VARIABLES INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY

RX Owona Ndi

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VARIABLES INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY

By

Rene Xavier Owona Ndi

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Supervisor: Dr Janine Krüger
Co-Supervisor: Prof Chantal Rootman

DECLARATION

I, Rene Xavier Owona Ndi, 211223972, hereby declare that the dissertation, *Variables influencing customers' buying behaviour in the South African clothing retail industry*, is my own work and that is has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification another University of for another qualification.

XAVIER OWONA   DATE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the whole family MBALLA EKOBENA, especially to the two most important people in my life, my mother Sylvie Mballa and my uncle Marcel Mballa.

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ABSTRACT

It is important for business managers to understand customers' buying behaviours, as customers are the cornerstone of the business' marketing strategy and the main providers of businesses' profits. Previous research have identified numerous factors that influence customers' buying behaviour, factors such as prices, promotions, brand image, brand reputation, customer experience and socio-cultural aspects. Despite the attention given to variables influencing buying behaviour, there was still a gap to be filled in this field of study in the clothing retail industry, especially in the South African clothing retail industry. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to investigate how the understanding of customers' brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can be used by clothing retailers to initiate a purchase.

A literature overview was conducted on the global retail industry, the global clothing retail, as well as on the South African retail and, more specifically, the South African clothing retail. In addition, a literature overview on variables influencing buying behaviour was provided, with a special accent on the selected variables for this study, namely brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations. From the literature overview conducted on variables, seven independent variables were selected to be investigated with the dependent variable, buying behaviour. The independent variables, namely brand perceptions (as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image), customer experience (as measured by store physical environment and staff service), and lastly social considerations (as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture) and the dependent variable (buying behaviour) were then presented in a hypothesised model.

An empirical investigation was undertaken to establish the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The measuring instrument used for the investigation was a self-administered questionnaire using seven-point Likert type of scale. The items were constructed based on previous research instruments found in secondary literature sources. The non-probability convenience sampling was implemented in this study to identify respondents. 207 usable questionnaires were collected and were examined through statistical analyses. The validity and the

reliability of the measuring instruments were confirmed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Descriptive statistics were undertaken to summarise respondents' demographic information, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were calculated to determine the correlations among variables. Furthermore, the relationships between the variables were assessed through multiple regression analysis, while a t-test and ANOVA tests were conducted to determine the influence of demographic variables on independent variables that showed significant positive relationships with the dependent variable. In addition, post-hoc Scheffe tests were undertaken to elaborate on the significant differences resulting from the t-test and ANOVA tests.

Significant positive relationships were found between Brand Image/Reputation and Buying Behaviour, between Store Physical Environment and Buying Behaviour and between Cultural Clothing and Buying Behaviour. The empirical results also showed that there was a significant relationship between Age and Cultural Clothing. In the same way, there was a significant relationship between Population Group and the variables Brand Image/Reputation and Cultural Clothing.

This study has contributed to the body of literature on buying behaviour, especially in the field of clothing retail, by extending the factors to consider when aiming at improving buying behaviour. In addition, the development of the hypothesised model significantly contributed towards having a better understanding of customers' perceptions of the selected variables, and ultimately how these variables could trigger their purchase decisions. As a result, this study enumerated some recommendations and suggestions that should enable retailers to create a positive image and reputation in customers' minds, assist retailers in arranging the stores in a more attractive way for customers and reach more culture-conscious customers.

KEYWORDS:
Brand Perceptions, Brand Quality, Brand Reputation, Brand Image, Customer Experience, Store Physical Environment, Staff Service, Social Considerations Reference Groups, Culture/Subculture, Cultural Clothing, Buying Behaviour.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Businesses invest heavily in marketing activities in order to increase their profits, as they acknowledge how valuable customers are to businesses' sustainability (Bolton, Lemon & Verhoef 2004:271). Customers are valuable not only in terms of profitability, but also in terms of costs saving. For instance, Gummesson (2004:147) poses customers as an asset that helps businesses in reducing advertisement costs, as satisfied customers become part-time marketers every time they make positive comments about the business. However, customers expect businesses to anticipate their needs and to display standards that are beyond customers' expectations (Chen & Popovich 2003:681).

The role of marketing is to understand customers' needs, expectations, attitudes and decision-making process in order to improve consumers' satisfaction (Ataman & Ülengin 2003:237). By increasing customers' satisfaction, businesses increase customers' loyalty and lead them to have positive comments about the business. In achieving that, marketing adds value to the business. The concept of added value implies a three dimensional consideration referred to as triplet by Gummesson (2004:143). The triplet entails quality which is revenue-centric, productivity which is cost-centric and profitability which is the bottom line. The interplay between marketing activities and added value is well detailed in Figure 1.1.

In order to create any type of added value, customers need to be in touch with the business. The connection between the business and customers can occur at many levels, but Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman and Raman (2005:178) argue that the interaction between customers and businesses occurs mostly through marketing activities. It is during that interaction that businesses learn more about customers' needs and their perceptions about the products and services offered by those businesses.

Figure 1.1:   The triplets – quality, productivity and profitability

Source: Adapted from Gummesson (2004:143)

Placing customers as the cornerstone of the marketing strategy, it is important to understand what factors influence customers purchase decisions (increase profits) and their satisfaction (add value to the customers). The literature has presented many factors such as the sales promotions (Delvecchio, Henard & Freling 2006), brand quality (Caruana & Ewing 2010), brand perception (Cretu & Brodie 2007), the quality of customer experience (Chen & Popovich 2003) and social considerations (Grant & Stephen 2005) as factors amongst others that might have an influence on customers purchase decisions.

Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009:52) stress the importance of understanding how customers experience the brand before developing marketing strategies. In the authors' quest of understanding the customer experience, businesses are orienting themselves towards customer experience management (CEM) to monitor the factors that create a positive interaction between the brand and the customers (Kamaladevi 2010:39). This interaction between the brand and customers is known as the customer experience. Most studies agree to define the customer experience as the emotions, sensations and feelings created by the interaction with the brand-related environment. Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007:397) summarise many different

definitions of customer experience to present it as a set of multidimensional interactions between a customer and a brand, involving rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual levels of interaction.

The customer experience does not occur only when the customers are shopping for a product or are receiving a service, but also while they are searching for and using it. Hence, the concept of customer experience involves a direct interaction with the product in the store physical and human environment (Brakus *et al.* 2009:52). However, there is a reciprocal relationship between customer experience and brand perceptions (Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger 2009:37).

Brand perceptions are influenced by the way the customer experiences the brand while interacting with it (Brodie, Whittome & Brush 2009:345). Various definitions of customers' brand perceptions are found in literature. Ghodeswar (2008:5) associates brand perceptions to the customer's perception of the brand image. Balmer (2008:892) associates brand perceptions with the perception of the brand's reputation. Customers' brand perceptions to some extent also refer to the perception of the brand's quality through its product quality and service quality (Baldauf, Cravens & Binder 2003:222). This viewpoint is supported by Wang, Lo, Chi and Yang (2004:172) who describe perceptions as the trade-off between the customers' fulfilment and the prior sacrifices that led to the fulfilment.

As customers' fulfilment also depends on the impression they can make to their peers, there are social considerations that can influence buying behaviour. He and Mukherjee (2007:446) stated that customers purchase according to their own self-image, but also to how the society will view their self-image. Therefore, customers present the social acceptance as a driver of buying behaviour (He & Mukherjee 2007:453). Similarly, Lee and Kacen (2008:267) found that normative social influences can shape customers' purchase intention, hence their buying behaviour. The normative social influences refer to the decisions taken upon other people's evaluations.

Various studies have analysed the customer experience, brand perceptions and social/cultural influences in the retail industry around the world. Amoudom and Ben-Shabat (2012) have given attention to the customer experience in the cosmetics retail outlets, while Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) have focused on the customer experience in online retail industry. Wall and Berry (2007) have researched the service quality perception in restaurants. He and Mukherjee (2007) have focused on the social variables that lead customers' self-image to influence shopping behaviour amongst Chinese shoppers. However, since this study will be conducted in the South African sphere, it is important to provide information about the state of the research on brand perceptions and customer experience in the South African retail industry.

South Africa's retail industry is establishing itself in the global retail industry. With retail chains listed in the 2011 Top 250 Biggest Retail Companies, namely Shoprite Holdings (ranked 95th), Pick' n Pay (ranked 130th), Massmart Holdings (ranked 138th), Metcash Trading Africa (245th) and Woolworths Holdings (248th), the industry is growing domestically and earning worldwide recognition (Farfan 2013).

However, while developed countries have given specific attention to the customer experience, brand perception and social considerations in the retail industry in their countries (Amoudom & Ben-Shabat 2012; He & Mukherjee 2007; Jiang & Rosenbloom 2005; Wall & Berry 2007), there is still a lack of similar studies in the retail industry in South Africa. Most of the studies regarding either the customer experience or brand perceptions in South Africa have been conducted in the banking industry (Bick, Brown & Abratt 2004; Ivatury & Mas 2008). The South African literature is not extensive in terms of the influence of social variables on buying behaviour, even though studies such as Radder and Le Roux (2005) have researched the social influence on food purchasing.

Although many studies have been conducted on brand perceptions, there is still a gap concerning investigating and empirically testing the relationship between customers' brand perception, customer experience and social considerations, and buying behaviour. Some studies such as Caruana and Ewing (2010) and Wall and Berry (2007) have discussed the relationship between customers' experience and buying behaviour or between brand perception and buying behaviour (Keh & Xie

2009; Martenson 2007). However, there is a lack of studies focusing on the influence of both brand perception and customer experience on buying behaviour in South Africa. Numerous studies (Bick *et al.* 2004; Waweru, Hoque & Uliana 2004) on customer experience and customer perceptions in South Africa were conducted in the banking industry (Ivatury & Mas 2008), but not many studies focused on the retail industry in South Africa. In addition, studies involving social considerations in buying behaviour in South Africa have not been extensively conducted in clothing retail. The present study will therefore focus on brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations in the clothing retail industry in South Africa and the influence thereof on buying behaviour.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Customers are the main concern of every business, as they are the ultimate users of the brand's products and services and the source of business profit. It is hence of utmost importance to conduct research on customers' buying behaviours. This knowledge will assist businesses to become more profitable.

The literature has presented numerous works, such as Baldauf *et al.* (2003), Keh and Xie (2009) and Lee and Kacen (2008) that conducted research to assess the influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on buying behaviour. However, despite many studies overseas addressing those elements in the retail industry, a deficiency was noted in terms of such studies in the South African retail industry. The outcomes may differ from the overseas' researches due the combined use of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations as variables, as well as a different retail industry in South Africa.

The "rainbow nation" implies socio-cultural diversity (Seekings 2008:6). This diversity leads to diversity in terms of buying behaviour. In addition, since the different cultural groups have different influences, there might be different brand perceptions from a cultural group to another. Furthermore, members from different social groups may have different expectations, thus experience brands in different ways and have different views on brand experience.

The retail industry is a growing and profitable field in the South African economy. On top of that, the socio-cultural diversity of the South African environment and its interplay with other variables such as brand perceptions and customer experience provide different approaches in terms of buying behaviour. There is hence a need for this research, as this study focuses on brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations as variables, and their influence on buying behaviour in the South African retail industry, more specifically the South African clothing retail industry.

1.3   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary and secondary objectives of the study are presented in this section.

1.3.1   PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the study is to investigate how brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can be used to initiate a purchase. The information pertaining to the influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on buying behaviour will be collected by making use of a questionnaire. Ethics clearance will be obtained from the NMMU Research (Human) Committee.

1.3.2   SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

The following secondary objectives to the study can be identified to assist in achieving the primary objective:

- To do an in-depth overview of the literature related to brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour.
- To conduct a literature overview on the retail industry in South Africa.
- To develop a hypothesised model showing the relationships between brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations (independent variables) and buying behaviour (dependent variable).

- To develop a measuring instrument to empirically test the relationships formulated in the hypothesised model.

- To empirically test the relationships formulated in the hypothesised model.

- To report on the data analysis resulting from the relationships empirically tested.

- To make recommendations that will assist clothing retail managers in assessing brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can be used to foster purchase decisions.

1.3.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the stated research objectives, a number of research questions arise as relevant to the clothing retail industry:

- What is the influence of brand quality on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of brand reputation on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of brand image on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of store physical environment on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of staff service on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of reference groups on buying behaviour?
- What is the influence of culture/subculture on buying behaviour?

1.3.4   RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the literature overview.

H^1:   There is a significant positive relationship between brand perceptions (as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image) and buying behaviour.

H^2:   There is a significant positive relationship between customer experience (as measured by store physical environment and staff service) and buying behaviour.

H[3]:   There is a significant positive relationship between social considerations (as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture) and buying behaviour.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the hypotheses to be empirically tested during the study.

