of this proposition is equal to 0, 000298, which denotes a significant relationship. Assuming a significance level of 95%, then this relationship is very strong because $p < 0, 05$. The findings in chapter 5 indicate that the respondents place high importance on both the brand attachment and self concept constructs via brand personality. This means that consumers with a strong self concept will also have strong attachment to brands. This finding supports the view of Belk (1989) who contends that brand attachment is more intimately implicated in the self concept construct. This means that customers are more likely to be connected to things that are momentous to their individuality. This is in line with Kim, Han and Park (2001) who argue that the greater the self-expressive value and the distinctiveness of brand personality are, the more the brand personality will appeal.

The second expert I interviewed, Gia Callinicos, shared the same sentiment. She stated that people use brands to establish their “brand-self”. Callinicos defined brand-self as “...people have something that resonates with the brand, whether it’s image, essence, personality, tonality”. Examples of brand tonality are: Nandos is humorous and Volvo is about trust. An example of brand essence is: the cellular network service provider, MTN. Their brand essence is “Go”.

6.1.3. PROPOSITION 3

Proposition 3:

A relationship exists between a consumer's brand experience and the loyalty they show to the brand.

Davies (2008) defines brand loyalty as a customer's propensity to purchase the same product over time. This is as a result of the fact that brand loyalty is symbolic of care, respect, trust and love. Only when these emotions are at play, will consumers purchase the same brand time and again. An example can be a consumer showing brand loyalty to the LV brand due to convenience and proven quality. The results show that the relationship between brand loyalty and brand experience is moderate. This result can be compared to one of the experts' views, Gia Callinicos, who stated that brand loyalty is achieved by intrinsic and the experiences that a consumer has with a particular clothing brand. An example of this is Morgan, the French clothing brand, which is known for form-fitted clothing and chic-sophistication. This also explains the relationship between self image and product image; for example, *I wear the Morgan brand because I'm chic and sophisticated.*

The result of the linear regression test showed that all the dots were in straight vertical lines. This was a surprise to the researcher and the direct reason for this outcome is that only one question on the questionnaire that was administered was related to brand loyalty. Therefore, brand loyalty could only have one value, which could not be averaged.

6.1.4. PROPOSITION 4

Proposition 4:

That an association exists between self concept and brand loyalty

The findings show that the relationship between self concept and brand loyalty is very weak. The model only explained 10.6% of the relationship between brand loyalty and self concept. The reason why this relationship is very weak is firstly because how one defines their identity does not necessarily make them more or less loyal to a particular brand. The other reason could be the fact that there was once again only one question related to brand loyalty on the survey that was sent out, which is why the graph produced straight horizontal lines. This finding represents a discrepancy in the literature: According to Escalas and Bettman (2003) the relationship between self concept and loyalty to a brand is strong and this allows the brand owner to gain an enduring competitive advantage because this type of connection is difficult for competitors to imitate. Escalas and Bettman are supported by Kim *et al* (2001) who argue that the more consumers identify with a brand, the more will be their loyalty to that particular brand.

Brand loyalty came up with the lowest rating out of the four constructs when measuring central tendency. Brand loyalty had the lowest mean of 2,7 and this is in line with the low level of importance placed on it by consumers and hence the weak relationship between self-concept and brand loyalty.

6.1.5 PROPOSITION 5

Proposition 5

That self concept has an impact on brand loyalty

The statistical evidence suggests that consumers with a higher and positive self concept will have higher loyalty towards a brand.

The p-value of the statistical analysis was p is equal to 0,002238. Assuming a significance level of 95%, then the relationship is quite strong because $p < 0,05$. The T-test findings in this proposition are in line with the previously captured results analysis from research proposition 1, which measured the fact that brand experience will be favourable and stronger when brands reinforce consumers' self concept. The literature suggests that self concept does have a positive impact on brand loyalty. According to Kim *et al* (2001) the more a consumer can express their self concept through identifying with a brand, the more likely they are to consistently use the brand and become loyal to the brand. This relationship is proving to be quite strong.