Figure 1.2:   Proposed hypothesised model

Independent variables   **Dependent variable**

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Brand perceptions     │
│     Brand quality       │ ─────── H¹ ───────┐
│   Brand reputation      │                   │
│     Brand image         │                   │
└─────────────────────────┘                   │
┌─────────────────────────┐            ┌──────────────────────┐
│  Customer experience    │            │                      │
│   Store physical        │ ── H² ───► │   Buying behaviour    │
│    environment          │            │                      │
│    Staff service        │            └──────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────┘                   ▲
┌─────────────────────────┐                   │
│  Social considerations  │ ─────── H³ ───────┘
│    Reference groups     │
│   Culture/Subculture    │
└─────────────────────────┘
```
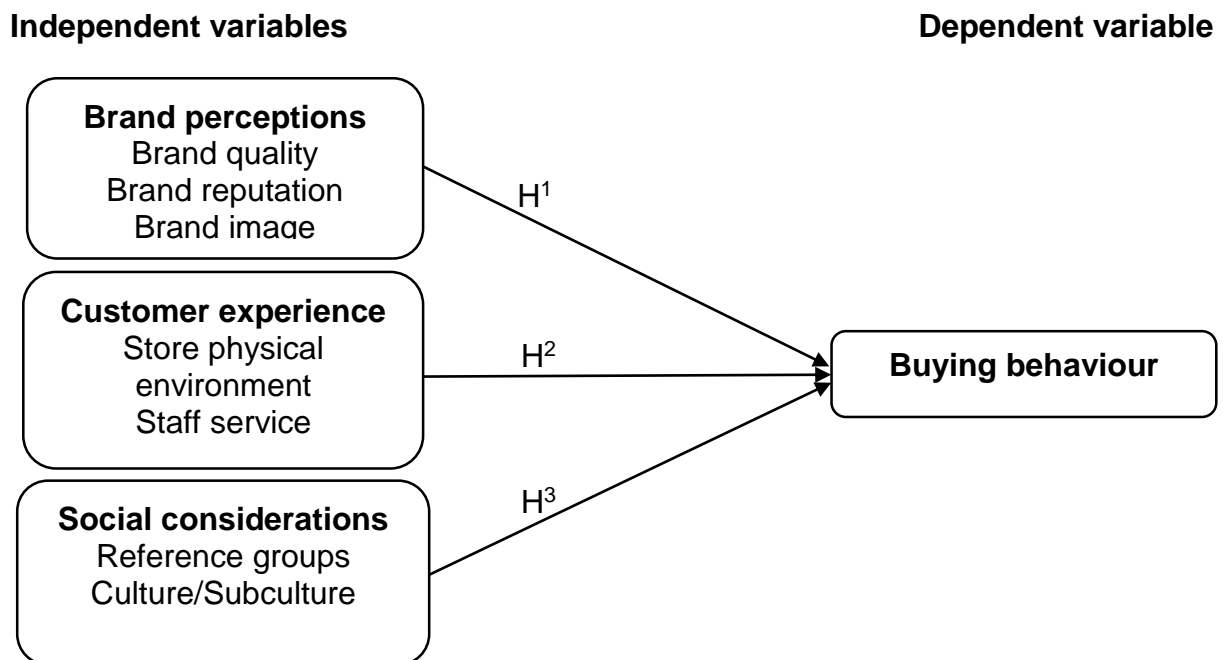
Source: Researcher's own construct

1.4   PRIOR RESEARCH

The literature overview summarises some studies that have been undertaken on brand perceptions and customer experience. The overview highlighted the dearth of studies focusing on customer experience, brand perception, social considerations and their joint influence on buying behaviour. For instance while defining customers brand perceptions as their perception of service quality, Wall and Berry (2007:63) presented service quality as the customers' subjective perceptions of the service experience. Similarly, Hu Kandampully and Juwaheer (2009:116) closely relate brand image to the service experience, as for them brand image stems from the technical attributes (service experience) and the functional attributes (how the service is delivered) of the brand. Caruana and Ewing (2010:1104) present brand reputation as a result of past interactions between the public and the brand. These studies show a

relationship between some dimensions of brand perception and customer experience, but do not give any specific attention to the relationship between both brand perception and customer experience and their influence on buying behaviour. In addition, even though some studies focused on social influences in fashion items purchasing (see Essoo & Dibb 2004 and McKinney, Legette-Taylor, Kincade & Holloman 2004), no attention has been given to brand perception and customer experience.

The literature overview also noted a lack of studies on brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations in South Africa. Bick *et al.* (2004) conducted a study to determine the South Africans' perceptions of the banking experience, on the basis of a previous report highlighting the difference between the expected experience of customers and the actual experience they were having in South African banks. In addition, Ivatury and Mas (2008) have also researched on the development and growth of branchless banking for customers from poor communities. This shows that authors in South Africa have given more interest to the banking sector.

However, some studies conducted in South Africa have also been in the retail industry. Hirsch (2012), when analysing the development of the retail industry in South Africa, presents it as the new land of honey and milk, where one can start sustainable businesses. Louw, Vermeulen, Kirsten and Madevu (2007) discuss how farmers can participate in improving the supply chain in food retail industry. In addition, Waweru *et al.* (2004) have researched on management accounting changes in the South African retail context. Even though their study involved clothing retail businesses, the focus was neither the customer experience nor the customers brand perceptions influence on buying behaviour for those specific outlets. The expansion of retail chains in townships have also been addressed by Tustin and Strydom (2006), who mentioned that trendy township residents were more likely to shop at classy shops than mass-market clothing chains.

The retail industry has drawn some authors' attention in South Africa, as evidenced by the studies mentioned above. However, very few of the studies have been applied to the clothing retail industry. Besides, the studies that involved the clothing retail industry were not conducted in the purpose of investigating the customers buying

behaviours. The lack of attention noticed in terms of customer experience, brand perceptions and social considerations in the clothing retail industry constitute the main reason why the current research needs to be conducted. The present research will address the influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on purchase decisions (buying behaviour) amongst customers of clothing retail outlets in Nelson Mandela Metropole.

1.5   CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The current study aims to bring some contributions to the field of marketing. More specifically, this study attempts to add valuable knowledge in the customer relationship management and brand management in the clothing retail industry in South Africa. Numerous studies have been conducted on the South African food and banking retail to gain more insight of customers buying behaviour, but not enough attention has been given to the clothing retail industry.

The results of this study will address how customers' brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can be used by clothing retail managers to trigger purchase decisions in order to improve sustainability. Furthermore, as South Africa is growing in importance in the global clothing retail industry, the results from this study will provide more tools to improve South African retail standards.

1.6   DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The terminology of the main concepts that are going to be used throughout the current study is presented as follows:

- Brand perceptions: Wang *et al.* (2004:172) present customers brand perceptions as the trade-off between customer satisfaction and the efforts engaged to reach that level of satisfaction. Brand perceptions in this study will refer to the difference between the customers' expectations towards a brand and the actual outcomes provided by the brand.
- Brand quality perception: Caruana and Ewing (2010:1104) concur with Baldauf *et al.* (2003:222) and present perceived brand quality as the level of

superiority and excellence customers see in a brand. In the current research, perceived brand quality will relate to the superiority of both the product and service standards as perceived by the customers.

- Brand reputation: Cretu and Brodie (2007:232) refer to brand reputation as the extent to which the brand realises its promises, meets the stakeholders' expectations, and the levels of performance that it produces in its environment. According to Abimbola and Vallaster (2007:343), brand reputation is the favourable or non-favourable views customers hold in their minds regarding a brand. Brand reputation in this study will refer to the positive or negative customers hold about the brand.

- Brand image: Martenson (2007:546) states that the corporate image is the set of perceptions, inferences and beliefs that customers associate with the business. In their definition, Hu *et al.* (2009:116) present brand image as the global impressions, associations, beliefs and attitudes that the brand inspires on the customers' minds. Brand image in this study will refer to the set of global impressions, associations, beliefs and attitudes that the brand inspires in the customers' minds.

- Customer experience: Brakus *et al.* (2009:52) present customer experience as the sensations, feelings and behaviours stimulated by the brand's logo, messages and environments. For the purpose of this study, the customer experience will refer to the set of emotions and sensations created by the store physical environment and interaction between the customer and the store's staff.

- Store physical environment in this study will refer to any interaction between the brand and the customers during the in-store experience. Payne and Frow (2005:172) present the physical interactions brand's outlets (retail stores, kiosks) as part of the customer experience.

- Staff service: Payne and Frow (2005:172) also mention that the service provided by sales force participates to creating a positive or negative customer experience. However, for the purpose of this study, the staff service will be bound only to the in-store experience.

- Social considerations: As presented by He and Mukherjee (2007:453) and Lee and Kacen (2008:267), social considerations refer to the social

environment's factors of acceptance that shape customers' buying behaviour. Those factors of acceptance can be driven by other people's evaluation of the customers' purchases (Lee & Kacen 2008:267). In this study, social considerations will hence refer to social environment influences on buying behaviour.

- Reference groups: McKinney *et al.* (2004:393) describe reference groups as elements of customers' social environment. Reference groups in this study relates to an element of the customers' social environment sharing the same beliefs and values as the customers'. That reasoning is shared by Grant and Stephen (2005:452) who describe reference groups as a collection of people sharing the same type of principles and views and regularly interacting with the customer.

- Culture/subculture: Alam, Mohd and Hisham (2011:83) present culture as the external aspects of a lifestyle inherited and accustomed over the generations by social group, and add that subculture stems from culture. Azevedo, Pereira, Ferreira and Pedroso (2008:409) describe culture as a key factor in determining buying behaviour. From these definitions, culture/subculture in this study will relate to a social group lifestyle that may influence the buying behaviour of members of that social group.

- Buying behaviour: Nelmapius (2003:67) describes buying behaviour as the different steps customers go through in the purchase and consumption process. According to Constantinides (2004:111), buying behaviour is a process during which customers search, evaluate, process the information linked to a purchase, decide whether or not to make the purchase and also involves a post-purchase assessment. This definition will be used for the current study.

1.7   STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

Chapter One introduces the research by providing a background for the topic under investigation. It also presents the problem statement, the purpose of the study and the research objectives. The secondary and primary studies of the research are introduced under the research methodology. Research questions and hypotheses,

based on the hypothesised model, are presented, and the contribution of the study is discussed. To conclude the chapter, the most important terminology used is defined. In Chapter Two, the focus will be on the South African retail, especially the clothing retail industry, after giving a global overview of the retail in general, insights of the clothing retail industry will be provided.

In Chapter Three, a literature overview of the independent variables and their measuring factors, together with the dependent variable will be provided. In detail, a literature overview of brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and their respective measuring variables will be given. In addition, the buying behaviour literature will also be presented, before closing with the literature pertaining to each measuring factor's influence on buying behaviour.

In Chapter Four, the primary research, which provides an appropriate research paradigm, the population, the sampling procedures, and the data collection procedure will be presented. The data analysis methods used, which will provide means to evaluate the reliability and the validity of the data, will be discussed. These methods include a discussion of statistical tools used for establishing the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

In Chapter Five, the results of the empirical investigations will be presented. The demographic information relating to the respondents, the results of the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments will be highlighted. Basic descriptive statistics, Pearson's product moment correlation, multiple regression calculations will be made to test the hypotheses and confirm them or not. The t-test and Analysis of variance (ANOVA) will also be undertaken to give more insight on the associations among the variables.

Chapter Six will provide an overview of the study. The previous chapters will be briefly summarised and some recommendations will be made according to the results. Finally, the limitations of the study will be highlighted and advices for future research will be given.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE OVERVIEW OF THE RETAIL INDUSTRY

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an introduction to the study was provided, as well as the primary objective and the secondary objectives that will assist in achieving the primary objective. The rationale of this study is to investigate the influence brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations have on buying behaviour in the clothing retail industry in South Africa, especially in the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

One of the secondary objectives formulated is to empirically test the relationships between brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour as presented in a hypothesised model. Results from that investigation should assist in creating a win-win situation between customers and businesses by adding value to businesses and improving customer satisfaction at the same time.

The current chapter will give an overview of the retail industry both on the global and local sphere, with a greater focus on the South African clothing retail industry, as it is important to understand the characteristics of the environment in which the study was conducted.

2.2   THE GLOBAL RETAIL INDUSTRY

The retail industry is defined by Reddy and Reddy (2010:122) as a set of activities encompassing selling goods and services to individuals (ultimate customers). A more extended definition by the Lucintel report presents retail industry as a business segment encompassing the sales of goods and commodities for personal or household consumption. Most of those goods and commodities comprise apparel, accessories, technology, food beverages, home appliances, or pharmaceuticals (Research and markets 2012).

The retail industry is a changing and dynamic environment driven by shifting customer behaviours and innovative technologies. This idea is supported by various authors such as Kwak (2013) and Tendai and Crispen (2009). Kwak (2013) reveals results of a survey on retail trends showing that retailers are adopting more sophisticated and digital approaches, together with variable pricing, whereas Tendai and Crispen (2009:102) argue that the global retail is facing huge drifts because of the ever-changing nature of customers' tastes, buying behaviours and consumption patterns. In addition, retailers are moving towards a click-and-collect type of retailing (online shopping), to adapt themselves and keep up with ever changing consumption patterns. Success in retail industry is hence conditioned by being attentive to customers' needs (Reddy & Reddy 2010:122).

The more aggressive use of social media and technologies, the seeking for multi-channel retailing and new markets, as well as the better use of customer data to understand customers' preferences constitute the main drivers of the global retail industry (Pike & Gibbs 2012). One global trend is the development of online shopping, as customers are shifting to enjoying the freedom and the convenience from shopping from home. According to Kwak (2013), online shopping offers more convenience and distinctive attributes than traditional in-store shopping. Furthermore, with the increasing involvement of technologies in retail translated by the expansion of mobile phone shopping applications, businesses should display more creativity in how and where they sell their products (Kwak 2013).

The Global Powers of Retailing 2010 (Stores 2011), which is the global retailer report by the consulting firm Deloitte, highlighted the global activity of European retailers, especially retailers from France, Germany and United Kingdom which were becoming less dependent on their domestic markets to expand in more attractive markets. The report states that overseas retail sales for those three countries compiled more than 40% of the overall sales. North American retailers however remained the largest retailers as their domestic market is large enough to generate sustainable profits (Stores 2011).

According to the Global Powers of Retailing 2012 (Pike & Gibbs 2012), Africa and emerging markets present a strong growth potential for retail. Africa-Middle East

region and Latin America recorded twice as much as the other regions in compound annual sales growth over five years, with respectively 15.4% and 14.8% growth (Pike & Gibbs 2012). With regards to the emerging countries potential, the Hidden Heroes report identifies BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies, along with Indonesia and Turkey, as rising stars in the retail industry. However, other countries such as South Africa, Vietnam, Morocco, Kenya and Nigeria present some interesting growth perspectives and their potential might become more profitable in the next decade ("Imara" 2011). According to another global retail report, the 2013 Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), by the A.T. Kearney's consulting group, emerging countries are also presented as rising stars in retail. The 2013 GRDI results, consistent with those from the Global Powers of Retailing, place the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as retail giants. However, other South American countries such as Chile and Uruguay are also ranked in the top five (ATKearney 2013). In addition, the 2013 Global Powers of Retail highlighted a general trend towards expanding overseas among the Top 250 global retailers. In fact, in 2011, 107 new markets were entered in 72 different countries by top 250 global retailers, in comparison to 88 new markets involving 57 different countries in 2010 (Deloitte 2013:32).

The 2013 GRDI also states that the soar of retail results from the panel of activities other than retail activities provided in shopping malls and shopping centres, such as leisure activities. Central Asia and Eastern Europe countries are also becoming a fertile ground for global retail as those countries are striving to keep up with the development imposed by Western economies. For instance, Russia and Turkey are growing in importance in the luxury and electronic retail (ATKearney 2013). The Middle East also presents some positive signals, as development of tourism leads to the development of new retail projects. Moreover, Middle East customers are becoming more demanding, sophisticated and trendy. Online retail activities are also expanding in these countries but still represent a small share of the retail sales (ATKearney 2013).

The Sub-Saharian Africa's population is rather young (about 30% of the population is aged between 10 and 24 years old) and displays the second fastest growing rate in the world is also experiencing a growth in the retail industry. Despite high inflation,

price sensitive customers and an overall agricultural economic dependence, some countries are remarkably expanding in the retail. One example highlighted is Ethiopia, which is listed in the 2013 GRDI with 12 other African countries (ATKearney 2013). Besides Ethiopia, there is also Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia that are presented as growing retail industries in Africa ("Imara" 2011).

2.2.1   THE GLOBAL CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY

From the Reddy and Reddy (2010:122) definition of retail industry, clothing retail industry can be bounded to the retail activities that applies exclusively to clothing through physical outlets or online stores. With about 75 million people employed around the world in 2012 and approximately USD 294 billion worth of exports in 2011, the textile and clothing industry is one of the biggest industries in the world (Fashion United 2013). It has been noted that in 2010, as the world economy was recovering from two years of hard recession, leisure and clothing retail outperformed other industries such as drug, food or mass merchandise. During that year, fashion retail experienced a 7.4% rise in sales as well as a leading 7.7% net profit margin overall (Ernst & Young 2013). In addition, fashion retailers appeared to be the most global retailers, as over three-quarter of those retailers were represented beyond their country of origin, with an average presence of 19 countries outside their homeland (Ernst & Young 2013).

Most of the clothing production is located in India and South East Asia, with the Tirupur hub in India exporting in excess of USD 2 billion per year. While other Asian countries like China, Vietnam and Cambodge also present cheap production opportunities for clothing retailers, Bangladesh appears to be the cheapest option, attracting more global brands (Chandrasekaran 2013).

China, India and Brazil are portrayed as the highest growing economies and are being subjected to a rise of retail sales in general, especially in clothing retail. However, with seven countries ranked in the world's 10 fastest growing economies and an increasing middle-class population more avid of technology, luxury goods and fashion, the African continent presents growth opportunities for global clothing retail,

both in terms of production and sales. To support that idea, Jätyri (2012) states trhat Africa is even becoming an inspiration for some Western fashion collections.

The overall youth of the African population and their propensity to follow Western fashion are other elements that are convincing clothing retailers to expand their activities in the continent. There is a change in the middle class customers' behaviour, which is shifting from a traditional clothing style to a trendy and Western way of dressing. African customers are more brand-conscious, more sophisticated, and seek more recognition in product offerings. This new behaviour results from the higher exposure to Western media, Internet and technologies (Jätyri 2012). While South Africa records the biggest share of retail attractiveness in the continent, other countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya also present good growth perspectives (Jätyri 2012).

2.3   THE SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL INDUSTRY

South Africa has become a milky cow of the global retail (Hirsch 2012:82). The South African retail industry, which is present in the global top 25 and is the largest in the Sub-Saharan region, is an oligopolistic market with five key players compounding 80% of the retail sales, namely Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Spar, Massmart and Metcash (ThomasWhite 2011). The retail industry proportion of the national employment has grown from 4.59% in 2006 to 6.44% in 2011, showing that retail has a growing importance within the national economy (Euromonitor 2012:32).

Despite being dominated by the mining and manufacturing industries, the South African economic environment has witnessed an increase of the tertiary industry from 17% to 24% share in the national economy in the past twenty years. This increase has been made mostly through business and finance services, real estate, wholesale and retail (StatsSA 2013). In addition, the most spending age range, the 20-44 years old, is expected to grow from approximately 36% of the population in 2005 to about 38% by 2015, leading to an expected increase of customers' expenditures in the retail industry. Furthermore, as urbanisation is a driver of development and especially retail development, the growing urbanisation and the growing number of

economically active population constitute some positive signals for the national retail expansion (ThomasWhite 2011).

There have been major changes in the importance of retail sales in the South African economy. Retail sales, which accounted for about USD 28 billion in 1998, soared to USD 92 billion in 2007. Despite a go-slow during the global financial crisis, sales still emerged to USD 117 billion in 2011. The rebound was made possible by a higher consumer spending, as the Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) jumped from six during the recession to about 15 in early 2010 (ThomasWhite 2011). Figure 2.1 highlights the changes in South African retail sales from January 2012 to July 2013.

Figure 2.1:   Changes in South African retail sales January 2012-July 2013

Source: StatsSA 2013

Figure 2.1 shows a more steadily growth in 2012, with peaks in January and July. From August 2012, sales plummeted drastically, and despite a surge in June 2013, it remained relatively low in average, as compared to 2013.

As stated by Tendai and Crispen (2009:102), the South African retail industry is shaped by the rise and expansion of local retailers. This expansion is translated by the entry of some of those retailers in the global Top 250 retailers based on 2010 annual sales. Shoprite moved from the 95th to the 92nd position in the Top 250, and was at the same time ranked 1st among Africa and Middle East retailers. Besides Shoprite, Massmart, Pick n Pay, Spar, Steinhoff and Woolworths occupy respectively

the 126th, 133th, 179th, 218th and 222th ranks in the Top 250 (Pike & Gibbs 2012). Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Spar and Woolworths are the main retailers of the local food retail industry (ThomasWhite 2011).

According to a report by Euromonitor (2013a), the year 2012 has recorded a more important growth in value than growth in volume in retail sales, with an overall 10% value growth. The growth difference can be explained by the increase in costs of production that has led business to increase prices per units, resulting in less quantity purchases by customers.

Furthermore, with the continuing rising costs, consumers are having less stereotyped perceptions about label brands. With retailers such as Pick n Pay or Woolworths introducing budget-ranged products from lower incomes to higher incomes, private label brands are not exclusively seen as low quality. The change of mind-set among South African customers is translated by an increase in private labels sales (Euromonitor 2013a).

2.3.1   SOUTH AFRICAN RETAIL TRENDS

As every economy, the South African market displays some specific trends towards the retail industry. The spread of school holidays and the fact that public schools and private schools have different holiday schedules have reshaped the retail industry. It is reported that, due to that spread, there is less peaks and troughs in the industry, when ignoring the Christmas and Easter festive seasons (SA commercial property news2013a). Another trend evoked is the change from one monthly bulk shopping to more frequent shopping. Therefore purchases are made in smaller volumes due to economic conditions giving, thus giving fewer alternatives for discretionary expenses (SA commercial property news2013a).

The South African retail market is driven, amongst other factors, by the expansion of shopping malls. The expansion is translated by the higher demand in retail space across the country, as noticed in the Eastern Cape, especially in Port Elizabeth, East London, Sterkspruit and Mthata (SA commercial property news2013b). In the same way, Coetzee (2013) notes that despite Eastern Cape has different retail patterns

than the rest of the country there is a boom in terms of sustained retail and property, which is worth researching on buying behaviour. While retail centres across the country carry a more entertaining orientation, those in Eastern Cape towns such as East London are more supply-oriented. In other words, while the main reason for visiting a retail centre in more urbanised areas would be entertainment, customers from less urbanised areas would visit a shopping centre as part of a trip to town (Coetzee 2013).

Furthermore, the largest retailers, conscious of the potential behind shopping malls and retail chains expansions, own multiple stores around the country. One example is Metro, a leading fast moving consumer goods in Africa. Metro is spread throughout the country, mostly around black townships, with over 150 stores. In the same way, Massmart, another leading general retailer, owns approximately 250 outlets catering for consumers from lower to higher incomes, through brands like Makro, Game and Jumbo (ThomasWhite 2011).

In addition, South African consumers prefer the convenience of shopping at nearby shopping centres more than once a week, and this leads retailers to keep less stock and restocking in accordance with changing buying behaviours (SA commercial property news2013a). This idea is supported by the Thomas White 2011 report, as it states that South Africans are more interested in convenience stores, which have longer business hours and offer a less time-consuming shopping experience (ThomasWhite 2011). Similarly, Prinsloo (n.d) notes that South African shoppers prefer convenience shopping, which results in more frequent shopping and decreasing volumes, even though some customers still shop monthly.

Retailers have grown conscious of the convenience store trend and have started adapting their brands accordingly. Service stations constitute one of the most used retailers' convenience stores, as they are open 24/7. The success of convenience shopping has led service stations to expand the size of their outlets in order to store a larger variety of products, which are mostly food (Prinsloo n.d). Some examples include Woolworths, which food items are sold at Engen service stations, while Pick n Pay has opted for Sasol service stations since 2009 (ThomasWhite 2011).

Among other patterns noted in the South African retail industry, there is also the large consumption of consumer goods. The emphasis is especially on electronic goods such as mobile phones (with 80% expected rate of penetration for smartphones in 2014), laptops, computing devices, notebooks and tablets (ThomasWhite 2011). According to the 2011 World Retail Data And Statistics (WRDAS), 35.2% of consumer expenditures in South Africa were allocated to retail sales, which was even higher than more developed countries like France or Canada (Euromonitor 2012:81). Furthermore, with higher disposable incomes, South African professionals' demand for vehicles, clothing and furniture is also on the rise (ThomasWhite 2011). In addition, the expansion of the middle class (mostly among the Black community), the increasing property ownership, the mass housing and electrification and the shorter life time of home ware have contributed to the boom of home ware sales and opening of more home ware retailers (Prinsloo n.d).

The launch of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) program has resulted in the rise of higher and middle class amongst the Black community. That emerging class among the Black population is referred to as "Black Diamonds". The Black Diamonds' spending power is estimated around USD 250 million, which makes them the largest spenders in the country, is expected to grow annually by about 30%. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show the middle-class repartition between 1998 and 2006.

Figure 2.2:   Distribution of population groups within middle-class 1998-2006

Percentage Distribution of Population Groups within Middle-Class 1998 and 2006
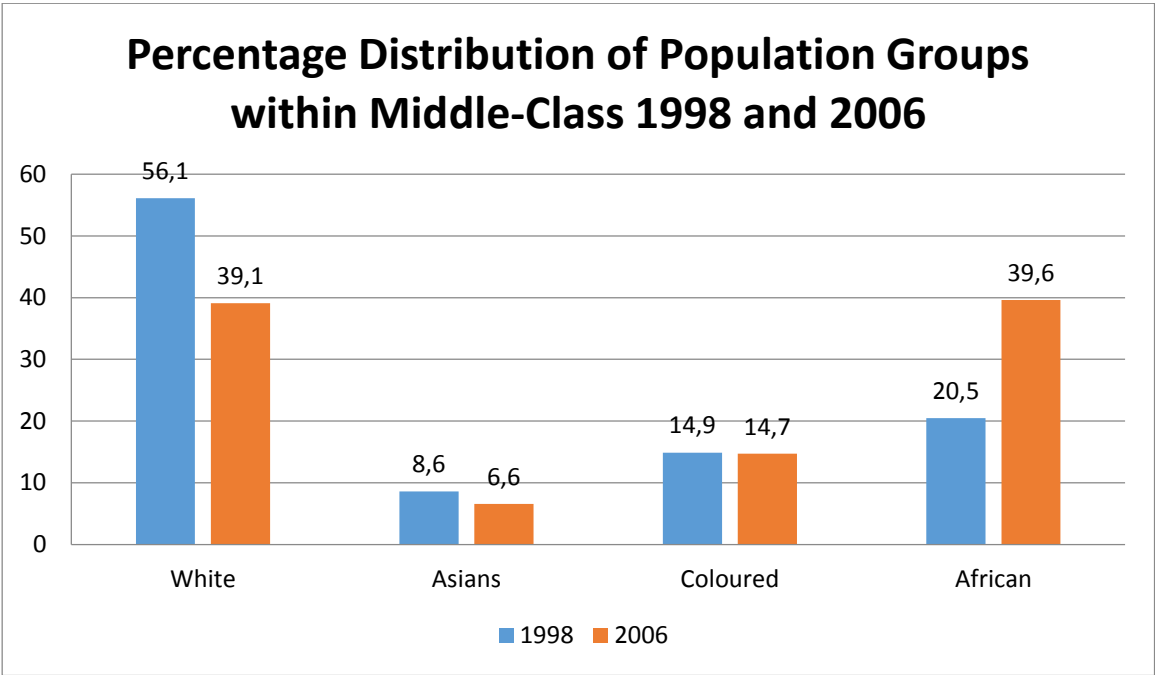
Source: ThomasWhite (2011)

Figure 2.2 highlights that even if the White population was still well represented in the middle-class in 2006, its percentage considerably plummeted with approximately 17% when compared to 1998. However, the Black population almost doubled its representation among the middle-class during the same period.

Figure 2.3 summarises the different population groups' expenditures over a decade, from 1993 to 2003.

Figure 2.3: Expenditures by population group in 1993 and 2003
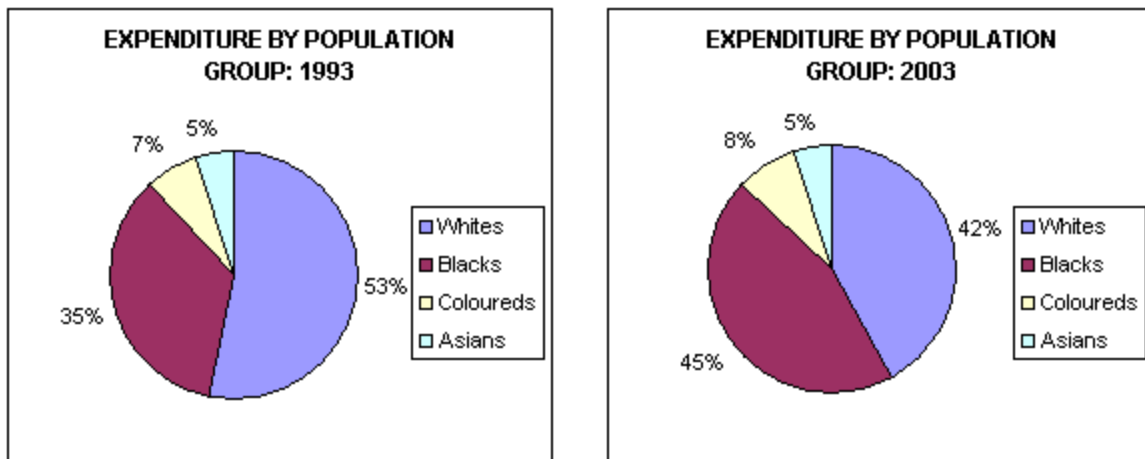
From the two figures displayed in Figure 2.3, it can be seen that there is a decline in expenditures among the White community despite 85% of the White population was classified as middle-class between 2004 and 2006. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 also provide evidence how the Black community's expenditures are soaring (ThomasWhite 2011). Another characteristic of the South African retail industry is the second economy. The second economy concept was brought up by the former president Thabo Mbeki. He defined it as a marginalised form of economy branded by low contribution to GDP, involving a large part of the population, prevalent in rural and poorest areas, detached from both the first and global economies and unable to generate self-growth and development (Devey, Skinner & Valodia 2006:1). The second economy, also referred to as informal retail, is widespread in black townships and stems from former apartheid restrictions measures, as Black community areas were ignored in the retail distribution. Informal retail mostly comprises street stalls, fast foods, kiosks, take-aways, taverns, small food retailers (tuck shops) and spazas, which are usually home-based run shops offering food and other products.

A study by University of South Africa (UNISA) reveals that the second economy or informal retail represents around R32 billion revenues, with about 750 000 street vendors and spazas. However, the informal retail is facing numerous challenges, especially theft, transport costs, supply issues and competition from formal retailers setting up in informal retail dominated areas (ThomasWhite 2011). In addition, the gap between formal retail and informal retail somehow seems to be institutionalised,

as some industries draw their inputs from the second economy to store the outputs in formal retail stores. One example highlighted is informal clothing factories selling the ultimate products in formal retail stores (Devey *et al.* 2006:16).

The introduction of the Internet in the retail chain has been identified as a driver of global and South African retail expansion. In the early 2000s, the South African consumer market was unaware of e-commerce opportunities. Since 2007, there has been a surge in the use of the Internet for shopping purpose, with a growth from about 4.6 million of Internet user across the country in 2009 to about 5.3 million in 2011. Retailers are progressively becoming e-retailers, advertising their products and promotions on websites (Prinsloo n.d). The main e-retailers are Kalahari.net, Exclusive books, OnSaleToday, or auction retailer Bidorbuy, which sales have soared by 40% over a year in 2010. Some e-retailers store both new and used products, benchmarking on the globally known auctioneer eBay (ThomasWhite 2011). However, the e-retail growth is slowed by the fact that a majority of consumers still prefer the traditional brick and mortar stores, but also by high Internet access costs, relatively low Internet penetration and low confidence in the postal system to perform deliveries (ThomasWhite 2011).

South African retailers do not necessarily perceive the entry of global retailers as a positive sign, even though their entry emphasises growth perspectives of the South African retail industry. Besides accruing the competition, local retailers do not feel armed enough to compete with retailers like Walmart, the number one global retailer. Their fears are motivated by the larger production volumes capacity, easier access to liquidity, bigger marketing budgets and better trained staff that characterise those global retailers entering the local market. However, top national retailers such as Woolworths, Pick n Pay and Shoprite are implementing action plans to take up the challenge imposed by Walmart and other global retailers within the South African shores (WRSETA 2011:2). The entry of new players, especially global players, in the local market applies for the general retail, food retail, but also clothing retail.

In addition, some operating and occupational costs are threatening the expansion of retail, both on the retailers' and the customers' side. As long as retailers will have to bear the costs of increasing Eskom tariffs as well as tariffs imposed on property by

local municipalities, they will increase their prices, which may affect customers purchase behaviours (SA commercial property news 2013a). Furthermore, increasing fuel costs also have an influence on distribution as they affect transportation costs (WRSETA 2011:2).

The next section will give an insight of the South African retail industry for a better understanding of why global retailers enter that market.

2.3.2   THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY

As the continent's economic wagon, South Africa remains the top country for global retailers seeking venture in Africa. South Africa accounts for 17% of the continental Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with the most traded currency on the continent. In addition, being the 24th largest retail market according to the 2010 GRDI report, making it the largest on the continent, South Africa is the choice by excellence for investments in Africa (ThomasWhite 2011). Jätyri (2012) states that, as the retail expansion has not touched the whole continent to the same extent, South Africa dwells by far the most reliable economy in Africa, hence is the focus of global retailers seeking venture on the continent.

With a consumer spending around 61% of GDP which is relatively high compared to other emerging countries ("Imara" 2011), mostly driven by the Black population (74.9% of the country population) and especially the Black middle class that is the largest spending group, South Africa represents a treasure for retail investors (ThomasWhite 2011). The "buppies", which refers to the emerging middle class and educated professionals among the Black population, represents a profitable and fashion-conscious segment of the local market. On average, 20% of the buppies spend about 3.5% of their income on clothing, while their White counterparts only spend 1.5%. This trend has led to the opening of the Maponya Mall in Soweto, the largest township of Johannesburg, in 2007, to address the growing spending power of buppies and Black Diamonds (ThomasWhite 2011).

Besides the overall attractiveness of the South African market, the clothing retail industry also shows green lights for investors, as steadily expands. After a 7.2% year

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on year increase in retail sales in August 2012, the sector recorded an even more important year on year 12.9% increase in May 2013 despite a slight deterioration in the previous surge of month. The surge was mostly pulled up by clothing, textiles and footwear sales (BDlive 2013). In the same way, the importance of the clothing retail industry within the South African environment is evidenced by the 2011 WRDAS, which shows that the sector recorded the highest sales with about USD 11.3 million worth of sales (Euromonitor 2012:69). Furthermore, the clothing retail industry is among the 10 highest employers of the South African workforce (PriceWaterhouseCoppers 2012:27).

The attractiveness of the South African market has convinced some biggest global retailers to set a foothold in the country. Apart from Walmart which acquired Massmart to expand its presence to thirteen African economies, Gap and the Arcadia group that are already present in the country, the world's biggest retailer in terms of sales, Inditex, has also penetrated the South African market. With already three stores in the country, Zara, the Inditex group's spear head, opened its fourth store in Port Elizabeth in November 2013. In addition, the Swedish giant H&M is expected to open in Johannesburg by 2015 (Moorad 2013a).

The South African clothing industry is controlled by a small number of large retailers, for which the top five account for about 70% of formal clothing sales countrywide (Department of Labour South Africa 2008:10). In terms of local clothing retailers, the market is also well garnished with retailers such as the Foschini group, Edcon group, Truworths or Woolworths that are more present in mid-level and higher level incomes while PEP, Ackermans and Mr Price are the main local brands for discount clothing (Moorad 2013a). Founded in 1917 and represented through more than 500 stores countrywide under its brands Uzzi, YDE, Ginger Mary, Truworths Man and Identity, Truworths International is the first local fashion retailer. Besides clothing, the Foscini Group is also present in jewellery, home furnishings and accessories. With over 1 500 outlets countrywide, some of its brands include Markham, Donna-Claire, @home and DueSouth (ThomasWhite 2011). However, the main local clothing retail player is Edcon, with discount brands like Jet and its main higher incomes brand: Edgars (Euromonitor 2013b).

The entry of global retail tycoons such as Zara in the South African retail industry should result in stepping up the local clothing retail game, as it leaves no choice but adapting to fast fashion retail. The fast fashion retail consists of being able to provide customers the latest catwalk trends the fastest way possible, by making them available in stores as soon as possible. Zara is known as the fast fashion pioneer, through quick and effective costs enabling the delivery of new designs in their stores twice a week. Keeping up with such standards require effective design and production, supported by cutting-edge technology, which fortunately can be found locally through businesses like Sync, the national leading software provider for clothing industry (Booysen 2013). That integration of cutting-edge manufacturing techniques can be observed countrywide, as retailers and manufacturers are focusing on ways to reduce delivery time, cutting inventory levels, reducing defect rates, aligning value chain creation (Department of Labour South Africa 2008:10).

Research has revealed that South Africans spend one and a half times more on clothing than on education, with about 10% of their expenditures on clothing, mostly due to the easy access to credit. Approximately, 11 million of the total population have a clothing credit account. (Moorad 2013b). A 2013 report on South African apparel sector supports that the spread of clothing credit is contributing to increased sales in the clothing retail industry (Euromonitor 2013b). In addition, a link has been made between clothing expenditures and social status, as some South Africans admit spending a lot on clothing to maintain standards from their social status (Lamprecht 2013).

The clothing retail industry is also facing its own issues, such as wages disputes despite the 2011 agreement passed between the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU), resulting in externalising the production to neighbour countries like Lesotho or Swaziland (PriceWaterhouseCoppers 2012:27). Another issue is the propensity of South African customers to copy on the Western fashion, hence opting for internationally known brands rather local brands (Jätyri 2012). Figure 2.4 provides evidence of the South African customers' low reliability on domestic clothing brands.

Figure 2.4: Domestic sales of local clothing and textile brands 1998-2005

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total	123.33	118.24	110.31	110.03	118.10	107.31	106.15	100.00
Clothing	130.70	126.32	112.33	109.32	113.42	107.22	106.31	100.00
Textiles	117.13	111.44	108.60	110.62	122.04	107.38	106.01	100.00
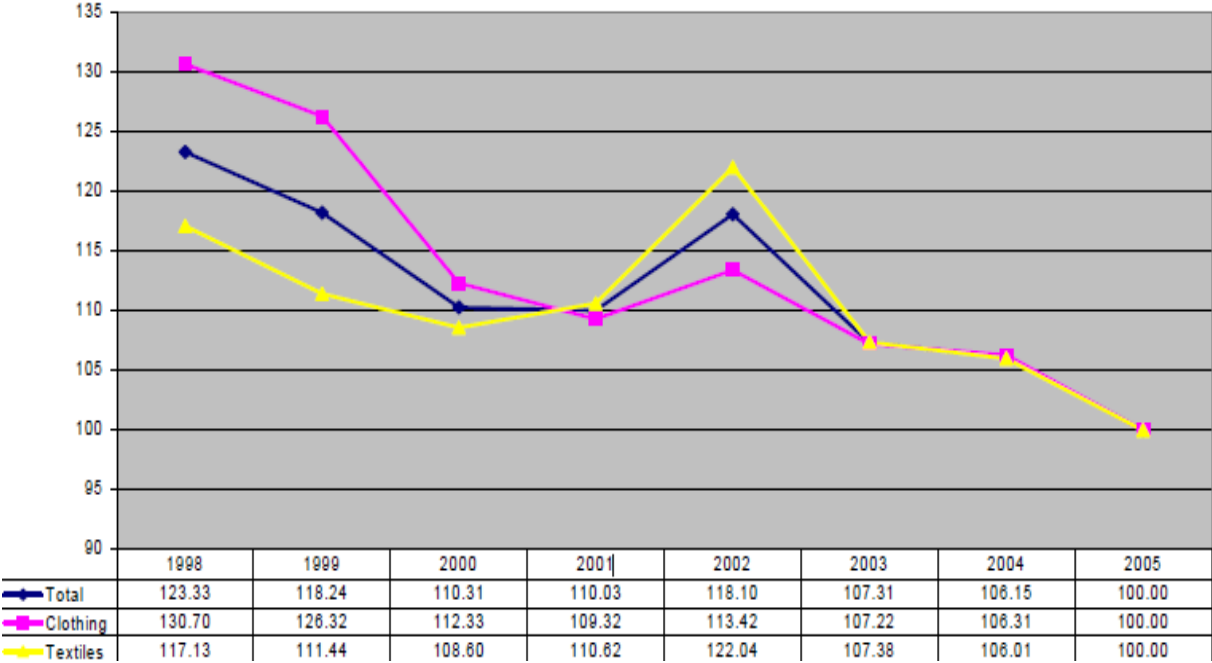
Source: Department Of Labour South Africa (2008:13)

As the local demand for clothing was increasing, Figure 2.4 illustrates that the domestic sales swiftly plummeted between 2002 and 2005. The rising demand has hence been relying more on imported clothing than domestically made clothing (Department Of Labour South Africa 2008:13).

The entry of international competitors improves standards that are difficult to maintain for some local manufacturers. The difficulty to maintain the standards mostly comes from labour turbulences as local workforce is regularly striking to demand wages increases, which to the closure of some production plants (PriceWaterhouseCoppers 2012:31). As previously mentioned, the clothing retail industry is facing a paradox with a production in informal and unregistered factories, which however store the ultimate products in formal retail stores (Department of Labour South Africa 2008:10). In addition, the entry of international competitors and the pressure coming from trade liberalisation that allows more imports are leading local retailers to focus on more niche markets (Department of Labour South Africa 2008:11). Despite some of the clothing inputs are locally produced, the sector mostly relies on Chinese imports (PriceWaterhouseCoppers 2012:27). In 2005, Chinese imports in the clothing sector had surged to almost 79% in comparison to 16.5% ten years earlier (Department of

Labour South Africa 2008:18). Despite the overall good health of the South African clothing industry, the Chinese stronghold set with cheap imports has resulted in some job losses, with about 50000 jobs lost in the past decade (Phakathi 2013).

The South African clothing retail, since it is the main field of this study, can be summarised in the SWOT analysis presented in Table 2.1. However, the appreciation of this SWOT analysis may differ whether it is viewed from a local retailer's angle or from a prospective retailer's.

Table 2.1:   SWOT analysis of South African clothing retail

STRENGHTS	WEAKNESSES
• Spending power of "Black diamonds" and "buppies". • Cutting edge technology for fast fashion. • Increasingly important place in the global fashion and clothing retail. • Customers overall high expenditures on clothing. • Adaptability of local retailers to global trends. • Country's attractiveness for venture. • Clothing sector among the biggest employers domestically.	• Quarrels between the SACTWU and the government. • Workforce's strikes. • High production costs. • Lower interest for national clothing retailers. • Increasingly externalised production. • Small number of local retailers. • High volume of imports, mostly from China.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Higher demand for shopping malls' openings. • Fast growing clothing retail figures. • Higher interest for globally known clothing retailers. • Higher interest for western fashion. • Emerging Black middle-class with its purchasing power. • Overall high consumer spending percentage of GDP. • Widespread use of clothing credit accounts.	• Important volume of Chinese imports. • Increasing energy, operational and occupational costs. • High propensity of labour disputes and strikes. • Entry of global retailers might outweigh the small number of local retailers. • Informal retail resulting from informal production plants. • Trade liberalisation allowing more imports.

Source: Researcher's own construct

Table 2.1 highlights that more strengths and opportunities are currently prevalent in the South African retail industry than weaknesses and threats.

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2.4   SUMMARY

Despite being affected by a global economic recession towards the end of the last decade, the global retail industry is recovering and expanding. That expansion is boosted by technological growth, urbanisation, expansion of online purchasing and the increased expenditures of the middle class in emerging economies.

The African continent shows great perspectives for retail development and growth. In the same way, BRIC countries as well as some other emerging markets do confirm the tendency of a growing global retail. However, one of the challenges for African and emerging economies retailers is to adapt their strategies to the diversity of those different markets.

While disputes within the mining industry and other industries like manufacturing are polluting the South African economy, the retail industry is expected to maintain a steady growth for the years to come. The main contributors to the South African retail growth are grocery sales with Shoprite Holdings as leading retailer, furniture and home ware, as well as clothing and clothing related sales (such as footwear apparel and textile). That growth will be fostered by increasing the Internet and technologies involvement in retail channels.

The South African clothing retail industry is dominated by five major local players, but is increasingly being penetrated by major global retailers such as Zara. The entry of international players is tightening the competition, obliging local retailers to adjust their processes to meet higher standards from new entrants. In addition, South African customers are more attracted by internationally known brands and are eager to follow Western fashion trends. However, as the industry often faces strikes from the workforce, the local production is facing an upsurge of informal production plants and is externalised to neighbour countries and to China for cheaper production options. Furthermore, the industry mostly imports products, with Chinese imports representing the biggest share of the sector imports because of their ability to offer low costs for production and distribution.

Whether customers opt more for imported products or prefer buying local brands, they are shaped by different influences in their purchase decisions. An example is that the White population displays different consumer patterns than the Black population. Hence, buying behaviours can be influenced by different brand perceptions or different social characteristics. The following chapter provides a literature overview of brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour in clothing retail, in order to establish the possible relationships among those variables.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE OVERVIEW OF BUYING BEHAVIOUR VARIABLES

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an overview of the South African retail was provided. It highlighted the main characteristics that pertain to the South African retail industry and also gave elements that are proper to the clothing retail industry.

As previous studies, such as He and Mukherjee (2007), Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005), have given attention to analysing customers' buying behaviour, This chapter will provide an overview of previous studies that have been conducted on buying behaviour, brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations.

Numerous factors have been reported to have an influence on customers' buying behaviour. However, the current study will focus on three principal variables. These variables are: brand perceptions (involving brand quality, brand reputation and brand image), customer experience in terms of store physical environment and staff service, and lastly social considerations, as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture.

The following sections hence will provide an overview of buying behaviour, brand perceptions (as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image), customer experience (as measured by store physical environment and staff service), and lastly social considerations (as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture). Besides, the possible relationships between brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour will be discussed.

3.2   BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Rajagopalan and Heitmeyer (2005:86) associate buying behaviour to a four-stage process involving the input, the information processing, the decision process and lastly the variables influencing the decision process. In more details, the input stage

corresponds to the customers' recognition of a need. In the second stage (information processing), customers search information in their memory and environment. In the third stage, customers evaluates their alternatives and prospective benefits that each can give. The last stage is the actual purchase and the expected outcome, ultimately the satisfaction. Jackson, Stoel and Brantley (2010:1) present buying behaviour as the overall outcomes resulting from customers' shopping experience and add that the shopping experience should lead to customer satisfaction.

Nelmapius (2003:67) describes buying behaviour as the different steps customers go through during the purchase and consumption process. According to Constantinides (2004:111), buying behaviour is a process during which customers search, evaluate, process the information linked to a purchase and decide whether or not to make the purchase. That process also involves a post-purchase assessment. For the purpose of this study, buying behaviour will refer to the different attitudes customers display before, during and after the purchase and consumption processes.

While opting for a brand, customers always seek for positive outcomes either straight away or later after using the brand (Khalifa 2004:653). It is hence important to investigate customers buying behaviour. Understanding customers buying behaviour is important as it can assist retailers in triggering a repurchase (Jackson *et al.* 2010:1). Park and Sullivan (2009:184) present two types of orientation shaping customers' buying behaviour, namely hedonic orientations and utilitarian orientations. Hedonic orientations are related to the potential entertainment that can stem from the shopping experience, while utilitarian orientations are linked with the efficiency of the shopping experience in a short time and with a minimum of frustration (Park & Sullivan 2009:184). In addition, Wang, Siu and Hui (2004:241) present eight types of customers that can be influenced by different factors in their buying behaviour, namely quality conscious, brand conscious, fashion conscious, recreational and hedonistic, price conscious, impulsive and careless, confused by overchoice and lastly brand loyal customers. Brand conscious, fashion conscious, price conscious and hedonistic customers tend to spend more time on evaluating a product before making a purchase (Wang *et al.* 2004:241).

Jackson *et al.* (2010:7) stress the importance of knowing buying patterns pertaining to different customer groups to be able to serve the different segments of the business' customer data base. Park and Sullivan (2009:182) share this opinion by stating that market segmentation is very important in understanding customers' buying behaviours. In addition, when comparing between teenagers and adult buying behvaiours, Massicotte, Michon, Chebat, Sirgy and Borges (2010:74) note that teenagers are more sensitive to self-congruity (symbolic) attributes of the store than adults, whom behaviour is based functional congruity (product performance). In other words, teenagers buying behaviours are more shaped by the symbolic values that the brand inspires in their minds and experienced customers' buying behaviour are driven by the quality of the product.

It is important for businesses to grasp the importance of understanding behaviours. As stated by Hu *et al.* (2009:113), not only a good brand quality perception drives customers to put a good word about the brand, but also a positive perceived service quality can trigger a repurchase decision (Kayaman & Arasli 2007:96). A repurchase decision is a sign that the customer was satisfied and ultimately increases profits. In addition, customers' buying behaviour is linked to the extent to which the brand meets their self-image. Burmann, Jost-Benz and Riley (2009:394) state that customers purchase brands for which the image can be linked to the image they display themselves in the society. This means that the more a brand can match the customers' self-image, the more likely the brand is to turn the customer into a loyal customer.

It is important to identify the variables that lead customers to opt for a brand and that provide positive outcomes after use, as it enables business managers to adapt their offerings in a way which matches customers' needs. There is a need to ascertain the functional, emotional and social values that direct customers' buying behaviour (Khalifa 2004:653).