6.1.6 PROPOSITION 6

Proposition 6

An association exists between the attachment a consumer has towards a brand and self concept.

The linear regression result was $R^2 = 0,1571$, which translates to a relatively weak relationship between the variables. There is a discrepancy between these findings and those of Belk's in the following way: the literature does not support this proposition through the theory by Belk (1989) who contended that consumers are more likely to be attached to things that are important to their concept of their self and identity. So, there may be other factors affecting this relationship that were not picked up in this research.

In conclusion the above analysis is in line with the literature, which states that identity and self concept issues are pivotal to the consumption of brands (Belk, 1988). The evidence from the above propositions and the literature suggests that people's consumption decision for certain brands are based on their individual identities and how they see themselves and relate to that particular brand.

6.1.7. Correlations between the various constructs

Firstly one must assert that a benchmark of 0, 5 for research in the social sciences ambit, such as this current research, was used in this statistical analysis. The relationship that brand experience showed to all the other three constructs was moderately strong as it was at least equal to at least 0, 5. On the other hand, brand attachment and brand loyalty revealed moderately weak associations to self concept as they were equal to a mere 0, 3.

Analysis and reasons:

The correlation between brand experience and brand experience was 1, which was expected because these two are both identical.

Brand experience had a correlation of at least 0, 57 with the other three constructs, which symbolized quite a modest linear relationship. The reason being that the overall experience a consumer has with a brand will have a direct effect to how the consumer perceives themselves and to whether they become both attached and ultimately loyal to brand. This result ties in with Callinicos' opinion from the expert interview, who stated that brand experience, that is, every single touch point of the brand, be it service, advertising or the actual product, influences consumers and how they feel about themselves, and the attachment and loyalty they eventually form with a particular brand. Callinicos' view is supported by the literature where (Ghodeswar, 2008) contends that a brand, from the consumer's point of view, can be defined as the total accumulation of all his/her experiences and is built at all points of contact with the customer.

Brand loyalty had a correlation of 0, 32 to self concept and brand attachment had a correlation of 0, 39 to self concept. This suggested weak relationships although brand attachment had a stronger relationship with self concept. The correlation result for brand loyalty is supported by the regression model that was run earlier where R^2 was equal to 0, 1059, which also represented a weak relationship. The reason being that the way a consumer perceives themselves as per Belk's (1988) definition of self concept, does not necessarily have an effect on whether they become loyal to a particular brand or not. The same reason applies to brand attachment although it symbolized a stronger relationship with self concept.

Relationships between the four constructs and Demographics

6.1.8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS & GENDER

The results show that the females had higher means (averaging 3, 0 for all constructs) when compared to the males; with a significant difference for the brand experience construct, which was recorded at 3, 7. The reason for this could be the fact that females enjoy the experience of shopping for brands as opposed to males who often go in and out and take literally a few minutes to make a purchase. This reasoning cannot be applied to all males; but the sample of 23 that was used does serve as a good proxy for this supposition.

6.1.9. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS & AGE

The results show that the younger sample (aged between 25 and 34 years) had higher means (averaged 3, 17 across all 4 constructs) when compared to the older sample (aged between 35 years and over), who averaged 2, 95). So, it indicated that younger people experience increased levels of brand experience, brand attachment and brand loyalty. The reason for this could be the fact that younger people are more aspirational, especially where luxury brands are concerned; whereas older people are more focused on other non-material things such as family life and careers. Younger people generally also place a lot of emphasis on looking the part and wearing “in - style” clothing brands whereas older people, one again, are not concerned about that. Younger people are all about the acquisition of premium items and are more interested in their external image; whereas older people are not.

6.1.10. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS & EDUCATION LEVEL

The results show that the diploma sample had higher means (averaged at 3, 66) when compared to other samples. However, the difference of means was only significant for the brand experience construct, which had a mean of 4, 14. Respondents with degrees had an average mean of 3, 35, Honours respondents had an average mean of 3, 70 and respondents with a doctorate had an average mean of 3, 37. Assuming that those respondents with a diploma are much younger and given a small sample size 6 that was used while running ANOVA, the following reasons can be deduced: the few young respondents, have a keen interest in premium clothing brands and the marketing domain,

where brand attachment and brand loyalty are promoted, which is in line with the relationship between the four constructs and brand experience analyzed above.