The literature has extensively discussed customers' buying behaviour and linked buying behaviour to some factors that were supposed to define and influence the buying behaviour. Factors such as price, promotions, brand perception, perceived quality and brand image have been discussed in previous studies (Caruana & Ewing

2010; Delvecchio *et al.* 2006). However, for this study, three main factors have been selected: firstly brand perceptions as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image, secondly customer experience in terms of store physical environment and staff service, and lastly social considerations, as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture.

There is a need to briefly define the selected variables and describe how each variable will be contextualised for the study. Wang *et al.* (2004:172) present customers brand perceptions as the trade-off between customer satisfaction and the efforts engaged to reach that level of satisfaction. In terms of brand perceptions, Caruana and Ewing (2010:1104) present perceived quality as the level of superiority and excellence customers perceive in a product. According to Abimbola and Vallaster (2007:343), brand reputation is the favourable or non-favourable views customers hold in their minds regarding a brand. Hu *et al.* (2009:116) present brand image as the global impressions, associations, beliefs and attitudes that the brand inspires on the customers' minds.

Park, Kim and Forney (2006:443) argue that customers are more likely to make a purchase in a clean store, with effective layout, attractive colours and well trained staff. Similarly, Jackson *et al.* (2010:1) support that idea as they list the store physical environment, staff and promotions, as attributes that can drive a purchase. Massicotte *et al.* (2010:75) also state that the store atmosphere has an effect on customers' behavioural responses and purchase decisions.

According to Lee and Kacen (2008:267), social considerations refer to the social environment's factors of acceptance that shape customers' buying behaviour. With regards to the measuring variables of social considerations in this study, Grant and Stephen (2005:452) define reference groups as a collection of people sharing the same type of principles and views and regularly interacting with the customer. As some customers dress to please others, reference groups appears to be an important driver of buying behaviour in the clothing industry (Park & Sullivan 2009:184). Azevedo *et al.* (2008:409) present culture as a key factor in determining buying behaviour. Alam *et al.* (2011:83) describe culture as the external aspects of a

lifestyle inherited and accustomed over the generations by a social group, and add that subculture stems from culture.

Therefore the study will investigate the possible influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on buying behaviour.

3.3 BRAND PERCEPTIONS

In order to attract, satisfy and retain more customers, brands need to be perceived as unique by the customers (Batra & Homer 2004:318). This implies that building long-term customer relationships and making sustainable profits for businesses infers creating a feeling of privilege in customers' mind when they use the brand. This uniqueness is a competitive advantage that can be achieved through reputation, brand quality or a superior brand image, depending on the customers' perception of the brand (Herdlicka, Vandrabant & Bellens 2008; Hu *et al.* 2009; Keh & Xie 2009). Many researchers have attempted to find a common ground to define brand perceptions. Definitions such as the one from Wang et *al.* (2004:172) have given a general idea of customers' perceptions by presenting them as the trade-off between customer satisfaction and the efforts engaged to reach that level of satisfaction. Other studies have affiliated brand perceptions to the customers' perceptions of the brand's quality, their perception of the brand's reputation or to some extent their perception of the brand's image (Hu *et al.* 2009; Keh & Xie 2009).

3.3.1 PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND QUALITY

The consumption of certain products implies the involvement of services (such as customer service) to a certain extent. Some definitions of perceived brand quality relate to product quality (Boo, Busser & Baloglu 2009:221), while other definitions are focusing on the service quality perception (Hu *et al.* 2009:112). However, since the product consumption implies a level of service consumption, brand quality will be used in this research to refer to both product quality and service quality.

Cretu and Brodie (2007:232) and Wang *et al.* (2004:172) define brand perceptions as results from the trade-off between the positive outcomes of brand quality and the monetary and non-monetary costs related to the product or service consumption.

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According to Boo *et al.* (2009:221), the perception of product quality can be oriented by seven product quality dimensions, namely performance, features, conformation quality, reliability, durability, serviceability and style/design. It implies that the perception of product quality is grounded on the performance of the product's physical and functional attributes. Based on this definition, even though a product is tangible, the product quality entails some intangible values such as serviceability.

Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005:151) argue that since quality of services offered by a brand is essential in creating customer satisfaction, it is a driver of brand perception. According to Hu *et al.* (2009:112), customers perceived service quality is defined as their assessment of the general excellence of the service. Flavian, Torres and Guinaliu (2004:368) relate the concept of service quality to customer satisfaction, as service quality stems from a comparison between the experienced service and the expected quality of the service. This shows that the concept of service quality involves a certain level of expectation from the customer.

Some authors have developed means for canvassing the service quality. Hu *et al.* (2009:112) present SERVQUAL, a construct that was developed in 1988 and is considered as the pioneer in terms of measuring service quality. Despite the questions regarding the validity of the measuring variables of SERVQUAL, it is still used as a spine in the research on service quality. In their construct grounded on the SERVQUAL, they propose five attributes to evaluate service quality, namely tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Hu *et al.* 2009:112). In the same way Wall and Berry (2007:61) identified three variables that lead to forming perceptions of service quality, namely functional variables (how the service is performed and its technical attributes), mechanic variables (the service environment) and human variables (employees' behaviour). Ma, Pearson and Tadisina (2005:1068) have listed quality dimensions differentiating between product and service quality, as summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1:   Brand quality dimensions

FRAMEWORK	DIMENSION	DEFINITION
PRODUCT QUALITY	1. Performance	Primary operating characteristic
	2. Features	Supplements to basic functional characteristics
	3. Reliability	Does not malfunction during specified period
	4. Conformance	Meets established standards
	5. Durability	A measure of product life
	6. Serviceability	The speed and ease of repair
	7. Aesthetics	How a product looks, feels, tastes, and smells
	8. Perceived quality	As seen by a customer
SERVICE QUALITY	1. Tangibility	Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel
	2. Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
	3. Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
	4. Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inquire trust and confidence
	5. Empathy	Caring, individualised attention the firm provider gives its customers

Source: Ma *et al.* (2005:1068)

From Table 3.1 it can be concluded that service quality entails customers' expectations about a certain standard of service. As stated by Ma *et al.* (2005:1068), quality lies in meeting or exceeding customer expectations. As there are different ways of assessing service quality, the service experience plays an important role in how the customers appreciate the service quality. Hence, it makes it easier for businesses to improve their service quality by giving a specific attention to the different attributes of a service, because service quality is a way by which customers can differentiate between competing brands (Hu *et al.* 2009:112).

Brand quality is of an utmost importance when it comes to purchase decisions, this is why businesses need to make sure customers have positive perceptions about their brand quality. Not only a positive quality perception leads customers to have a positive perception about the brand (Hu *et al.* 2009:113), but also a positive perceived quality can trigger a repurchase decision (Kayaman & Arasli 2007:96). In addition, high standards of quality lead to improving businesses' revenues. Indeed, as stated by Hu *et al.* (2009:113), high levels of service quality lead to increased profitability through customer retention. Furthermore, customers are willing to pay more for products of higher quality. However, poor quality increases customers'

likeliness to switch to another brand (Hu *et al.* 2009:113). Taking the above reasoning into consideration, the possible influence of brand quality perceptions on buying behaviour will be investigated.

3.3.2 PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND REPUTATION

Many authors relate brand perceptions to customers' perceptions of brand reputation. Stern (2006:220) states that brand reputation is a customer-controlled perception about the brand. Keh and Xie (2009:733) qualify brand reputation as a global impression reflecting the perception of stakeholders about the brand. In other words, brand reputation deals with perceiving the brand as either good or bad.

Brand reputation entails how well known the brand is and whether it is perceived as good, reliable, trustworthy, believable and reputable (Caruana & Ewing 2010:1104). Furthermore, Keh and Xie (2009:734) state that a positive brand reputation is associated in some customers' minds with credibility, reliability, responsibility and trustworthiness and a positive reputation can drive high perceptions about the brand's performance and quality. Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009:315) pose brand reputation as the stakeholders' aggregate perception of the signals and marketing strategies the business engages. Brand reputation is even suggested to have more influence on customers' perceptions than brand image (Cretu & Brodie 2007:234). As brand reputation and brand image are often used interchangeably, Martenson (2007:546) insists that those two concepts should be differentiated, as reputation is long term related while image is short term related.

According to Cretu and Brodie (2007:232), brand reputation embraces its values, visions and missions, and the more service involved, the higher the expected reputation. Musteen, Rhyne and Zheng (2012:5) present the following factors as scales for assessing a brand's reputation: innovativeness, quality of management, product quality, service quality, long-term investment value, financial soundness, attraction and retention of talented people, corporate citizenship and the use of corporate governance. Brand reputation stands as a canopy for the products as these carry the same associations that stem from the reputation (Cretu & Brodie 2007:230).

Furthermore, Caruana and Ewing (2010:1104) present brand reputation as a result of experiences from past interactions between the public and the brand. In the same way, Abimbola and Vallaster (2007:343) assert that a positive brand reputation can be the result of a positive experience with the brand. Similarly, Walsh and Beatty (2007:129) define brand reputation as the result from the customer experience and the information gathered from other customers' interaction with the brand. From this first set of definitions, brand reputation can be associated with the favourable or non-favourable views customers hold in their minds regarding a brand, especially after interacting with it.

Brand reputation is also a result of information exchanges about the brand and social influences from various stakeholders. According to Hem, De Chernatony and Iversen (2003:788), brand reputation refers to the outcome of the brand's products quality, its marketing and acceptance in the business environment. Brand reputation stems from associations that the public make to the brand name (Maden, Arikan, Telci & Kantur 2012:656). Similarly, Cretu and Brodie (2007:232) refer to brand reputation as the extent to which the brand realises its promises, meets the stakeholders' expectations, and the levels of performance that it produces in its environment. Alniacik, Cigerim, Akcin and Bayram (2011:1178) define brand reputation as the result of the firm's past actions and projected future actions as perceived by the public. It represents the stakeholders' judgements of the brand over the time, based on how much stakeholders' expectations have been met by the business. This second set of definition present brand reputation as a summary of the public's perceptions of what the business stands for, how the business is viewed and the associations made by its main stakeholders.

According to Walsh and Beatty (2007:130), since brand reputation encompasses different stakeholders' experience, businesses can have different reputations, depending on the type of stakeholders. In other words, the reputation that customers have of a brand may differ from the reputation from the supplier's view. Brand reputation is hence a result of both the public experiences of the brand and the brand-related communication amongst the different stakeholders.

As brand reputation is built from customers' word-of-mouth, it can be destroyed the same way. A good reputation can easily be altered, as experienced by Nike in 1996 after the child labour scandal (Musteen *et al.* 2012:4). However, as it takes long to build a strong reputation, it cannot be altered easily in a short time frame (Veloutsou & Moutinho 2009:315). This poses brand reputation as an asset that is either strengthened or weakened over the time. It is hence very important for a business to build a strong and positive reputation, as it can ensure customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, trust, and positive word of mouth (Walsh & Beatty 2007:130). Keeping a strong reputation cannot be achieved by sending mixed signals, so the business must show a consistency between the information it sends to its stakeholders and the actions it takes (Veloutsou & Moutinho 2009:315).

Even though a good reputation is difficult to achieve (Keh & Xie 2009:732), numerous studies such as Alniacik *et al.* (2011); Keh and Xie (2009) and Maden *et al.* (2012) have stressed that a good reputation provides the brand with a competitive advantage. Along with that reasoning, Keh and Xie (2009:732) state that a positive reputation constitutes a competitive advantage, as it is an intangible asset that is hard to replicate. In addition, on the first contact with the brand, customers associate a good reputation to high standards of competence (Keh & Xie 2009:734). Similarly, Alniacik *et al.* (2011:1178) list corporate reputation as one of the best intangible attributes for creating a sustainable competitive advantage, as it is valuable, scarce and hard to copy. In addition, Maden *et al.* (2012:656) present three levels of brand reputation: firstly the institutional level which deals with how the brand legacy is established in its environment, secondly the signaling level which refers to the actions the business takes to build an impression in the public's mind, and lastly the resource based level that posits the reputation as a unique asset and competitive advantage. Besides being an asset hard to imitate, brand reputation also sends positive signals to the public in terms of brand attributes and quality (Maden *et al.* 2012:656).

According to Kim and Hyun (2011:428) brand reputation, which is also referred to as corporate image, has a direct impact on both customer value and customer loyalty. Kim and Hyun (2011:430) summarise brand reputation as the outcome of customers' perceptions of the brand's credibility, identity and capacity to keep its promises. They

suggest that brand reputation stems from its products, prices, distribution channels, advertising, customer care, employees' behaviour and environmental respect (Kim & Hyun 2011:430). Customers' trustworthiness and brand perceptions are more positive for worldwide known brands, brands reputed to be financially stable and leading edge (Kim & Hyun 2011:431). A positive brand reputation also constitutes an entry barrier to potential new rivals (Kim & Hyun 2011:431). Walsh and Beatty (2007:133) list seven factors that can help assessing a business' reputation, namely: customer orientation, fairness and social responsibility, financial performance, product and service quality, sympathy, transparency and lastly communication and appearance. Table 3.2 summarises the definitions of these seven factors.

Table 3.2:   Seven factors of brand reputation

FACTORS	DEFINITIONS
Customer orientation	Customers' perceptions of the extent to which the business puts customers at the centre of their focus.
Fairness and social responsibility	Customers' expectations as to equal treatment of all and compliance with established regulations.
Financial performance	Customers' perceptions of the business' competitiveness, profitability and growth prospects.
Product and service quality	Customers' perceptions of standards of products and services offered by the business.
Sympathy	Customers' awareness of the business' actions and emotional affinity with the business.
Transparency	Customers' beliefs that the business has nothing to hide and openly communicates its activities and financial situation.
Communication and appearance	Customers' perceptions of the business' communication and appearance of its staff in public.

Source: Walsh and Beatty (2007:133)

3.3.3   PERCEPTIONS OF BRAND IMAGE

Brand image can be defined as the emotional perceptions customers have of a brand's products or services (Cretu & Brodie 2007:232). According to Kayaman and Arasli (2007:97), brand image relates to the associations customers hold about the brand after interacting with it. Similarly, Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAllister and

Srivasta (2006:126) define brand image as the perception and preference of the different associations that the brand inspires in the customers' minds. According to Martenson (2007:546), the corporate image is the set of perceptions, inferences and beliefs that customers associate with the brand. This definition is consistent with Hu *et al.* (2009:116) who state that brand image is the global impressions, associations, beliefs and attitudes that the brand inspires on the customers' minds.

Ghodeswar (2008:5) defines brand image as the perceptions and associations on the brand that customers hold in their minds. In the same way, Madhavaram Badrinarayanan and McDonald (2005:74) define brand image as the associations that customers hold in mind about the brand. In addition, they suggest that a positive brand image can stem from an effective communication around the brand (Madhavaram *et al.* 2005:70). Similarly, Kim, Jin-Sun and Kim (2008:250) make a link between a positive brand image and a multichannel communication from the brand. Stern (2006:220) presents brand image as a business-directed communication that delivers the information the business wants the stakeholders to know about it. On the basis of the definitions above, it can be stated that the concept of brand image is rather subjective as it is linked to each individual's approach and to how well they grasp the business' communication.

Another set of definitions poses the experience with the brand as the force that forges the perception of brand image. According to Flavian *et al.* (2004:367), brand image is the result of interplay of experiences, impressions, emotions that people have about the brand. Lai, Griffin and Babin (2009:982) furthermore add that brand image results from past consumption experiences. In addition, Hu *et al.* (2009:116) closely relate brand image to the service experience, as for them brand image stems from the technical attributes (service experience) and the functional attributes (how the service is delivered). Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009:314) found a link between brand image and the consumption experience and stated that customers do not consume a product for its utility, but mostly because of the brand's image, which is represented by its symbolic meaning to them. Furthermore, it is noted that the image does not represent the product but, at the contrary, the product represents the image, and customers become illusion customers as they buy the image and not the product (Veloutsou & Moutinho 2009:314).

As individuals can have their own perceptions of brand image, Burmann *et al.* (2009:396) highlighted how difficult it is for managers to control a business' brand's image. Control is difficult because brand image is a construct of acceptance, which is a result of the interpretation of the brand's signals. Furthermore, customers' perceptions are influenced by the extent to which the brand's image functional and emotional signs can satisfy their needs (Burmann *et al.* 2009:391). However, Ataman and Ülegin (2003:238) list three stages in a brand life cycle that entail different perceptions at each stage. In the proprietary stage, the brand is perceived as unique. In the second stage, which is competitive stage, the brand is perceived according to its functional characteristics. In the maturity stage, which is the last stage, the brand is perceived as the image that its symbolic values reflect. Moreover, according to Batra and Homer (2004:318), improving brand image implies going beyond the mere brand perceived quality by developing intangible attributes of the brand such as prestige. It appears that brand image does not only result from what the brand inspires in the customers' minds or from their experience of the brand, but also from its uniqueness, its functional characteristics and the symbolic values that it conveys.

According to Kim and Hyun (2011:425), brand image plays a more important role than the product image on brand loyalty. This implies that a product is more likely to get the customers' acceptance if its brand carries a positive image. Furthermore, they add that brand image has a direct influence on customer value and an indirect influence on customer loyalty (Kim & Hyun 2011:428). A positive brand image increases customer attraction, customer satisfaction, and positive word of mouth. Besides, it may inspire high product quality and ensure a good product performance (Kim & Hyun 2011:429). Brand image, just as brand reputation, appears as an important intangible asset to a business.

A strong brand image not only reinforces brand awareness amongst customers, but also toughens the relationship between the customers and the brand. Ghodeswar (2008:8) states that an effective brand image should establish a relationship between the brand and its customers. In addition, a positive brand image gives the upper hand to the brand when it comes to negotiating (Herdlicka *et al.* 2008:4). A big challenge in

managing a brand image is to match the brand to all the stakeholders' groups' needs (Herdlicka *et al.* 2008:9).

3.4   CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The importance of customer experience and the growth in the body of knowledge has led to the development of customer experience management (CEM). CEM focuses on how experiences affect customers' behaviours and on the business' execution and efficiency in matching customers' needs (Kamaladevi 2010:39). In addition, managing the customer experience can lead businesses to build profitable customer relationships (Kamaladevi 2010:38), as it is stated that customer relationships rely on customers experiences (Ha 2004:331). Customer experience should lead to a win-win situation for the brand and its customers. In other words, it should add value to both the customer and the brand (Gentile *et al.* 2007:395). It is important to understand the concept of customer experience to enable a better management of the customer experience.

Customer experience corresponds to customers' perceptions and sensations that stem from the interaction with the brand (Oracle 2012:3). The business environment is shaped in such a way that businesses are not just focusing on offering a product experience. Instead, businesses strive to offer a total consumption experience encompassing the product itself and all the tangible and intangible factors that come in before, during and after the consumption (Jiang & Rosenbloom 2005:153). In addition, as stated by Verhoef *et al.* (2009:32), the customer experience entails the total experience, which may involve a multichannel interaction during the search, the purchase, but also the consumption and the after-sale experience. Boulding, Staelin, Ehret and Jonhston (2005:156) furthermore argue that customers are more attracted in a total experience than just the experience from using the product.

Gentile *et al.* (2007:397) present customer experience as a set of multidimensional interactions between customers and a brand at multiple levels of interaction. Similarly, for Brakus *et al.* (2009:52), customer experience entails the sensations, feelings and behaviours triggered by the brand's logo, communication and environment. This is consistent with the idea that the customer experience does not

only entail the customers' expectations about functional characteristics of the offer, but above all, the emotional characteristics derived from the total experience (Khalifa 2004:658).These definitions present a direct link between the customers' sensations and their interaction with the brand.

A more extended definition presents the customer experience as the customers' response to direct or indirect interaction with a brand, the direct interaction, mainly occurring during the purchase or consumption phase (Verhoef *et al.* 2009:32). Furthermore, Amoudom and Ben-Shabat (2012:2) describe the customer experience as a deciding factor on whether or not to make a purchase.

Furthermore, consumers experience a brand from when they start looking for the products in the store to when they reach the consumption phase (Brakus *et al.* 2009:52). In addition, Payne and Frow (2005:172) also present the customer experience as the interactions between customers and brand through sales force and outlets, telephony, direct marketing, electronic commerce and mobile commerce. Brakus *et al.* (2009:53) state that the customer experience encompasses the shopping and service experience. Shopping and service experience relate to the interaction between the customer and the store's human and physical environment. This leads to a division of the customer experience here in two main dimensions, namely the store physical environment and staff service.

From these definitions, the customer experience can be summarised as the set of sensations derived from interactions with the brand environment. Brakus *et al.* (2009:52) are of the opinion that developing marketing strategies should be based on the understanding of how customers experience the brand while in its environment. It is thus important to scrutinise the store physical environment experience and the staff service separately to obtain a better understanding of the customer experience.

3.4.1   STORE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

According to Payne and Frow (2005:172), interactions between the brand and the customers occur through contact with the sales force and in the brand outlets (retail stores, kiosks). In some industries, such as cosmetics, the customer experience in the point of sale is very important, as it is the main point of interaction between the brand and the customers. The store atmosphere, store ambiance, and the products' layout can have an influence on customers' behaviour (Kamaladevi 2010:49). Wall and Berry (2007:61) advocate that having a decoration theme can add life and uniqueness to the store physical environment, taking example on the rock and roll theme in the Hard Rock Café. In addition, offensive signs displayed in the store can hold customers from spending more time in the store. That idea is supported by Wall and Berry (2007:62), who mention signs such as "break and you've bought it" and their negative influence on the customer experience. Henceforth, the in-store experience is a decisive factor on whether or not there is going to be a sale (Amoudom & Ben-Shabat 2012:2).

When referring to stores congestion, Tendai and Crispen (2009:104) argue that crowded stores tend to inconvenience customers and turn their experience negative. However, many businesses invest in improving the service experience in their outlets, but designing the most appropriate layout order remains a field of uncertainty (Kamaladevi 2010:49). In addition, during the in-store experience, if a product is sold out at consecutive customer visits, it may prompt customers to switch to other brands (Leone *et al.* 2006:136).

The human interaction is another factor of the store physical environment that can have an influence on buying behaviour. Human interaction refers to the interaction with the brand representatives as well as with the other customers. Verhoef *et al.* (2009:36) state that employees are part of the human environment influencing customer experience. Furthermore, customers feel a need to share very good or very negative experiences with other customers (Maden *et al.* 2012:657). In addition, there are different types of customers whose interactions with other customers can have an effect on the in-store experience. Verhoef *et al.* (2009:35) mention disruptive

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customers who can ruin other customers' experience with their nuisance, while helpers can advise fellow customers on their purchases.

From the above it can be stated that customer experience can also be influenced by the experiences of other customers within the store because interactions amongst customers themselves have effects on their respective experiences (Verhoef *et al.* 2009:34).

It is advisable not only to focus on the interactions between brand-customers and employees-customers while analysing the in-store experience, but to also focus on customer-customer interaction. As customers feel the need to share their experiences with other customers to help making good purchase decisions, there are also interactions between customers that may influence their experience (Verhoef *et al.* 2009:34). Besides, designing a layout which would help customers to easily access what they are looking for is an element of a positive experience. Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005:159) note that the emotions involved in the early stages of the interactions serve as reference points for evaluating the consumption experience.

3.4.2   STAFF SERVICE

As businesses strive to create a pleasant store environment, they should also align their staff service to that pleasant store environment, as customer associate a pleasant environment with credible staff service (Wall & Berry 2007:62). Furthermore, the staff's influence on the customer experience is summarised by Wall and Berry (2007:61) as they argue that an unpleasant waitress can spoil a customer's experience in a restaurant, even if the meal was nicely cooked. It is evident that, even if the core service is delivered, it does not guarantee a successful experience as an incompetent staff can ruin the positive experience.

Efficient staff must be able to manage how they attend to customers' needs in the store. This viewpoint is elaborated by Verhoef *et al.* (2009:34) as they state that when too much attention is focused on one customer, it can chase away another customer also needing attention but not being assisted. Nevertheless, customers do not enjoy shopping when they are overwhelmed by employees being more helpful

than needed. Customers prefer supportive staff that assists in their specific need (Tendai & Crispen 2009:104). The general standards expected from store's employees are greeting customers promptly as they enter the store, proposing to assist them and checking if they need further assistance while they are shopping (Wall & Berry 2007:65). In addition, the staff-customer interaction can increase the service quality perception, especially in how staff shows courtesy and their knowledge of the job, but also in how they deal with products returns and exchange (Newman & Patel 2004:774). Therefore, it can be said that providing staff with the appropriate training can help them being more effective and helpful and not being viewed as hampering by customers (Tendai & Crispen 2009:107).

3.4.3 IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Many actions can be taken in order to improve the customer experience. Amoudom and Ben-Shabat (2012) advocate the use of the five following methods:

- Understand the aspects of the in-store experience and its impact on sales to improve the shopping experience through a nice atmosphere and decoration, a targeted communication and more one-to-one talks with customers.
- Know what is more important to the customers to offer them a premium treatment.
- Identify the specific touch-and-feel experiences across geographies by thinking like the customer would and improving the interaction with the salespeople.
- Be consistent in the customer experience offered in all the channels by offering the same standard of customer experience for all the channels.
- Use the best organisational structure and competencies to maximise in-store experience by making use of the following practices: building recognizable corporate missions and values, better knowing customers, balancing product knowledge with service and sales techniques, making use of appealing merchandising techniques, fostering retail culture and skills.

Even though these methods are mostly applicable to the in-store experience, they can also be used in a multichannel approach. In a similar manner, Laine (2010:3)

advocates keeping the store décor attractive and consistent with the brand's standards, optimising inventory levels, improving the products and prices' display, as ways to improve the in-store experience. In addition, Miksen (2014) notes that advertising the store, using mannequins, ensuring staff satisfies the customers and finding the most logical clothing items layout can increase the store attendance. Parson (2011) proposes a specific approach to deal with customers' claims and complaints. The approach consists of basic tips that the firm's staff must apply to turn the unpleasant situation into a positive customer experience, such as warmly greet the customers, actively listen to them, always stay positive and seek a solution that will end up in a win-win solution. Employees should strive to offer standards that will make the customers say "wow" by treating them in a way they will feel recognised and valued, offering standards that are above the industry norm, experiencing the business as a customer would (Parson 2011).

3.5   SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Customers' buying behaviours are often influenced by a number of individual and social considerations. While individual considerations mostly entail demographic information about the customer such as age, gender or level of education, many social considerations can be involved in the buying behaviour, amongst which reference group, culture and subculture are included (Grant & Stephen 2005:452). Essoo and Dibb (2004:692) also state that shopping behaviour is influenced by personal and social motives, which translate a need of attention or acceptance from peers. In addition, He and Mukherjee (2007:446) support that customers have personal and social selves that can be expanded into four main ideas. Firstly, customers actual self-image, which refers to how they see themselves, secondly the social self-image referring to how they think others view them, thirdly the ideal self-image which is how they would like to portray themselves and lastly the ideal social self-image which is how they would like the society to portray them. Customers thus are not only under the permanent influence of their own beliefs, but also under their social environment's influence. This is supported by Jin, Chansarkar and Kondap (2006:285), as they state that people seek for positive evaluations and a favourable image from themselves as well as from their peers. Therefore, social considerations

can be affiliated to the extent to which customers' decisions are influenced by others (Silvera, Lavack & Kropp 2008:25).

Mangleburg, Doney and Bristol (2004:102) state that social considerations shape customers' buying behaviour and the literature has identified numerous social variables that can influence customers' behaviour. Essoo and Dibb (2004:685) consider religion as a social influence on buying behaviour and even note that religious customers are more mature, more innovative, more conservative and traditional. However, the current study will focus only on two social considerations, namely reference groups and culture/subculture. The choice of those two variables is justified by the fact that the South African context offers a wide choice of social diversity with different ethnic groups having their own cultures. The retail stores locations sometimes are adapted to the lifestyles, culture and practises of those specific groups, as there is a need to comply with the group culture to fit in well.

3.5.1   REFERENCE GROUPS

In a study on buying behaviour in fashion clothing, McKinney *et al.* (2004:390) define reference group as a real or virtual group that can significantly influence someone's evaluations, aspirations and beliefs. Furthermore, they place reference groups as part of one's social environment, as they state that influences from reference groups, culture and social class shape the social environment (McKinney *et al.* 2004:393). With the same line of reasoning, Grant and Stephen (2005:452) define reference group as a group of people sharing the same kind of values and beliefs and with whom customers interact on a regular basis.

According to Grant and Stephen (2005:453), reference groups mostly comprise family and friends, and in industries like fashion, the purchasing decision strongly lies in their approval. In addition, they state that family and friends can even be presented as the main source of socialisation for customers. Furthermore, racial origin has been presented as a motivation for dressing in a way to express ethnicity, prestige and status (Park & Sullivan 2009:184). Choo, Chung and Pysarchik (2004:622) note that word of mouth in a reference group can serve as information about a brand for the group members. In addition, Lee and Kacen (2008:266) support the idea that that in

a social group, customers give a strong importance to the group's standards and strive to fit in the group. Furthermore, they present three levels of social influence: firstly the compliance, which consists of posing a positive action under others' influence to seek for reward or avoid punishment. Secondly the identification, referring to accepting others' influence to maintain a relationship with them. Lastly, the internalisation level refers to accept others' influence because it is consistent with the individuals' own beliefs (Lee & Kacen 2008:267). Mangleburg *et al.* (2004:102) state that the reference groups' influence can occur by providing information, setting norms of conduct, enhancing the customer's self-image before, during or after a purchase.

Reference groups can be summarised as a group of people whom customers associate themselves with, and which serve as a ground of comparison in the decision-making process. Reference groups mainly include family and friends, as they are the most regular people customers socialise with.

3.5.2   CULTURE/SUBCULTURE

Human behaviour is shaped by the interplay between physiological and psychological factors on one part, physical environment and culture on the other part (Azevedo *et al.* 2008:409). Alam *et al.* (2011:83) pose culture and subculture as the main issues in studying customers' behaviour. They describe culture as external variables that embody a lifestyle started in previous generations and accustomed by the social environment. Therefore, subculture stems from culture, and they identify four types of subculture, namely nationality, religion, ethnic group and geographical area.

In a similar approach Azevedo *et al.* (2008:409) define culture as a mix of beliefs, knowledge and customs shared by a group of people that will be transferred to future generations. In addition, they present culture as an external element of human behaviour that is a key factor in determining buying behaviour, and add that culture encompasses the subculture and the social class. Furthermore, they assert that every individual is part of a subculture group that stands as a basis of identification and social development, and also divide subculture in four groups, namely, racial

groups, regional groups, religious groups and national groups (Azevedo *et al.* 2008:409).

Seock and Sauls (2008:473) describe a group of customers of approximately the same age as a reference group, as each age group has a specific subculture. Thus, it is normal that members of a same age group share akin shopping and consumption patterns. In a similar approach, Sorce *et al.* (2005:124) pose male and female groups as gender reference groups, each with its own characteristics. More mature males show more likeliness to purchase online even though younger customers have more positive perceptions regarding online shopping (Sorce *et al.* 2005:124).

Radder and Le Roux (2005:586) support the idea that culture and tradition are social influences on South African customers' behaviour. Some consumption patterns are specific to some social groups, whether to identify themselves or differentiate themselves from others. Those groups' members will then align to the groups' characteristics to gain social recognition or prestige (Radder & Le Roux 2005:586). This is consistent with the Mangleburg *et al.* (2004:102) assumption that some customers shop with peers to make sure their purchase reflects the group's image and improves their standing inside the group.

3.6   RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Numerous factors have been presented to influence possibly customers buying behaviour. Delvecchio *et al.* (2006) focused on the sales promotions, while Caruana and Ewing (2010) chose to elaborate on brand quality, for example. However, the current study is bound to three selected variables, namely the brand perceptions, the customer experience and social considerations. The relationships between the above mentioned variables and buying behaviour are discussed in the sections to follow.

3.6.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND QUALITY AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

The customers' brand perception can have an influence on purchase decisions, as changes that occur in brand perceptions can lead to similar changes in buying behaviour (Ataman & Ülegin 2003:241). Among brand perceptions there is brand quality perception, which is of utmost importance when it comes to the purchase decision. Brand perceptions influence buying behaviour, therefore businesses need to make sure customers have positive perceptions about their brand quality. Walsh and Beatty (2007:128) establish a relationship between perceived quality and buying behaviour by stating that businesses with poor standards expose themselves to bad-mouth and are avoided by customers.

In addition, high standards of quality lead to improving businesses revenues. Improving revenues means that positive perceptions have been translated into purchases. As stated by Hu *et al.* (2009:113), high levels of service quality lead to increased profitability through customer retention. Furthermore, customers are willing to pay more for a higher quality and bad service quality increases their likeliness to switch to another brand (Hu *et al.* 2009:113). As some industries have rather standardised products, Cretu and Brodie (2007:238) report that the product quality perception is more relevant when the purchase decision is complex or when the difference with the competition's products is tangible. Considering the above reasoning, the possible influence of brand quality as brand perception measurement, on buying behaviour will be investigated.

3.6.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND REPUTATION AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Various authors have researched the relationship between brand reputation and buying behaviour. According to Walsh and Beatty (2007:128), the perception customers hold about a business' reputation will influence their behaviour towards the brand. Alniacik *et al.* (2011:1178) argue that a strong reputation induces positive results for the business. Those good results are the outcome of customers purchase decisions. Keh and Xie (2009:735) state that highly reputable companies are perceived as more attractive to customers, and often reap good financial results.

According to Cretu and Brodie (2007:234), the perception customers have about the reputation of a brand can have an influence on their purchase decision. Furthermore, they link the consumption experience with brand reputation, by stating that the reputation can influence the consumption experience (Cretu & Brodie 2007:230). Walsh and Beatty (2007:128) note that businesses with poor standards expose themselves to bad-mouth which will depict on their reputation, and are avoided by customers. In summary, a positive brand reputation is a means to ensure good financial results, as it will lead customers to feel confident about consuming products/services from the brand.

According to Hansen, Samuelsen and Silseth (2008:212), brand reputation does not only help in attracting new customers, but also in adding value and retaining the existing customers. Kim and Hyun (2011:431) support that brand reputation has both a direct and an indirect influence on buying behaviour through quality expectations. Indeed, a strong reputation leads customers to nourish high expectations about the brand (Veloutsou & Moutinho 2009:315). Therefore, once customers have an idea of brand reputation, they can relate it to brand quality while making their purchase decision. In addition, since reputation reduces uncertainty, it is an important measure to evaluate a new product (Kim & Hyun 2011:431). While some authors have shown the influence of reputation on buying behaviour, Leone *et al.* (2006:132) show that the influence is reciprocal as they state that the more a brand is repurchased, the more its reputation increases. It is important to substantiate if the same results as Cretu and Brodie (2007) and Leone *et al.* (2006) can apply to the current study within the South African context. Considering the above reasoning, the possible influence of brand perceptions, as measured by brand reputation, on buying behaviour will be investigated.

3.6.3   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND IMAGE AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Brand image is closely related to the image customers have of themselves or how they would like to be seen by others.

When defining brand image, Craig, Dibrell and Davis (2008:354) refer to a set of attributes, attitudes and benefits related to a brand and likely to influence the

purchase decision. Furthermore, Cretu and Brodie (2007:234) argue that brands carrying a positive image are more likely to influence customers' perceptions and even purchase decisions. According to Herdlicka *et al.* (2008:9), the added value of a brand is closely related to matching the brand's image with the customers' needs. The customers' purchase decision is hence related to the extent to which they can relate to the brand image.

According to Esch, Langner, Schmitt and Geus (2006:99) in their customer-based brand equity model, customers' buying behaviours are influenced by brand image. In addition, when a customer buys the brand on a steady basis, its attachment to the brand can turn in positive brand image due to the "mere exposure" effect (Esch *et al.* 2006:103). Customers' behaviour towards a brand depends on whether the brand image matches their lifestyle, self-image and social status (Ataman & Ülegin 2003:238) or the way they would want to be viewed by the society (Ataman & Ülegin 2003:239). Indeed, during the pre-purchase phase, they assess the brand's image and compare it with their self-image. The brand that is more likely to match the customer's self-image has a greater probability of being chosen. (Ataman & Ülegin 2003:240). In terms of brand image and buying behaviour, the most recurring idea is that the more the brand image matches the customers' self-image and social image, the more it influences their purchase decision. Considering the above reasoning, the current study will investigate the possible influence of brand image, as a measurement of brand perceptions, on buying behaviour.

3.6.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Khalifa (2004:658) states that the customer experience does not only entail the customers' expectations about functional characteristics of the offer, but above all, the emotional characteristics derived from the total experience. This is grounded on the results of a 2004 study which attributes only 30% of purchase decisions to the product and service characteristics (Khalifa 2004:658).

Customers feel a need to share their brand experience with other customers in order to either encourage or discourage future purchases. With regard to the store physical

environment, the sale outlet is very important, as it is the main point of interaction between the brand and the customers. This idea is supported by Tendai and Crispen (2009:103) who state that a good store atmosphere can lead even customers that were in a bad mood to spend more than what they intended to. Store atmosphere variables such as the music can emotionally influence customers and trigger purchase decisions (Tendai & Crispen 2009:104). Besides, the store congestion can also influence customers' buying behaviour, as some customers can delay their shopping, or reduce it to enter express check out queues just to avoid congruity and save time (Tendai & Crispen 2009:104).

In addition, the easier customers can find their way in the store and access the products they need or want, the more likely it is that a purchase transaction will take place (Kamaladevi 2010:49). Different strategies can be used to make the store layout more effective. For instance, some products can be displayed next to other products to which they are complementary. Another way can be to display the best-sellers at the back to lead customers to walk passed other products that can induce purchases before getting to the actual products they are looking for (Tendai & Crispen 2009:104).

Wall and Berry (2007:61) argue that customers' satisfaction and switching behaviours are strongly influenced by the way they evaluate the service provided by the staff. It means that poor staff service standards lead customer to switch to brand that can meet their expected standards. More importantly, the latest stage of the experience may have a higher influence, as supported by Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005:159), who state that the repurchase intention becomes clearer towards the end of the purchase.

Provided the above reasoning, the current study will investigate the possible influence of customer experience, as measured by store physical environment and staff service, on buying behaviour.

3.6.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Self-image and social factors such as the need to impress others can influence buying behaviours, as noted by Barber, Almanza and Donovan (2006:221). Choo *et al.* (2004:622) also state that information exchanged amongst members of social groups can influence other members' purchase decisions. This is supported by Radder and Le Roux (2005:586) as they state that the way customers behave towards a brand can be dictated by the habit or familiarity with the brand. The habit and familiarity however can stem from the exposure from the interaction with family or reference group members. In addition, some reference groups' behaviours follow certain codes, as for religion-based groups. Essoo and Dibb (2004:705) furthermore state that some religious taboos can direct certain clothing items' purchases.

Grant and Stephen (2005:453) argue that customers' behaviours towards a brand play a role in the purchase decision. That behaviour is oriented by factors such as education, economic environment, human interaction and social background. More explicitly, besides the brand name, family and peers' approval are the main drivers of purchases in industries such as fashion (Grant & Stephen 2005:450). Customers are willing to pay premium prices for a product that will reap their peers' approval and acceptance (Grant & Stephen 2005:462). Similarly, Mangleburg *et al.* 2004:102) argue that peers' approval leads customers to make purchases more in line with their reference groups' standards. In addition, factors that enhance social prestige and self-esteem are found to positively influence customers' buying behaviour (Yani-de-Soriano & Foxall 2006:413).

He and Mukherjee (2007:454) state that customers opt for a brand for which the image matches their social self-image. Customers will therefore choose a brand that is consistent with the image they think others have of them. Furthermore, in some cultures, such as the Chinese culture where social harmony is advertised, the social acceptance may influence customers buying behaviour (He & Mukherjee 2007:453). At different age stages of their lives, customers perceive different social influences as important. At the early stage of the adolescence, peer pressure from other teenagers constitutes the main social influence on purchasing decision (Grant & Stephen

2005:455). According to Lee and Kacen (2008:266), in collectivist cultures, buying behaviours are strongly influenced by the social environment. This means that in cultures where social accord is important, purchase decisions rely on how the society will perceive the purchase.

McKinney *et al.* (2004:390) present reference groups as a driver of buying behaviour. Similarly, social environment parameters such as culture and family can also have an influence on the buying behaviour (McKinney *et al.* 2004:389). The model of McKinney *et al.* (2004:389) which illustrates factors influencing buying behaviour in the clothing industry is presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1:   Buying behaviour as influenced by social factors
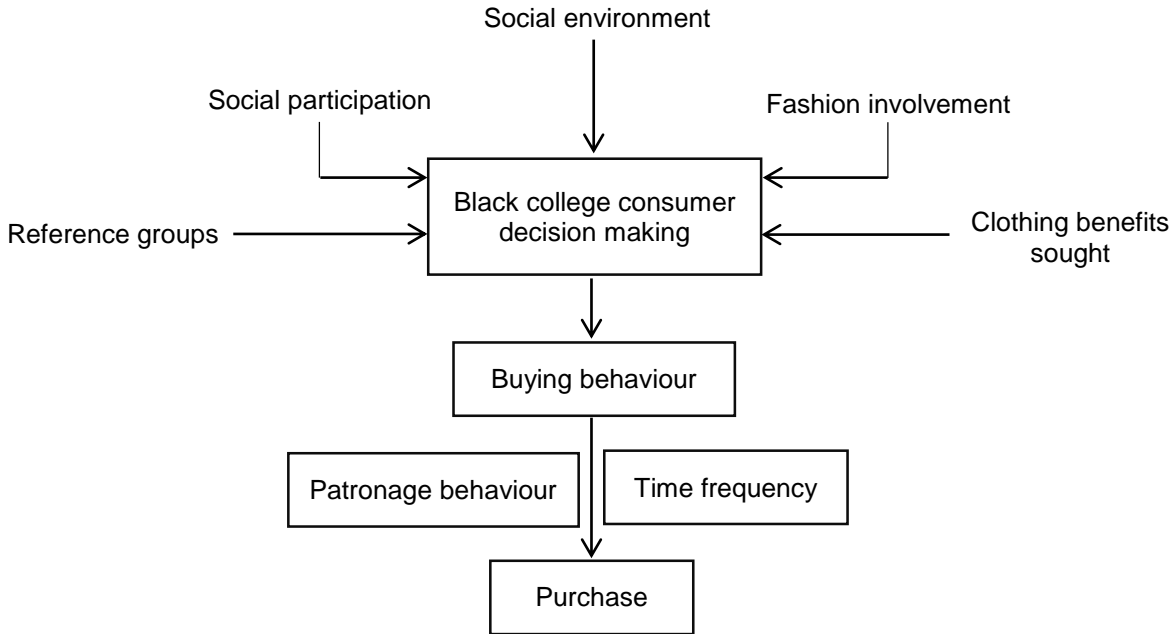
Source: McKinney *et al.* (2004:389)

According to Iyengar, Han and Gupta (2009:4), buying behaviour is shaped by social influences such as bandwagon effect, peer pressure, neighbourhood influence, conformity and contagion. There is a reciprocal effect between buying behaviour and social environment. As social environment can shape the buying behaviour, the buying behaviour can also signal customers' social identity (Iyengar *et al.* 2009:7).

Oliveria-Castro , Foxall and Schrezenmaier (2005:314) state that buying behaviour is a response to socio-economic and cultural influences, as the consumption of certain