6.1.11. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS AND OCCUPATION & INCOME

The researcher is unable to comment on these two relationships because some respondents failed to answer the question on occupation and left it blank; the same applies with the income question and that produced inconclusive information.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

International Comparative study

International research was carried out to observe the similarities and divergences pertaining to luxury consumption. The research study focused on the luxury consumption patterns among the Indian and British consumers. The nations were chosen for their historic association, brand affiliation with luxury consumption and commonalities of brands available. The results of the study suggest that British consumers used status consumption to achieve social gains, indicate esteem and ostentation behaviour. However, in the Indian context consumers engaged in luxury consumption with generally ostentation. This proves the deviations between Western and Eastern consumers and the influence of culture and markets. The British Individualistic consumers focus on their actual self-concept (how one sees oneself) and the Indian consumers focus on others self-

concept (how others see oneself) (Shukla, 2010). It is evident that identity plays a significant role in luxury consumption and marketers must not ignore its character. This is evident in Kamineni's (2005) argument, which states that both consumers and brands are becoming increasingly important marketing problems, particularly with characteristics such as materialism being a strong driver of acquiring and consuming specific types of brands.

The following analysis was conducted from the two expert interviews:

Intrinsic and extrinsic brand value

The researcher asked the experts what marketing and communications strategies they had embarked upon in their professional experience to ensure that consumers stay loyal to the brands they have managed. Both experts mentioned the fact that they took into account both intrinsic and extrinsic brand qualities.

Thomas explained that the intrinsic quality of a brand talks to the '*...physical properties that the brand represents*'. An example of this is Carling Black Label beer packaging with strong masculine red and black colours. He explained extrinsic experience of the brand to talk to the image that Carling Black label represents. Callinicos explained that intrinsic are what a brand is made up of, for example, Nandos is flame-grilled and another example is the high-tech performance in the Mini Cooper brand. She further stated that brand loyalty is ultimately earned by delivery on the intrinsics. She defined extrinsics as '*...everything a brand exudes*'. She made reference to the Mini Cooper brand as

representing an image of being sexy, safe and very cheeky. Callinicos' sentiments are supported by Kim et al (2001) who claim that the brand personality and the way a consumer relates to that personality has a direct effect on the consumer's brand loyalty and subsequent repurchasing behaviour.

Reason to believe

Callinicos explained the 'reason to believe' concept as talking to why people buy into a company's product or brand. She further stated that advertising agencies must give consumers a reason to purchase their brand. Thomas defined the reason to believe as *"...intrinsic quality or product feature that supports your advertising claims as an advertising agency"*. He further stated that this intrinsic quality must be readily communicated at all touch points. So, advertising agencies must reinforce what that reason to believe is through their advertising campaigns. Therefore it can be said that the meaning to business is that business must incorporate product functionality, special, features and attributes while designing their advertising campaigns for promoting their brand offering. Both the experts' views are supported by Keller and Moorthi (2003) who say that failures in communication often distort the meaning of the brand and can cause it to be interpreted wrongly, narrowly and often negatively.

Other emerging themes

Relationship between identity and brand personality

Thomas mentioned the fact that brands promise to lend products some level of exclusivity and uniqueness and that the same can be applied to identity construction, where a consumer will purchase a premium brand that represents their identity. This is in line with the literature where Aaker (1997) asserts that the personality of a brand is much like the personality of an individual. Brand personality is the group of human characteristics that describe a brand (Guthrie and Kim, 2009).

Brand consistency

Thomas mentioned the fact that the best brands are able to deliver consistent messages all the time. He made reference to the Johnson and Johnson (J&J) brand and particularly the baby product range, which has retained the same character; that is, the same colour and smell over the years.

He also referred to British actress, Audrey Hepburn and the Little Black Dress (LBD) on the movie, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. She was a brand in her own right and is most remembered for the stylish black shift dress she wore on the movie. The fashion icon's glamorous and chic style continues to be popular among women despite her death in 1993.