products or brands can offer customers a specific status in the social scale. This can lead to conclude that the social influences on buying behaviour revolve around the idea that customers seek for their social environment approval or respect while they have to choose a brand. The social environment mostly refers to the family and the peers (which can be from the same cultural group, the same age group or the same social class). Therefore, the study will investigate the possible influence of social considerations, as measured by reference groups and culture/sub-culture, on buying behaviour.

3.7   PROPOSED HYPOTHESISED MODEL

Based on the literature presented in this chapter and in the previous chapter, the following hypothesised model presented in Figure 3.2 is proposed.

Figure 3.2:   Hypothesised model of selected variables influencing buying behaviour

Independent variables   **Dependent variable**
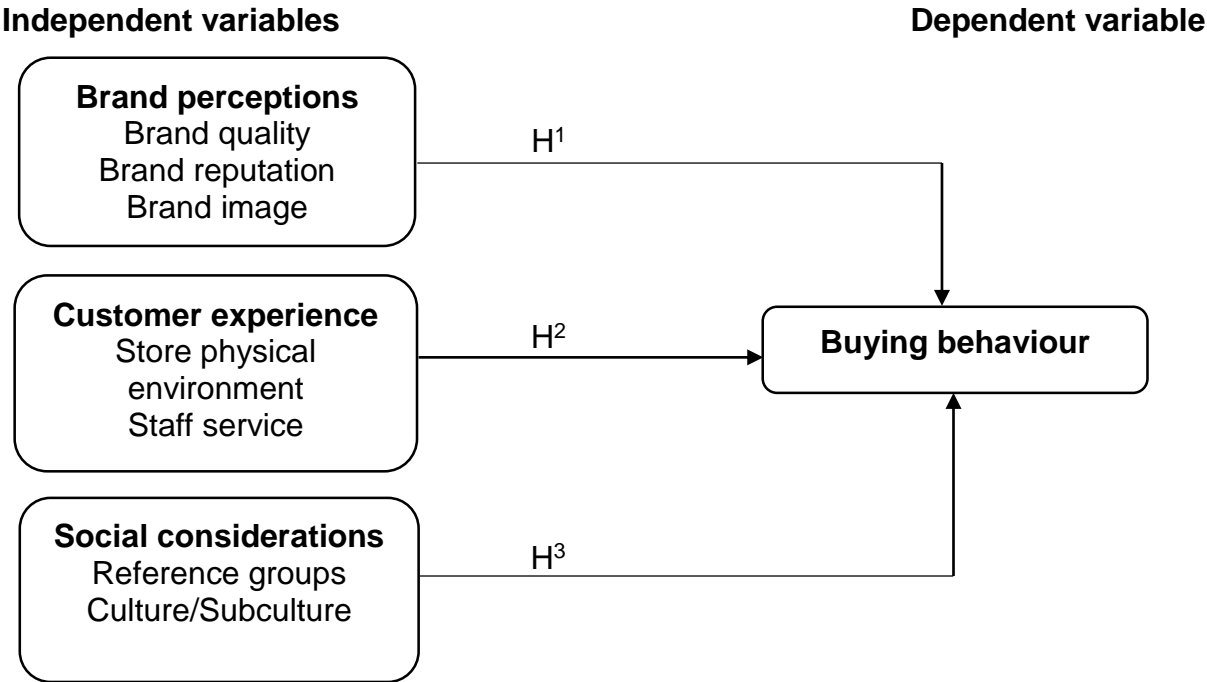
Source: Researcher's own construct

3.8   SUMMARY

In this chapter, a literature overview was provided on the variables presented in the hypothesised model. Firstly, the dependent variable, buying behaviour, was discussed. Buying behaviour was defined as a process (involving a post-purchase assessment) during which customers search, evaluate, process the information linked to a purchase, and decide whether or not to make the purchase. After defining buying behaviour and presenting the importance of grasping customers buying behaviours, the selected independent variables and their measuring factors were presented.

With regards to the independent variables, the brand perceptions variable (as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image), the customer experience (as measured by store physical environment and staff service), and social considerations (as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture) were first defined. Brand perceptions were presented as the difference between the customers' expectations towards a brand and the actual outcomes provided by the brand. Brand perceptions were identified as encompassing brand quality perception, Brand reputation and brand image. Furthermore, customer experience, measured by store physical environment and staff service, was defined as the set of emotions and sensations created by the store physical environment and interaction between the customer and the store's staff. Thereafter, social considerations, as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture, were defined as the social environment influences on buying behaviour.

After defining the concepts, a section was provided to highlight the relationships between the dependent variable buying behaviour and the independent variables brand perceptions (as measured by brand quality, brand reputation and brand image), the customer experience (as measured by store physical environment and staff service), and lastly the social considerations (as measured by reference groups and culture/subculture

It was stated that customers choose brands for which the image matches the customers' own self-image. Furthermore, a positive brand reputation reduces

uncertainty in the customer mind about a new product, and customers tend to buy brands that will give them a better status in their communities. In addition, as the store environment is likely to convince a customer whether or not to make a purchase. In the following chapter, the research methodology used for this study is presented.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter of this study, an introduction and background to the study were presented. Chapter Two was a literature overview of the retail industry and its trends, with an emphasis on the South African clothing retail industry. Chapter Three highlighted some variables that may have an influence on buying behaviour, more specifically the brand perceptions, the store physical environment and social considerations.

From Chapter Three, a theoretical model was suggested to analyse the relationship between brand perceptions, store physical environment, social considerations and buying behaviour. The current chapter will present the methodology used while conducting the research and the tools used to draw conclusions on the relationships between the above mentioned variables.

Collis and Hussey (2003:55) define research methodology as the approach used that underpins the research process and governs the methods to be used. This stated, the purpose of the current chapter is to present and explain the different techniques and procedures undertaken to complete this study. The focus will hence be on defining and describing the main concepts that outline the research methodology, namely the different research paradigms, the data collection, the sampling method, the research instrument and the assessment of the research instrument through data analysis.

4.2   RESEARCH PARADIGM

Business research follows one of two research paradigms, namely the phenomenological or qualitative research and the positivistic or quantitative research (Collis & Hussey 2003:47). The qualitative research paradigm is more common in

anthropology studies, whereas the quantitative research paradigm is used mostly in economic studies (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler 2008:192).

4.2.1   QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Qualitative research paradigm (qualitative research) is an exploratory-oriented type of research in which the role of literature review is reduced, as the information collected from the participants are more meaningful, although quite broad (Creswell 2005:45). In addition, it implies listening to the participants' views, meeting them at their workplace or home for a better data collection (Creswell 2005:43). According to Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2011:138), the qualitative research has four main fields of orientation, namely phenomenology based on human experiences, ethnography which involves embracing a culture, grounded theory which is an inductive investigation and case studies. In the same way, O'Leary (2010:105) states that qualitative research uses ethnomethodology which refers to studying individuals' daily routine, phenomenology, ethnography, is inductive, idiographic, intuitive and based on interviewing small scales, observation and document analysis. Reporting on qualitative research entails taking a reflexive approach, using a flexible structure and evaluative criteria (Creswell 2005:49).

Although there is a debate over the credibility of qualitative research methods, there are ways of ensuring more credibility to a qualitative study. Methods need to be approached with consistency, the results must have a broad applicability and the research processes must be verified. In order to reach such standards of credibility, O'Leary (2010:114) advocates the use of the following methods:

- Prolonged engagement whereby they are immersed in the culture to understand that culture better.
- Persistent observation.
- Broad representation.
- Peer review to double check the research processes.

To process data in a more rigorous way, researchers use triangulation, member checking or full explication. Triangulation consists of using more than one source to

confirm the authenticity of each source. Member checking consists of verifying that researchers' interpretations match with the insiders' interpretations, and lastly full explication method consists of expanding as much as possible on the methodological details (O'Leary 2010:115). To summarise, qualitative research can be presented as a research method that is grounded on a large amount of data collected from interviews between the researcher and the participants. As the method is essentially exploratory, the results obtained can be biased and subjective, and the role of literature review is minor.

4.2.2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The quantitative research paradigm (quantitative research) is also known as the quantitative, objectivistic, scientific, experimental or traditionalist research paradigm (Collis & Hussey 2003: 53) and uses methods of enquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data using measuring instruments that produce statistical data (Collis & Hussey 2003:13). Kumar (2011:103) presents some characteristics of quantitative research and states that quantitative studies are specific, well organised, can be explicitly defined and recognised, and have their reliability and validity tested. On the other hand, (Kumar 2011:103) presents quantitative research as a method that uses questions that are narrowed down to a specific topic, which helps in data collection and data analysis through statistical methods and leads to a less biased and more objective analysis.

Quantitative research data are represented through numbers and analysed by making use of statistical methods. Therefore quantitative research data analysis is about describing trends, comparing or relating variables (O'Leary 2010:105). In a different approach, O'Leary (2010:105) states that quantitative research uses scientific methods through surveys or random control trials, is hypothesis driven, and must have reliable, valid and reproducible measuring instruments. Locke, Silverman and Spirduso (2010:94) list three categories of quantitative research, namely the descriptive, the correlational and the quasi-experimental/experimental research. While the descriptive research basically describes a group on a specific situation, the correlational research describes relationships between variables. The quasi-

experimental/experimental on the other hand is used to test differences between independent variables (Locke *et al.* 2010:95).

In business research, quantitative research is generally used to measure customers' behaviours or attitudes (Cooper & Schindler 2011:160). Similarly, Creswell (2005:45) states that quantitative research can be used to describe a tendency and how that tendency varies by explaining the relationship between the variables and how one variable affects another. Interpreting quantitative data consists of comparing results with previous research results, and reporting on quantitative data entails the use of a standard and fixed structure (Creswell 2005:49).

Kumar (2011:105) presents three different perspectives for conducting quantitative research with each perspective having subgroups. The first quantitative research perspective is based on the number or contacts with the examined population, the second perspective is based on the reference period of the study, and the third perspective based on the nature of the investigation. Regarding the approaches based on the number of contacts with the population, the first subgroup is cross-sectional studies, which is useful for obtaining the overall picture in terms of prevalence of a phenomenon or attitude in a population. Cross-sectional studies entail only one contact with the population and are cost effective. However, if there is a variation in the phenomenon studied, this approach is not suitable (Kumar 2011:107). The second subgroup is the before-and-after study approach, which is a pre-test and post-test approach to measure the change to compare an initial and a given situation (Kumar 2011:107). The third subgroup is the longitudinal study, which helps in determining the pattern of change in an evolving situation. It involves repeated contacts at regular intervals with the population, usually over a long period (Kumar 2011:110). With regards to studies based on the reference period, retrospective studies examine a phenomenon or situation that occurred in the past, prospective studies assess the likeliness of a situation to happen, and the retrospective-prospective studies focus on past trends and the outcome they might have in the future (Kumar 2011:111).

4.2.3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ADOPTED IN THIS STUDY

Qualitative research focuses on having an in-depth understanding or building theories in a field of research based on narrative type of information, while the quantitative research mostly focuses on describing, predicting and testing theories (Cooper & Schindler 2011:163). This idea is supported by Blumberg *et al.* (2008:192) as they state that qualitative research is often used to explore new fields of research and that quantitative research is used later to test the propositions formulated in the qualitative study.

Qualitative research opposes to a positivist approach and focuses on validating realities through a constructivism approach, using a smaller sample than the quantitative approach. The shortfalls of the qualitative research are the higher subjectivity and bias compared to quantitative research. On the other hand, quantitative research is presented as a positivist and objective approach relying on hypotheses, variables and statistics but without much depth in the research (O'Leary 2010:105).

Despite the differences between the various paradigms, qualitative and quantitative research can be complementary. While qualitative research is more suitable for exploring variation and diversity in a social group, quantitative research was more appropriate to find out the extent of those variation and diversity (Kumar 2011:104). Table 4.1 summarises the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Table 4.1:   Qualitative versus quantitative research

	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH
Focus of the research	• Understand and interpret	• Describe • Explain • Predict
Researcher involvement	• High, researcher is participant or catalyst	• Limited • Controlled to prevent bias
Research purpose	• In-depth understanding • Theory building	• Describe or predict • Build and test theory
Sample size	• Small	• Large
Research design	• May evolve or adjust during the study • No consistency expected • Use of multiple methods simultaneously or sequentially	• Determined beforehand • Use of single or mixed methods • Consistency is critical
Data analysis	• Human analysis following computer or human coding • Researcher has to see the contextual framework of the phenomenon being measured • Always on-going during the process	• Computerised analysis through statistical and mathematical methods • Analysis may be on-going during the project • Maintains clear distinction between facts and judgments
Insights and meanings	• Researcher's participation allows insights to form and be tested during the process	• Entry with limited ability to interview participants
Feedback turnaround	• Smaller sample makes data collection faster for shorter possible turnaround • Insights are developed during the study, shortening data analysis	• Larger sample lengthen data collection, Internet shortening turnaround but inappropriate for some studies • Longer research process, insights follow data collection

Source: Cooper and Schindler (2008:165)

Given the nature of the problem definition in this study, the quantitative approach seems most appropriate to gauge the influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on buying behaviour, as the research will test the relationships between brand quality and buying behaviour, between customer experience and buying behaviour, and lastly between social considerations and buying behaviour. The data was collected by the means of a self-administered questionnaire, which is widely used in quantitative research. In addition, the large number of respondents needed to carry out this study also supports the choice of using a quantitative approach.

4.3   DATA COLLECTION

There are two main approaches for data collection, namely the secondary data collection through secondary sources such as official documents, reports, journals, previous research publications, and the primary data collection through primary sources such as observation, interviews and questionnaires (Kumar 2011:139). As the secondary data collection for this study was done in the previous chapters, the primary data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. Therefore it is important to discuss the population and sample, the sampling technique used to select the respondents for this study as well as the self-administered questionnaire (measuring instrument) that was used as research instrument in this section.

In quantitative research, the data collection process involves choosing a population and then selecting a sample usually on a random basis in order to select representative individuals from the global population to whom the study is applicable. Once a representative sample is drawn from the population, the research instrument is usually administered either by contact interviews or electronically. Approaching the participants may require obtaining permissions and addressing ethics concerns depending on the type of research that is to be undertaken.

4.3.1   POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In order to complete a research, there is a need to select individuals or entities that will be representative of the overall group on which the research is conducted. The selection of individuals or entities is referred to as population selection. Burke and Christensen (2010:256) define the population as the homogeneous group comprising all the individuals that the researcher intends to survey. Similarly, Blumberg *et al.* (2008:192) refer to the population as the total assortment of individuals on which the measurement instrument is to be tested on. For the purpose of this study, the population was all the clothing retail customers. However, the sample, which was drawn from the population, is narrowed to customers of clothing retail stores in the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

The sample is referred to as a sub-set of the whole population that is the focus of the survey (Walonick 2003:5). The sample ought to be valid, as it must well represent the characteristics of the population it aims to represent, which implies accuracy and precision (Blumberg *et al.* 2008:192). Accuracy refers to the extent to which the sample lacks bias, because some characteristics can sometimes be either overestimated or underestimated in a sample. Drawing the sample from the population entails accuracy in order to avoid such bias (Blumberg *et al.* 2008:192). Creswell (2005:145) provides a more extended definition advocating the need to have a representative sample, which is described as a sample drawn from the population and presents typical characteristics of the global population under study. The more representative the sample, the more applicable the results are to the population as a whole. Sampling the population infers taking in consideration the following questions: who is the relevant population? Who is the sample of the study? What constitutes a significant sample size? What is the appropriate sampling method? How much will it cost?

With regards to the sample size, there are various ways of determining the suitable size, such as formulas, published tables, using sample sizes from similar studies, and obtaining a statistician's assistance (Israel 2009). Smith (2013) argues that the following three factors are needed to calculate the sample size: the margin error, the confidence level and the standard of deviation. The margin of error or confidence interval, usually ± 5%, refers to determine an interval of acceptable error for the sample, as no sample can be perfect. The confidence level, usually 90%, 95% or 99%, refers to the researcher's confidence in the accuracy of the sample. The standard of deviation is the variance expected in the responses, and the default value of 0.5 is commonly used (Smith 2013). The confidence level is represented by the "Z score" which is a constant value determined as *90% Z score= 1.645, 95% Z score= 1.96, 99% Z score= 2.326.* For a different confidence level, the equivalent Z score can be found using a Z score table (Smith 2013).

In a similar way, O'Leary (2010:164) advocates the use of the following formula:

$$N = [(K \times S0 / E]^2$$

where   K = desired confidence level

           S = sample standard deviation

           E = required level of precision

For this study, the sample size, consisting of a minimum of 200 respondents was determined as follows. This study has eight variables in total including the sub-variables of the dependent variables, and a minimum of five items per variable was required. A minimum of five respondents per items was also required, and the multiplication of the eight variables, with the five items per variables and five respondents per items, gave the results of 200 respondents. This required number of respondents was chose on the ground of ratio observations by Swanson and Holton (2005:129), Sprenkle and Piercy (2005:396) and Nemati and Barko (2004:197).

4.3.2   SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

According to Kumar (2011:192), sampling is the process of selecting a small portion or sample of a bigger group or population. This sample is used for describing or predicting the attitudes of the population as a whole towards a given situation. In other words, sampling refers to the process of selecting the elements of the population that was included in the research. The process is always strategic and can even be mathematical (O'Leary 2010:162). Sampling in quantitative research aims at selecting a representative and unbiased group of respondents from the studied population and drawing inferences about that population (Kumar 2011:192). A sample must present three main characteristics: firstly, it must be broad enough to be representative of the population; secondly, it must be large enough to include all the population's main characteristics, and lastly it must be manageable (O'Leary (2010:162).

Two main issues arise when it comes to sample selection, namely the size of the sample and the extent of variation inside the sampling population. In general, the larger the sample, the more accurate the results; the higher the variation the higher the uncertainty (Kumar 2011:197). In order to address the above-mentioned issues,

there is a variety of sampling techniques that forms part of either probability sampling methods or non-probability sampling methods.

4.3.2.1 Probability sampling

The probability sampling method is based on the random selection, where random refers to the assurance for each element of the population to get a chance of selection (Blumberg *et al.* 2008:235). Sample randomisation aims at avoiding bias and ensures representativeness of the sample (Kumar 2011:192). In probability sampling, the researcher strives to make the sample as representative as possible by using of rigorous sampling methods (Creswell 2005:146). The sampling method includes simple random sampling, complex random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling.

In simple sampling, the selection is made in a way that gives any individual an equal probability of being selected. The procedure consists of assigning a number to each individual then use a random numbers table to select the individuals of the sample. The shortfall of this technique is that the equal distribution is not always possible (Creswell 2005:147).

With regards to the systematic sampling, some steps are to be followed for effective systematic sampling. The first step is to identify the total number of elements in the population. The second step is to identify the sampling ratio k by dividing the total population size by the size of the desired sample. The third step is to identify the random start of an element in a range of 1 to k. The fourth and final step is to draw a sample by choosing every k^{th} entry that will give the skip pattern to apply to the sample (Blumberg *et al.* 2008:243).

Stratified sampling is used when there is inequality reflected on some characteristics of the sample. According to O'Leary (2010:167), the stratified sampling entails dividing the population into subgroups while selecting a random sample within each subgroup. Therefore, the probability of the inclusion of all the meaningful subgroups of the population can be increased.

Cluster sampling consists of breaking down the sample selection in two or more different clusters to simplify the process. Cluster sampling is usually used when the population is too large or difficult to identify (Creswell 2005:148). A school can, for example, be regarded as a cluster within a population. The process will consist of using random sampling to select the geographic regions across the whole population, then randomly selecting a number of schools within those regions before narrowing down to the final sample by randomly selecting pupils from the selected schools (O'Leary 2010:168).

4.3.2.2 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is a subjective sampling method as it does not include each element of the population (Cooper & Schindler 2011:369). A common reason why some researchers opt for non-probability sampling is that it is cost and time effective (Cooper & Schindler 2011:384). The sample selection is made on the basis of availability and convenience, but must still represent some characteristics of the population under study (Creswell 2005:149).

O'Leary (2010:168) notes that some researchers do not give much credit to non-probability sampling methods because their representativeness cannot be statistically assessed. However, if the researcher keeps the goal of representativeness in mind and uses strategies to match the sample with the population's characteristics, it will give more credibility to the sample selection (O'Leary 2010:168).

Kumar (2011:206) mentions five types of non-probability sampling, namely quota sampling, accidental sampling, purposive sampling, expert sampling and snowball sampling. O'Leary (2010:169) contests the use of the word "convenience" sampling because convenience must not be presented as a criterion for sample selection. The three non-probability sampling techniques identified by O'Leary (2010:169) are handpicked sampling, snowball sampling and volunteer sampling.

Quota sampling is described as the selection of any individual matching the population's characteristics in a convenient location for the researcher. The selection

process ends when the researcher reaches the quota needed for the study (Kumar 2011:206).

The accidental sampling answers to the same criteria as the quota sampling, but differs in the fact that in quota sampling the respondents selected present obvious and visible characteristics whereas in accidental sampling they do not (Kumar 2011:207).

In purposive sampling, also called judgmental sampling, the researcher approaches respondents who in their opinion are likely to possess and share the required information (Kumar 2011:207). In expert sampling the respondents selected are known as experts in that field of research (Kumar 2011:207).

Handpicked sampling consists of making the selection with a specific purpose in mind, usually on extreme or deviant cases. The aim is to enhance learning by exploring the limits of a phenomenon. Volunteer sampling entails selecting a sample on a voluntary basis. (O'Leary 2010:170).

In convenience sampling, participants are chosen because they are available and willing to take part to the study. The participants can bring some valuable input by answering the researcher's questions, but the extent to which the sample is representative when using convenience sampling can be questionable (Creswell 2005:149).

In snowball sampling, participants are asked to identify other participants that can participate in the research (Creswell 2005:149). The sample is built through referrals. Once a respondent is identified, the respondent is asked to recommend other possible respondents who meet the criteria to participate in the study. Snowball sampling is hence suitable for a population that is hard to reach or to identify (O'Leary 2010:170). If this method can ensure a large number of participants, it also presents the shortfall of a questionable representativeness (Creswell 2005:149). The snowball sampling hence consists of using networks by getting respondents on other respondents' recommendations until the saturation point is reached.

To summarise, there are two main groups of sampling techniques, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. While probability sampling uses scientific and statistical techniques to draw the sample from the population, non-probability sampling is more of an arbitrary way of selecting the sample, which is based on researchers' subjectivity. The convenience, cost and time effectiveness pertaining to non-probability sampling techniques make them more widespread than probability techniques, despite the debate around the credibility of non-probability sampling techniques. However, whether it is a probability or a non-probability sampling technique that is used for a study, the main concern remains the same for the sample, namely the representativeness of the population's main characteristics.

As no sampling frame was available and convenience sampling is cost and time effective, useful in gaining ideas on a topic, and allows to choose whomever the researcher finds available to complete the questionnaire (Cooper & Schindler 2011:385), non-probability convenience sampling was used in this study.

The respondents were approached in clothing retail stores and parking lots in the main shopping malls in Nelson Mandela Metropole. However, respondents willing to complete the questionnaire outside the shopping environment were taken into account. Prior to the encounter with the customers, ethics clearance was applied for from the relevant Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) research ethics committee. The ethics committee's approval reference number was included in the cover letter of the questionnaire for customers. Verbal consent from the management of the malls and different outlets was obtained to approach customers on their premises.

4.4   THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Different data collection methods can be used to conduct research, such as interviews, focus groups or questionnaires. As self-administered questionnaires present the advantages of confidentiality and anonymity, a wider geographic coverage, and the possibility for the respondents to answer in their own time (O'Leary 2010:182), the research instrument to be used in this research was a self-

administered questionnaire. In addition, questionnaires are the most used data collection instrument in business research (Cooper & Schindler 2011:319).

However, since respondents can answer in their own time, it does not give much opportunity for clarification if there is a question that is unclear. Moreover, the response rate may also be low because the respondents can take the questionnaires but never return them (O'Leary 2010:182). In addition, the questionnaire can only be applicable to people who can read and write, which can be prejudicial for some studies. Furthermore, the response to a question can result from the influence from responses to previous questions or from other respondents, as they can consult each other (Kumar 2011:149).

4.4.1   QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

Questionnaire statements should be inoffensive, unbiased and unambiguous. In addition, statements should be in a very simple and easily understandable language (O'Leary 2010:189). The questions' structure and wording must be relevant, appropriate and free from any sort of confusion (Kumar 2011:151). Similarly, Kumar (2011:145) highlights the importance of posing statements in a clear and easily understandable way, with a pleasant and flowing layout. In addition, the questionnaire layout should be interactive to make respondents feel like the researcher is in front of them while they are completing it (Kumar 2011:145).

However, negative ways of asking questions should be avoided. Double negatives statements such as "You are not satisfied with your employer" can lead to answers such as "Disagree" which can cause confusion. In the same way, double-barreled statements can give biased answers as the respondent can agree with one part of the statement and disagree with the other part, but will only have one answer to give that was applied to both parts of the statement. Furthermore, statements should not be formulated in such a way that there is a likelihood that a high percentage of respondents agree with the statement because the statement sounded reasonable. Similarly, leading questions can bias the study because intentionally or not, the researcher can lead respondents to a specific answer (O'Leary 2010:189).

Apart from the type of statements, another important element of the questionnaire is the type of response expected from the respondent. There are open-ended responses, where the respondents are invited to answer using their own words to provide their opinion or give some information. The data can be either rich or irrelevant, but was difficult to code and analyse.

There are also closed-ended responses where the responses are already predetermined and the respondents need to choose from a range. Such responses are easy to code and statistically analyse. Kumar (2011:151) identifies two types of questions, namely open-ended questions and closed-ended questions. In open-ended questions, the respondents use their own words to answer the questions, as no options to formulate their responses are provided. Open-ended questions present the advantages of allowing respondents to express themselves freely and provide in-depth information. However, these questions are difficult to code for data analysis.

Regarding closed-ended questions, respondents choose the answers that best describe their opinion from a list of responses provided in the questionnaire. For some closed-ended questions, there is an option "Other, please specify" for questions that do not list all the possible answers. Closed-ended questions lack depth and variety in terms of information obtained. Furthermore, these questions present a greater risk of bias because the ready-made list of answers does reflect the researcher's mind more than the respondent's. However, closed-ended questions ensure the researcher to obtain information on what is really needed or required (Kumar 2011:154).

The most common closed-ended responses are "Yes/No" responses where the respondents must simply choose yes or no, and "Fill the blank" responses where there is a blank space allowed for filling with a word or a number. There are also "Choose from the list" responses where a list is provided. Often the "Other" option where the respondent specify an alternative response that is not listed is provided. "Ordering options" where the respondents are asked to rank the proposed responses in order of preference are also used. Another question style is the "Interval response scale" that can be five-point scales or seven-point scales ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree" (O'Leary 2010:192).

4.4.2   ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

There are different approaches to administer a questionnaire, and the most commonly used are the mailed questionnaire, the collective administration, and the administration in a public place. According to Sekaran (2003:236), questionnaires can be administered in three different ways, namely, personally, mailed to the respondents or administered electronically.

The mailed questionnaire implies having the respondents' addresses, which can be a shortfall. The response rate of this approach is relatively low (Kumar 2011:147). However, the low response rate can be overcome by attaching stamped envelopes to the questionnaire, sending follow up letters, or notifying respondents in advance about the completion of the questionnaire (Sekaran 2003:237). In addition, Sekaran (2003:237) states that mailed questionnaires can allow a larger geographic coverage. The collective administration consists of gathering the respondents in the same place. It ensures a high response rate with the possibility to physically interact with the respondents for clarification. It is also the quickest way of obtaining responses (Kumar 2011:148).

The administration in a public place consists of drawing participants in a public place such as a shopping mall or a school (Kumar 2011:148). The administration in public place, which can be associated with personal administration mentioned by Sekaran (2003:236), present the advantage to be time effective as the completion is done within a short time, usually in front of the researcher. In addition, the researcher has an opportunity to introduce the topic to the respondents to make it clearer for them. One downfall of the personal administration is that in some cases respondents do not have time to complete the questionnaire when requested to do so. In such situations, the researcher can make another appointment for the collection or opt for the mail or electronic alternative (Sekaran 2003:237). Moreover, Lee and Lings (2008:276) refer to the use of questionnaires as an interactive way of collecting data when the researcher approaches respondents in the streets to get them to complete the questionnaire. For the purpose of this study, the personally administered approach was adopted.

The questionnaire consists of a cover page and three sections, namely Section A, Section B and Section C. The cover page present the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University logo, the title of the research, the REC-H approval reference number, a description of the study as well as its purpose, the rights of the respondents and also the contact details of the researcher and the study supervisors. The cover page is an important component of the questionnaire, as it introduces the researcher and the institution supervising the research. It also describes the relevance and main objectives of the research, gives the guidelines to follow while completing the questionnaire and highlights the rights of the respondents (Kumar 2011:151).

Section A, using nominal scales, aims to obtain information pertaining to the respondents' demographic profile such as gender, age, population group, but also information related to their shopping habits such as clothing store frequented and preferred mode of payment. Section B consists of a set of statements relating to respondents' perceptions and shopping patterns in the clothing store they attended the most, and Section C considered respondents' social considerations in clothing stores in general. These statements were phrased on a seven-point Likert type scale with response categories ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7). The items (statements) that was used in this study to measure the various factors of the independent variables (brand perceptions, customer experience, and social considerations factors) and those used for the dependent variable (buying behaviour) was drawn from the secondary sources presented in the literature overview and from previously used scales such as scales from Caruana and Ewing (2010); Kim and Kim (2008); Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009).

4.5   DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis entails presenting data using statistical methods such as the mean and the standard deviation, assessing the validity and the reliability of the proposed measuring instrument, determining the correlation between the variables and conducting a multiple regression analysis to test the relationships proposed in the hypothesised model.

4.5.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Goodwin (2010:141) defines descriptive statistics as a set of statistical tools used to help in understanding the significance of data collected by summarising large amounts of numerical data into smaller and more significant data. Descriptive statistics such as the mean, standard deviation and frequency distributions was used in this research. These methods are commonly used to provide a description and a summary of the data characteristics (Zikmund *et al.* 2011:410).

The mean represents a frequency distribution average, while the standard deviation involves calculating the difference between each observation and the mean, and the final result is squared in order to provide the standard deviation (Collis & Hussey 2003:220). For the purpose of this study, the mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution was used to summarise demographic data from the Section A of the questionnaire, but also data collected from Section B pertaining to stores were respondents do most of their shopping, and Section C related to respondents' social considerations.

4.5.2 VALIDITY

It is important for a study not to lose its credibility, quality and accuracy throughout the whole research process. Validity and reliability assessments ensure that the research results are credible, accurate and reliable. Validity refers to the ability of given factors to effectively measure what they claim to measure (Cooper & Schindler 2011:280). Cant, Gerber-Nel, Nel and Kotze (2003:227) define validity as the extent to which differences in observed scale scores reflect true differences between objects on the characteristics being measured rather than systematic random errors. Kumar (2011:179) defines validity as the capacity for the study to provide insights to the research questions for which it was originally undertaken and if so, whether the procedures used were the appropriate ones. Creswell (2005:162) defines validity in terms of the results obtained when administering the research instrument, implying that the scores obtained are meaningful and help the researcher in drawing appropriate conclusions. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the researcher needs to avoid ambiguous questions, make meaningful predictions from

scores and design questions providing useful information (Creswell 2005:164). Assessing the validity of a research instrument lies in asking the question "Is it measuring what the researcher intends to measure?" (Kumar 2011:179). In other words, validity can be defined as the extent to which a measuring instrument actually measures what it was supposed to measure.

Kumar (2011:179) lists three types of validity, namely, face/content validity, concurrent/predictive validity and construct validity. With regards to the face validity, each item of the questionnaire must have a logical link with one of the research objectives and the items must cover the full scope of the study, as each aspect of the study must be adequately represented in the questionnaire. The face/content validity is then assessed by experts in the field of research (Kumar 2011:180). In concurrent/predictive validity, the assessment is made on the basis of a comparison with another assessment or with a future observation. It basically implies assessing the extent to which the research instrument can predict an outcome by comparing with a second assessment (Kumar 2011:180). The construct validity entails more statistical procedures, hence is more sophisticated. Construct validity is grounded on determining the contribution of each hypothesis to the total variance of a situation or phenomenon. The greater the variance pertaining to each construct, the higher the validity (Kumar 2011:181). Similarly, Creswell (2005:165) presents three main types of validity, namely content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity, summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2:   Types of validity

Types of validity	What is measured?	What evidence is obtained to substantiate it?
Content validity	• How well do the questions represent all of the possibilities of questions available?	• Ask experts if the questions are representative of the area of interest.
Criterion-related	• How well do the scores on the instrument relate to an outcome?	• Select an outcome and correlate or relate the scores to it.
	• How well do the scores on the instrument predict a future outcome?	• Select a future outcome and correlate the scores with it.
Construct validity	• What do scores on the instrument mean or signify?	• Use statistical procedures, such as correlating scores with other scores. • Examine the correlation among questions on an instrument. • Test a theory against the scores.
	• What is the intended purpose or use for the scores from the instrument? Can the scores be safely generalised?	• Use non-statistical procedures, such as examining the values inherent in the interpretation of the scores. • Assess the relevance of the scores for the purpose of the study. • Consider the likely social consequences.

Source: Creswell (2005:165)

The content or face validity of the questionnaire was ensured, as academic experts were approached to examine and assess the questionnaire beforehand. In addition, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the measuring instrument and changes were made accordingly to assist respondents in better interpreting the questionnaire statements. Lastly an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to consider the construct validity of the measuring instrument (Cant *et al.* 2003:204).

4.5.3   RELIABILITY

Cooper and Schindler (2011:280) define the reliability as the level of accuracy and precision that can be attributed to a measurement procedure. According to Cant *et al.* (2003:228), the reliability represents the degree to which a measurement procedure is consistent over the time, in other words the extent to which it can produce identical results if repeated. Another definition of reliability is presented by Creswell (2005:162), when associating reliability with the extent of stability and consistency of

a research instrument when the instrument is re-administered many times and at different times. Kumar (2011:181) states that a reliable research instrument is consistent, stable, predictable and accurate. In other words, reusing the same measurements under the same conditions must yield the same results.

The researcher should ensure the reliability of the research instrument. Even though it is not possible to obtain 100% reliability, it is possible to minimise the inaccuracy by monitoring factors such as the wording of questions, the type of interaction, and the regression effect of the instrument (Kumar 2011:182). With regards to the wording of the questions, Creswell (2005:162) states that questions used in the research instrument needs to be clear and not ambiguous. Regarding the nature of the interaction, in the case of repeated interactions between the respondents and the researcher, there can be a change in terms of responses between the different interactions. This change in opinion can also be associated with the regression effect of the instrument (Kumar 2011:182). In addition, as indicated by Creswell (2005:162), the test and administration procedures should be standardised, and the respondents need to be put in comfortable conditions to complete the questionnaire.

Creswell (2005:163) presents five types of reliability summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3:   Types of reliability

Form of reliability	Number of times instruments administered	Number of different versions of the instrument	Number of individuals who provide information
Test-retest reliability	Twice at different time intervals	One version of the instrument	Each participant in the study completes the instrument twice.
Alternate forms reliability	Each instrument administered once	Two different versions of the same concept or variable	Each participant in the study completes each instrument.
Alternate forms and test-retest reliability	Twice at different time intervals	Two different versions of the same concept or variable	Each participant in the study completes each instrument.
Inter-rater reliability	Instrument administered once	One version of the instrument	More than one individual observes behaviour of the participants.
Internal consistency reliability	Instrument administered once	One version of the instrument	Each participant in the study completes the instrument.

Source: Creswell (2005:163)

Kumar (2011:182) presents two main approaches used to determine the reliability of a research instrument, namely, external consistency procedures and internal consistency procedures. The external procedures are test/retest and parallel forms of the same test. The test/retest consists of administering the instrument once, then administer it again under the same conditions. This technique presents one key disadvantage, namely that the respondents may recall their previous answers and repeat them, and therefore alter the reliability if the research is reactive by nature. The parallel from of test relates to constructing two instruments to measure the same phenomenon and administer it to two different groups of respondents where after the results are compared. The degree of reliability depends on the degree of similarity of the results obtained from both groups (Kumar 2011:183). In terms of internal consistency, the reliability should be approximately the same for each item of the instrument selected, regardless of the number of items selected. The main internal consistency procedure is the split-half technique, which entails dividing the questionnaire in two halves. The division is done in such a way that two statements measuring the same variable fall into different halves. The scores obtained in both halves are then correlated with one another (Kumar 2011:184).

The study used Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficients to assess the reliability of the research instrument, with 0.7 coefficient regarded as reliable (Slaughter 2009:14). According to Sekaran (2003:311) the closer the Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient is to 1.0 the better, and coefficients below 0.6 are considered as poor.

After presenting the descriptive statistics and assessing the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument and the collected data, the relationships presented in the hypothesised model were tested through the use of the Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis.

4.5.4 PEARSON'S COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION

O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014:212) present the Pearson's correlation coefficient as a measure of associations between variables measured on interval or ratio scales. Invented by Karl Pearson, the Pearson's correlation ranges between -1 and +1 (Lee

& Lings 2008:350). Also known as Pearson's *r*, the Pearson's correlation determines the strength in the association between variables. The Pearson's correlation is the most used correlation technique in research (Collis & Hussey 2003:236).

However, the correlation does not indicate a causality effect between variables, but only a relationship between those variables (Collis & Hussey 2003:236). Pearson's *r* +1 means that there is a positive association between the variables, while Pearson's *r* -1 shows a negative association between variables (Lee & Lings 2008:350). Thomas (2004:210) states that a correlation of 0.6 or above expresses a strong relationship between the variables. In more extended way, Choudhury (2009) presents a guideline to assess the strength of relationships between variables:

- -1.0 to -0.5 denotes a strong negative affiliation.
- -0.5 to -0.3 denotes a moderate negative association.
- -0.3 to -0.1 reflects a weak negative relationship.
- -0.1 to +0.1 denotes no relationship, or otherwise a very weak relationship.
- +0.1 to +0.3 reflects a weak positive association.
- +0.3 to +0.5 indicates a moderate positive association.
- +0.5 to +1.0 denotes a strong positive affiliation.

For this study, Pearson's coefficient correlation were calculated to identify the correlation between the independent variables, namely, brand perceptions (brand quality, brand reputation, brand image), customer experience (store physical environment and staff service), and social considerations (reference groups and culture/subculture) and the dependent variable, buying behaviour.

4.5.5   MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multiple regression analysis is used to determine the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In addition, it is extensively used for studies which use questionnaires as research instrument (Thomas 2004:212). O'Leary (2010:246) presents multiple regression analysis as a statistical tool used to present the relationship between at least two independent variables and one dependent

variable in quantitative research. In the same way, O'Dwyer and Bernauer (2014:212) note that multiple regression analysis measures the influence of independent variables, also referred to as predictors, on a dependent variable, also called criterion variable. When there is only one predictor variable and one criterion variable, the analysis is called simple regression (O'Dwyer & Bernauer 2014:212).

As indicated by Thomas (2004:212), multiple regression analysis implies the use of regression coefficients also known as beta weights. Regression coefficients are determined and allocated to independents variables and indicate how the dependent variable is affected by changes in the independent variables.

For this study a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the independent variables brand perceptions (brand quality, brand reputation, brand image), customer experience (store physical environment and staff service), and social considerations (reference groups and culture/subculture) have an influence on the dependent variable, buying behaviour.

4.5.6   *T*-TEST AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA)

The *t*-test and the ANOVA are the main statistical methods used to analyse the difference between groups in a sample by comparing the mean values of the different groups. Both techniques often require the use of ordinal scales such as Likert scales (Lee & Lings 2008:356).

The *t*-test is usually undertaken to determine the difference between only two groups, such as 'male' and 'female'. Similarly, O'Leary (2010:245) presents the *t*-test as a method used to compare two groups for two-point scales such as 'male' and 'female'. Sekaran (2003:403) also supports the idea that *t*-test is used to determine whether there are a relevant differences between the means of two groups in a variable. The larger the difference between the two groups, the more likely the difference between the two groups (Lee & Lings 2008:357). The *t*-test considers the means and standard deviations of the two groups and analyses whether the difference in the means is significantly different from zero as formulated in null hypotheses (Sekaran 2003:403).

According to Lee and Lings (2008:359), the ANOVA uses a ratio called the F ratio to compare the means of more than two groups in a sample. Similarly, Sekaran (2003:404) states that the ANOVA helps in assessing the significant mean differences among more than two groups. The F ratio indicates whether there is a significant difference between two samples' variances (Sekaran 2003:404). In addition, O'Leary (2010:245) states that ANOVA is used to compare within the same group over time for at least a three-point scales. However, if it is true that the ANOVA provides evidence of a difference between the means, it does not specify the nature of the difference. This view is shared by Sekaran (2003:404) who states that there is no way of finding the origin of the difference. In order to find the nature of the difference, researchers need to undertake post-hoc tests (Lee & Lings 2008:360). Even though taking multiple *t-test* may help in finding the exact nature of the difference, using that method carries low statistical confidence. Using post-hoc tests such as Scheffe test are more reliable methods to know where exactly the difference lies (Sekaran 2003:404).

4.6   SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the different steps that were followed while undertaking this study. The different research paradigms were presented and defined, and the choice of the quantitative approach was justified. Thereafter, the data collection elements, namely the population, sample and sampling methods, were discussed.