The implications for business whose brands do not remain consistent are incalculable: the owners and custodians of these brands will be perceived as confused by the image of the brands by consumers, they will be deemed as inconsistent, and eventually lose credibility and consumer trust in the brand.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Main findings from the study

The researcher has studied this research and found that:

Brands are leveraged to differentiate and complement self-image, which means that brands can be used to construct one's identity and self concept.

Consumers learn about brands through past experiences with the product and marketing strategies. Consumer experiences are driven by touch points such as television advertisements, billboards, physical store and other factors. Consistent communication and touch points are crucial in the luxury clothing brand space. Furthermore, consumers use history and experience to make purchasing decisions where some brands are concerned. These experiences influence attitudes and can augment consumer spending on brands.

Advertising plays a colossal role in terms of offering the consumer the 'reason to believe' in the brand being promoted. It is a pivotal part of the process.

Brand loyalty needs to be further investigated because it does bring in another dynamic in brand relationships. Some of those dynamics could not be fully explored because there was not any in-depth discussion around the role of brand loyalty in the premium brands consumption space.

People choose brands emotionally; but they defend their choices rationally.

Consumers use brands to play out a life-narrative to use in their lives.

The current South African reality is that consumers love brands in modern-life stage society.

This research does contribute to the body of knowledge because the theory concluded that most of the relationships that were tested did exist. The research added credibility and affirmation to the current research.

7.2 Recommendations to marketers & business

Retailers must ensure that consumers constantly enjoy a positive experience by giving significant thought to areas such as corporate advertising and store design.

Marketers must bear in mind that branding can be a powerful means of securing a competitive advantage. Although competitors may easily duplicate manufacturing processes and product designs, they cannot easily match the lasting impressions left in consumers' minds by years of marketing activity and product experience. So, the learning here is that today's consumers are extremely well-informed and they know their brands. Marketers should take the time to design appropriate promotional activities; instead of merely dumping irrelevant communication on consumers.

Marketers should constantly track and measure brands' value and customer experiences; otherwise they eventually stop developing. Pine and Gilmore cited in Morrison and Crane (2007) who argue that global business will be forced to rethink the nature of their products and shift to selling brand experience rather than products or services *per se*, as services become more commoditised.

Both marketers and brand strategists should spend time exploring the functional versus the emotional role of brands in order to deliver good, strong brands to consumers.

Marketers need to be conscious of variance with South Africa's general society; in light of the fact that South African consumers love brands during these modern times. These consumers are not just a mass market; they are informed, clever and clued-up and are individuals.

Brand strategies must realize that a brand is a business enabler and while building a brand, one is simultaneously driving the communication aspect, which is the output and the corporate strategy must be built around the brand.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

- Future research that is conducted must have more robust measures for the various constructs and concepts that are measured.
- Another recommendation for future research is that the researcher should design more questions related to brand attachment and brand loyalty in order to obtain a more equal distribution of questions or constructs.
- The brand loyalty theory must be explored in order to add to the literature and body of knowledge of this area.
- Future research should look at ‘conspicuous consumption’ and the influences and effects of this phenomenon as it will contribute further to understanding the various dynamics at play in the luxury clothing brand consumption literature.
- The factors influencing luxury clothing brand choice for women in emerging markets.
- South Africa’s readiness for premium clothing brands
- Pick one of 4 elements of brand experience; that is, sensory, behavioural, cognitive and feelings (Brakus, 2009) and investigate how it influences brand experience and ultimately brand choice.
- Developing a brand experience scale to determine a positive or negative experience.
- The long-term outcomes of brand experience on brand choice.
- The relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty
- The role that brand personality plays in the consumption of luxury brands.

7.4 Conclusion

The researcher hopes that these findings will lead to a better, more informed response by marketers to self concept and identity issues as being core to understanding and driving the consumption of premium clothing brands. The findings confirm and substantiate the relevancy of the self concept theory in the consumption of clothing brands. The recommendations the researcher has proposed will offer some insights in the management of premium brands.

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APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2