The population has been defined as the database on which the measuring instrument has to be tested. For the purpose of this study, the population was all clothing stores customers. The sample was defined as a representative, unbiased and manageable subgroup drawn from the total population to conduct the study. The sample for this study consisted of customers of clothing retail stores in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Two main sampling techniques with their respective options, namely the probability sampling and the non-probability sampling were presented. The sampling technique that has been implemented in the current study is the non-probability convenience sampling, as it is cost and time effective, useful in gaining ideas on a topic, and allows some flexibility in choosing respondents.

The self-administered questionnaire, which is the research instrument that was used in this study, was described and its different characteristics presented. Some methods used in determining the right sample size for the study have been presented, and on a statistician advice, the questionnaire was administered to a minimum of 200 respondents representing the sample size of this study.

The data analysis briefly discussed the descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency) that was used, as well as the validity (exploratory factor analysis) and the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) as tools to assess the credibility of the research instrument. In addition, the Pearson's *r* and multiple regression analysis were briefly described. The Pearson's r was presented as a measure the strength of the association between the different variables, while multiple regression analysis was described as a measure of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In the next chapter, the results of the statistical techniques introduced in the current chapter was presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The research design and methodology to be applied to this study were discussed in Chapter Four. The current chapter will present the empirical results and interpretations pertaining to those results after following the methodology mentioned in Chapter Four. In other words, the current chapter will present the statistical analyses undertaken.

To be more specific, this chapter will present tables summarising the demographic information shared by the respondents as calculated by descriptive statistics techniques, namely, the means, standard deviations and frequency distributions. In addition, the validity and reliability assessments through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha will be summarised and discussed. Thereafter, the inferential statistics such as Pearson's Product moment correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis employed in this study will be presented to determine the correlations and relationships between brand quality, customer experience, social considerations variables and buying behaviour.

5.2   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Section A of the questionnaire used in this study was made up of items related to respondents' demographic information and also the most used payment mode, the people whom respondents usually shop for and the specific clothing stores where respondents usually shop. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the respondents' demographic information in terms of frequency distribution and percentage.

Table 5.1:   Frequency distribution of demographic information pertaining to respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	68	32.9%
Female	139	67.1%
Total	*207*	*100%*
POPULATION GROUP	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Asian	5	2.4%
Black	113	54.6%
Coloured	46	22.2%
White	43	20.8%
Total	*207*	*100%*
AGE	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
18-24 years	125	60.3%
25-34 years	54	26.1%
35-44 years	13	6.3%
45-54 years	7	3.4%
55+ years	8	3.9%
Total	*207*	*100%*

Table 5.1 shows that the majority of the sample that took part in the study was female, characterising 67.1% of the sample, while males only represented 32.9% of the sample. Almost 90% (86.4%) of the respondents were younger than 35 years, with respectively 60.3% of the respondents aged between 18-24 years and 26.1% of them aged between 25-34 years. The least represented age group was 45-54 years, representing only 3.4% of the respondents while respondents between 34-44 years were almost twice as many (6.3%) and only 3.9% of the respondents were older than 55 years. The most represented population group was the Black ethnic group, as they embodied more than half of the respondents (54.6%). The Asian ethnic group was the least represented group with only five of the 207 respondents, which translated to 2.4% of the respondents. There was approximately the same number of Coloured and White respondents, representing respectively 22.2% and 20.8% of the respondents.

Besides demographic information, Section A also dealt with the most used payment mode, the people whom respondents usually shop for and the specific clothing stores where respondents usually shop. The frequency and percentage of the preferred payment mode is summarised in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1:   Frequency distribution of preferred payment mode
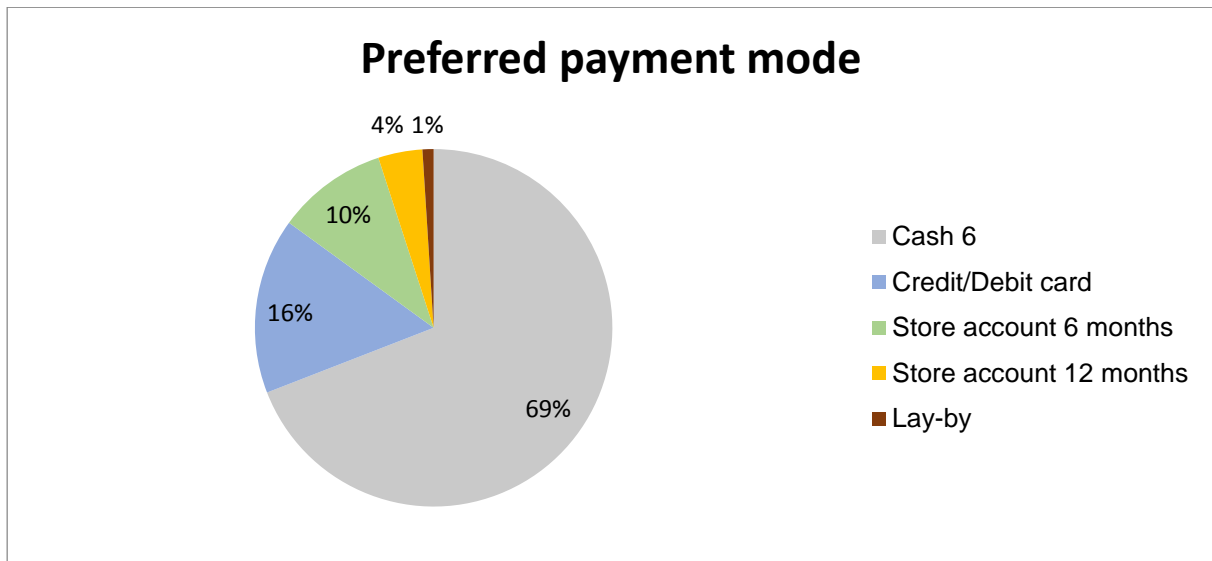
Figure 5.1 shows that the vast majority of respondents prefer paying cash when buying clothes. Approximately 69% of the respondents opt for the cash payment option while 16% prefer using their credit or debit card, translating to 143 respondents preferring cash and 33 respondents opting for credit or debit card. About 14% of the respondents use store accounts as payment mode, with 10% (21 respondents) going for the six months store account option while 4% (8 respondents) use the 12 months accounts. Only two of the respondents use lay-by as a mode of payment, representing 1% of the respondents.

The frequency and percentage of the people whom respondents usually shop for are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2:   Frequency distribution of whom usually shopping for

USUALLY SHOPPING FOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yourself	200	96.7%
Partner	33	15.9%
Children	30	14.5%
Other Family	8	3.9%
Friends & Colleagues	4	1.9%

Table 5.2 shows that 96.7% of the respondents shop for themselves when visiting clothing stores. Family as a whole is the second shopping motive for respondents,

as 14.5% of them shop for children, 3.9% for other family members such as parents or siblings. In addition, 15.9% of the respondents shop for their partners (spouse, husband, fiancé, boyfriend or girlfriend) and 1.9% shop for their friends and colleagues. However, as respondents had the opportunity to choose more than one option, the responses are not exclusive (therefore the total percentage adds to more than 100%).

The frequency and percentage of the respondents' usual clothing store are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: **Frequency distribution of usual clothing store**

Clothing store	Frequency	Percentage	Clothing store	Frequency	Percentage
Edgars G.	103	49.8%	Mr Price G.	103	49.8%
Edgars W.	46	22.2%	Mr Price W.	47	22.7%
Edgars O.	20	9.7%	Mr Price O.	18	8.7%
Edgars Total	130	62.8%	Mr Price Total	123	59.4%
Foschini G.	36	17.4%	Woolworths G.	65	31.4%
Foschini W.	21	10.1%	Woolworths W.	50	24.2%
Foschini O.	8	3.9%	Woolworths O.	9	4.3%
Foschini Total	48	23.2%	Woolworths Total	97	46.9%
Markham G.	44	21.3%	Jet G.	3	1.4%
Markham W.	10	4.8%	Jet W.	1	0.5%
Markham O.	4	1.9%	Jet O.	7	3.4%
Markham Total	49	23.7%	Jet Total	9	4.3%
Legit G.	3	1.4%	Truworths G.	10	4.8%
Legit W.	0	0.0%	Truworths W.	2	1.0%
Legit O.	6	2.9%	Truworths O.	2	1.0%
Legit Total	9	4.3%	Truworths Total	12	5.8%
YDE G.	5	2.4%	Other G.	20	9.7%
YDE W.	3	1.4%	Other W.	17	8.2%
YDE O.	1	0.5%	Other O.	15	7.2%
YDE Total	6	2.9%	Other Total	45	21.7%
Key: G.=Greenacres, W.=Walmer park, O.=Other					

Respondents were asked to choose among a list of stores the ones they usually visit in the main shopping centres in the Nelson Mandela Metropole, namely Greenacres (G.) and Walmer Park (W.). Respondents were also given the choice to add any

other shopping centres frequented. Therefore the coding of "O." was given to any other shopping centre. Furthermore, the respondents could also provide clothing stores not listed as options on the questionnaire.

Table 5.3 shows that Edgars is the store that most of the respondents visit (62.8% of the respondents), with a preference for Edgars Greenacres where approximately 50% (49.8%) of the respondents shop. Mr Price is also one of the most visited clothing stores, with 59.4% of the respondents choosing Mr Price with 49.8% of the respondents preferring visiting Mr Price Greenacres. Similarly, Woolworths stores (46.9%), especially Woolworths Greenacres (31.4%) are among the stores that respondents visited the most. Therefore, based on the results presented on Table 5.3, Greenacres shopping centre is the respondents' preferred shopping centre for clothing shopping.

To elaborate more on the respondents' preferred clothing store, Figure 5.2 summarises the total store attendance for each of the stores listed in Table 5.3.

Figure 5.2:   Total store attendance
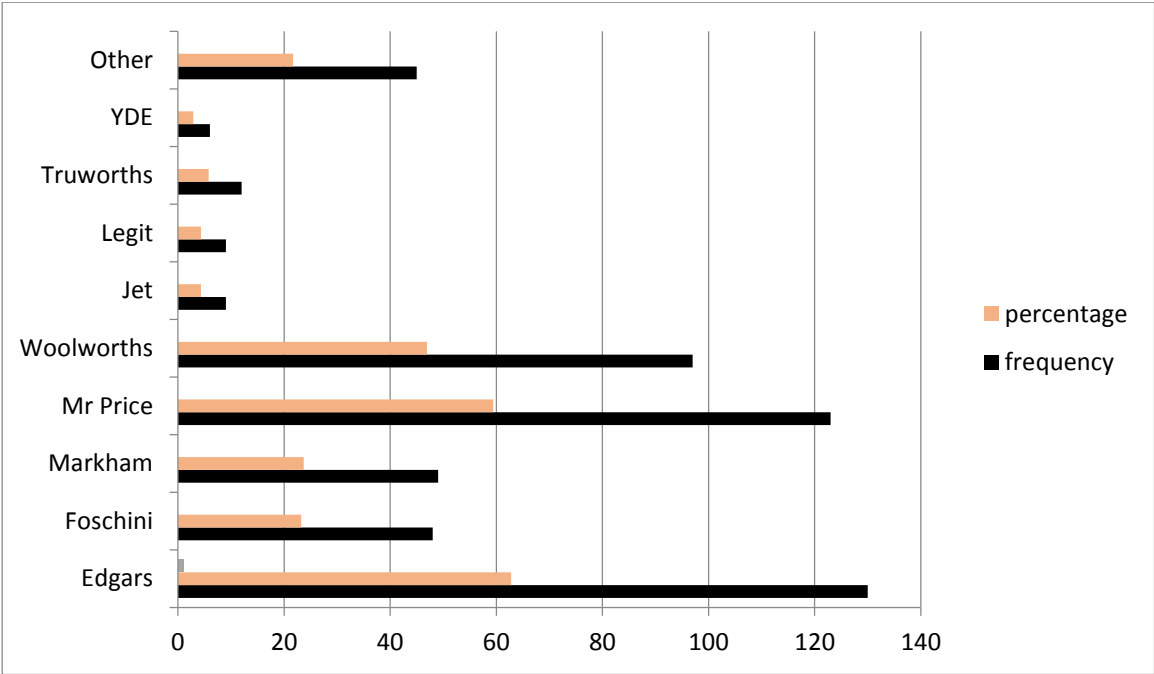
From Figure 5.2 it can be seen that most of the respondents have a preference for shopping at Edgars, Mr Price and Woolworths, with respectively 130, 123 and 97

respondents shopping there, which translates to respectively 62.8%, 59.4% and 46.9% of the respondents. However, 21.7% of the respondents (45 respondents) shop at other stores than the listed clothing stores.

5.3 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ANALYSES OF THE INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Validity has been defined by Cooper and Schindler (2011:280) as the extent to which the measuring instrument effectively measures what it claims to measure. Kumar (2011:179) added that defining validity also entails assessing whether the procedures used in the research process were the appropriate procedures. The use of the appropriate procedures ensures obtaining meaningful results in order to draw significant conclusions (Creswell 2005:162).

Various authors (Creswell 2005; Kumar 2011) have identified different types of validity. However, the most widely used are the face/content validity and the construct validity. The face validity consists of assessing how well the questions represent all of the possibilities of questions available, while the construct validity lies in assessing whether the scores obtained can safely be generalised (Creswell 2005:165).

The face/content validity of the questionnaire used for this study was ensured by consulting experts in the field of marketing and statistics to assess the questionnaire beforehand. In addition to that, a pilot study was conducted to pre-test the questionnaire and assess the respondents' understanding of the items. Consequently, changes were made in the wording and the layout of the questionnaire upon statistical advice based on the pilot study results.

An EFA was conducted on the items to ensure the validity of the questionnaire after making amendments on the statistician and marketing experts' advices. The factor structure of the EFA is summarised in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Factor structure

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9	Factor 10
B29	*0.799759*	0.037290	0.091520	0.032297	-0.006909	0.153639	0.140533	0.079392	-0.064904	0.183224
B28	*0.760293*	0.089405	0.054928	-0.099673	0.106135	0.113678	0.210708	0.176345	0.018665	0.113747
B32	*0.642736*	0.032114	0.115486	0.139954	0.072624	0.373394	0.082199	0.046103	0.147070	0.122346
C42	0.116442	*0.845384*	0.088581	0.131615	-0.010998	-0.005580	-0.038039	-0.027416	0.002167	-0.064578
C43	-0.035338	*0.827755*	0.006733	0.282965	-0.030243	-0.005353	-0.001436	0.102865	-0.021065	0.017396
C41	0.093362	*0.810129*	0.122438	0.097964	-0.050815	0.093542	-0.068327	-0.078715	0.056856	-0.016425
C44	0.039103	*0.751682*	-0.002181	0.251893	0.048027	0.050021	-0.021773	0.061099	-0.040570	0.002410
C40	-0.094744	*0.632283*	-0.023452	0.166466	0.143412	-0.012867	0.040279	-0.049203	-0.094564	0.161047
C39	-0.069508	*0.555536*	-0.086330	-0.072312	0.063579	-0.079160	0.110731	0.043431	-0.135389	-0.112585
B12	0.076699	0.155973	*0.648121*	0.012909	0.115160	0.059399	0.165453	0.167519	0.186418	0.113060
B14	0.025951	0.131927	*0.606396*	-0.139472	0.229129	0.171964	0.318937	0.144365	0.001708	0.080276
B21	0.248895	-0.125718	*0.596324*	0.144761	-0.013436	0.400398	-0.014041	0.001188	0.030979	0.032586
B08	-0.046555	0.032705	*0.565696*	0.045902	0.007085	0.062746	0.012845	0.137238	0.073608	*0.537565*
B10	0.076690	-0.010128	*0.562577*	0.240409	0.033793	0.076027	0.091609	0.043121	0.149270	0.308568
B07	0.046825	0.173621	*0.554712*	-0.008601	0.124945	-0.066245	-0.156430	0.104850	0.047835	0.285659
B16	0.247718	0.157881	*0.535027*	0.126389	0.013141	0.097544	-0.076572	0.282680	0.193389	0.084704
B13	-0.053284	0.106696	*0.517065*	-0.213834	0.180310	-0.096398	0.244180	0.183893	0.210890	0.104361
C51	0.015463	0.223791	0.071589	*0.790460*	0.157108	-0.009862	0.033694	-0.009309	0.010293	-0.037063
C49	0.105301	0.075406	-0.070846	*0.716025*	0.271781	-0.007404	0.072071	0.045708	-0.039708	0.121090
C53	0.076120	0.355855	0.128653	*0.686052*	-0.063350	0.048219	-0.075591	0.006382	0.100769	-0.019306
C52	-0.038922	0.401441	0.029810	*0.669916*	0.043968	0.057555	0.083656	-0.005908	-0.007203	-0.102127
C50	-0.039561	0.154288	0.039190	*0.666868*	0.222653	0.044246	0.099806	0.096537	-0.086976	0.002949
C47	-0.139953	0.270273	-0.032021	*0.614830*	0.033175	-0.026360	0.062428	-0.021059	0.094286	0.208993
C45	0.082441	0.067361	0.096043	0.145631	*0.849343*	-0.071722	0.023670	0.138631	0.034983	-0.004712
C46	0.075849	-0.016135	0.138358	0.172571	*0.835371*	0.069203	0.065800	0.059244	0.043521	0.026204
C48	-0.161682	-0.147621	-0.170715	0.146876	*0.535425*	0.191629	0.130513	0.051531	-0.031279	0.142013
B27	0.302736	0.175424	0.053574	0.011963	0.105575	*0.682020*	0.046150	0.111632	0.217768	0.129994
B22	0.036469	-0.057224	0.113515	-0.012666	-0.052338	*0.655712*	0.220148	0.153670	-0.032771	0.172857
B25	0.369534	0.035580	0.231107	0.026555	0.148500	*0.621974*	-0.005528	0.117326	0.225672	0.131611
B23	-0.114095	0.048770	-0.019239	0.053016	-0.148942	*0.600293*	0.221730	0.209131	-0.071523	0.061240
B26	0.308552	0.068476	-0.033076	-0.066310	-0.025512	*0.599135*	-0.071812	0.155559	0.306383	0.114004
B31	0.222716	-0.043164	0.055204	0.069025	0.089150	0.109450	*0.746315*	0.126372	0.195365	0.033174
B30	0.254434	-0.069472	0.067829	0.154222	0.061120	0.146957	*0.720610*	0.066051	0.188975	0.102969
B38	0.161289	0.041799	0.175658	0.065881	0.076507	0.188997	0.090609	*0.737046*	0.089047	0.176629
B35	-0.146904	-0.021250	0.153243	0.068340	0.009403	0.201204	0.167864	*0.718469*	0.003054	0.025955
B36	0.264370	0.119319	0.017437	-0.031578	0.182662	0.031571	-0.002421	*0.715116*	0.168060	0.063149
B34	0.276741	-0.163415	0.216113	-0.036975	0.168507	0.159430	0.008035	*0.603100*	0.150213	0.082675
B17	0.067618	0.014855	0.138743	0.024406	0.042283	0.092618	0.124162	0.071758	*0.831145*	0.058829
B18	-0.037103	-0.107350	0.103002	-0.000541	0.027301	0.211156	0.155364	0.157694	*0.765994*	0.225576
B02	0.178270	-0.063617	0.128363	0.036888	0.146190	0.252392	0.068243	0.049954	0.104597	*0.671086*
B03	0.387855	0.120908	0.085248	-0.017282	0.018000	0.015687	0.254514	0.131075	0.124849	*0.589680*
B05	0.202110	-0.132438	0.365770	0.186561	-0.083085	0.223707	-0.018724	0.107719	0.172120	*0.562023*
B04	0.213994	0.031781	0.167578	-0.123392	-0.024603	0.062478	0.226585	0.238904	0.182698	*0.558773*
Expl. Var	3.125884	4.318412	4.666379	3.637212	2.423634	3.280931	2.216202	2.748952	2.475329	3.020638
Prp. Totl	0.058979	0.081479	0.088045	0.068627	0.045729	0.061904	0.041815	0.051867	0.046704	0.056993

The items factor structure, as presented in Table 5.5, shows that the analysis resulted in ten factors instead of eight as originally indicated in the hypothesised model. However, as item B08 cross loaded onto both Factor 3 and Factor 10, the item was eliminated from further analysis. A more comprehensive assessment of the validity using EFA and reliability through Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each factor is summarised in Table 5.5 to Table 5.14. For the purpose of the study and provided the amount of respondents, and on statistical advice, the items were determined as valid and reliable when returning loadings equal to or higher than 0.50. The validity and reliability for Factor 1 is presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5:   Validity and reliability for Factor 1

Factor 1	Summary for scale: Mean= 15.0097 Std.Dv.= 3.09207 ***Cronbach's alpha: 0.682905*** Standardized alpha: 0.677759 Average inter-item corr.: 0.424046			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B29	The staff in the store is friendly.	0.799759	0.552735	0.512493
B30	The store's refund procedure is fair.	0.760293	0.349148	0.757539
B32	The staff in the store has good knowledge of the products they sell.	0.642736	0.606559	0.435402

The factor loadings for items for Factor 1 ranged between 0.64 and 0.79. Factor 1 returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.68, providing evidence that the measuring scale used for Factor 1 was reliable as it exceeded 0.6. From the questionnaire, it can be seen that items that loaded onto Factor 1 (B28, B29, B32) are *Staff Service* items, hence Factor 1 was named *Staff Service.* Items B30 and B31 loaded onto Factor 7, while item B33 did not load on any factor. Therefore, item B33 was excluded from further analysis and items B30 and B31 were included in further analysis for Factor 7. Even though *Staff Service* originally totalised six items (B28, B29, B30, B31, B32 and B33), the three items remaining were enough to make *Staff Service* a valid factor. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, *Staff Service* is defined as the friendly, fair and informative in-store interaction between the store personnel and the customers, and validity and reliability were confirmed for this factor.

The validity and reliability for Factor 2 is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6:   Validity and reliability for Factor 2

Factor 2	Summary for scale: Mean= 17.8696 Std.Dv.= 7.89540 ***Cronbach's alpha: 0 .854602*** Standardized alpha: 0.857474 Average inter-item corr.: 0.524170			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
C42	It is important that other people like the brands I buy.	0.845384	0.763057	0.806820
C43	I achieve a sense of belonging by buying the same brands my friends buy.	0.827755	0.790743	0.805394
C41	It is important that other people like the products I buy.	0.810129	0.718669	0.815179
C44	I buy from stores where people who are important to me encourage me to buy.	0.751682	0.697385	0.819992
C40	I dress similar to those in my community.	0.632283	0.528772	0.850687
C39	I seek my friends' opinion before shopping.	0.555536	0.396119	0.875941

The six items (C39, C40, C41, C42, C43 and C44) developed to measure *Reference Groups* loaded onto Factor 2 with loadings ranging from 0.55 to 0.84. Those items correspond to *Reference Groups* in the questionnaire, and as all the items (C39, C40, C41, C42, C43 and C44) loaded as expected, the name *Reference Groups* was retained for Factor 2. Therefore *Reference Groups* is defined in this study as the people within the social environment whose opinion is important to the customers and will help them to achieve a sense of belonging. Factor 2 returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 which is greater than 0.60, proving the reliability of the scale. Based on the EFA loadings and Cronbach's alpha, validity and reliability were thus provided for the scale for *Reference Groups*.

Table 5.7 summarises the validity and reliability results for Factor 3.

Table 5.7:   Validity and reliability for Factor 3

Factor 3	Summary for scale: Mean=40.7150 Std.Dv.=7.49504 *Cronbach's alpha: 0.828389* Standardized alpha: 0.831427 Average inter-item corr.: 0.386536			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B12	I identify with the store's brand image.	0.648121	0.638636	0.795953
B14	The store is regarded as selling stylish products.	0.606396	0.582551	0.805303
B21	The store has attractive décor.	0.596324	0.465542	0.819676
B10	The store is regarded as a leader in the market.	0.562577	0.557882	0.808244
B07	I choose to shop at the store because of its reputation.	0.554712	0.522334	0.815571
B16	The store has a unique image compared to the others in the same industry.	0.535027	0.553679	0.808505
B13	I visit the store because its products fit in with my lifestyle.	0.517065	0.503908	0.814984

Factor 3 returned eight items (B07, B08, B10, B12, B13, B14, B16 and B21) with loadings ranging from 0.52 to 0.65. Item B08 was excluded from Factor 3 as it cross-loaded onto Factor 10. Four of the items (B12, B13, B14 and B16) were originally developed for *Brand Image*, two (B7 and B10) for *Brand Reputation* and one (B21) for *Store Physical Environment*. Eight items (B12, B13, B14, B15, B16 B17, B18 and B19) were developed to measure *Brand Image*. However, only items B12, B13, B14 and B16 loaded unto Factor 3. Items B15 and B19 did not load onto any factor and were therefore disregarded from further analysis. Items B17 and B18 loaded onto Factor 9. Of the five items (B07, B08, B09, B10 and B11) developed to measure *Brand Reputation*, only two items (B07 and B10) loaded onto Factor 3, while item B08 loaded onto Factor 3 and Factor 10. Items B09 and B11 did not load at all and were therefore disregarded from further analysis. However, the items that loaded onto Factor 3 were mostly *Brand Image* and *Brand Reputation* items, and in the literature brand reputation is also referred to as corporate image (Kim & Hyun 2011:428). Therefore, there was a need to rename Factor 3 to *Brand Image/Reputation*. In addition, even though brand reputation aims at a longer term perspective than the image, brand image and brand reputation are sometimes used interchangeably (Martenson 2007:546). The Cronbach's alpha returned by Factor 3 was 0.82. Factor 3 was hence also both valid and reliable. Therefore, the factor *Brand Image/Reputation* is defined as the extent to which the brand meets the customers' expectations, lead to positive or negative impressions, as well as create associations that the brand inspires in the customers' minds compared to that of

competitors. The EFA and Cronbach's alpha results confirm the validity and reliability of the *Brand Image/Reputation* factor.

The validity and reliability results of Factor 4 are presented in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8:   Validity and reliability for Factor 4

Factor 4	Summary for scale: Mean= 20.0725 Std.Dv.= 7.58189 ***Cronbach's alpha: 0.854534*** Standardized alpha: 0.856704 Average inter-item corr.: 0.507299			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
C51	I prefer wearing clothes representing my culture.	0.790460	0.754575	0.810945
C49	I buy local brands that relate to my culture.	0.716025	0.618682	0.834464
C53	I change my buying opinions to conform to those of my culture.	0.686052	0.630083	0.832399
C52	I find it necessary to dress similarly to other members of my culture.	0.669916	0.696255	0.819953
C50	The way I dress is influenced by my culture.	0.666868	0.609238	0.837005
C47	I shop in stores where members of my culture are employed.	0.614830	0.557504	0.846582

The six items (C47, C49, C50, C51, C52 and C53) loading onto Factor 4 were all part of the nine *Culture/Subculture* items (C45, C46, C47, C48, C49, C50, C51, C52 and C53) that focused on the respondents' clothing style and their culture. Six items with factor loadings ranging from 0.61 to 0.79 loaded onto Factor 4, providing evidence of validity. As all the items that loaded onto Factor 4 focused on cultural clothing, the factor was renamed *Cultural Clothing*. Factor 4 Cronbach's alpha was 0.85, greater 0.60, providing evidence of reliability. Therefore, the factor *Cultural Clothing* is defined as the situation where cultural conformation is the driver of dressing style and clothing shopping.

Table 5.9 summarises the validity and reliability of Factor 5.

Table 5.9:   **Validity and reliability for Factor 5**

Factor 5	Summary for scale: Mean= 17.0628 Std.Dv.= 3.37911 ***Cronbach's alpha: 0.724452*** Standardized alpha: 0.721580 Average inter-item corr.: 0.519056			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
C46	I am proud to be identified with my culture.	0.849343	0.708020	0.436514
C45	I regard my culture as important.	0.835371	0.676352	0.461371
C48	I like to be exposed to other cultures.	0.535425	0.304444	0.893032

Three items (C45, C46 and C48) originally developed to measure *Culture/Subculture* loaded onto Factor 5 with loadings ranging from 0.54 to 0.85 show validity of the factor. The three items that loaded onto Factor 5 were the three remaining items from the originally developed *Culture/Subculture* items. These items posed culture as part of the respondents' identity and openness to other cultures, which led to rename Factor 5 as *Cultural Assimilation*. Factor 5 returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.72 (> 0.60), providing evidence of reliability. Therefore, *Cultural Assimilation* is defined as cultural openness and self-identification.

The results of validity and reliability for Factor 6 are presented in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10:   **Validity and reliability for Factor 6**

Factor 6	Summary for scale: Mean= 26.1449 Std.Dv.= 4.64865 ***Cronbach's alpha: 0.773034*** Standardized alpha: 0.787475 Average inter-item corr.: 0.439933			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B27	The shopping experience at the store is pleasant.	0.682020	0.682572	0.691063
B22	The store's changing rooms are clean.	0.655712	0.536593	0.734862
B25	The store's overall atmosphere makes shopping enjoyable.	0.621974	0.601642	0.713080
B23	The store has enough changing rooms.	0.600293	0.402500	0.796471
B26	It is easy to find what I am looking for in the store.	0.599135	0.570777	0.722559

Only five (B22, B23, B25, B26 and B27) of the originally developed eight items for *Store Physical Environment* (B20, B21, B22, B23, B24, B25, B26 and B27) loaded onto Factor 6. The factor loadings for items B22, B23, B25, B26 and B27 ranged from 0.60 to 0.68. Items B20 and B24 did not load onto any factor and are therefore disregarded from further analysis. As the loading items were all part of *Store*

Physical Environment items, Factor 6 was named *Store Physical Environment.* The Cronbach's alpha for Factor 6 was 0.77, which is greater than 0.60. Based on the EFA and Cronbach's alpha results, the measuring instrument for Factor 6 is regarded as valid and reliable. Therefore, *Store Physical Environment* is defined as the pleasant and easy shopping environment, with enough clean facilities provided by the store.

Table 5.11 summarises the validity and reliability results for Factor 7.

Table 5.11:   Validity and reliability for Factor 7

Factor 7	Summary for scale: Mean= 10.6667 Std.Dv.= 2.24474 *Cronbach's alpha: 0.860257* Standardized alpha: 0.860519 Average inter-item corr.: 0.755185			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B30	The store's refund procedure is fair.	0.746315	0.755185	
B31	The store's exchange procedure is fair.	0.720610	0.755185	

Items B30 and B31 were originally developed to measure *Staff Service.* Although the reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, greater than 0.60), only factors with three or more loadings are acceptable for validity purposes (Suhr 2006:4). Therefore Factor 7 is disregarded for further analysis.

The validity and reliability results of Factor 8 are presented in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12:   Validity and reliability for Factor 8

Factor 8	Summary for scale: Mean= 20.9709 Std.Dv.= 4.17064 *Cronbach's alpha: 0.779242* Standardized alpha: 0.784941 Average inter-item corr.: 0.479376			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B38	I prefer shopping in this store.	0.737046	0.674223	0.684844
B35	I frequently visit this store.	0.718469	0.533561	0.751527
B36	I remain loyal to this store when shopping for clothing.	0.715116	0.578571	0.734705
B34	I recommend this store to other customers.	0.603100	0.572853	0.732285

Four items (B34, B35, B36 and B38) of the originally developed five items for *Buying Behaviour* (B34, B35, B36, B37 and B38) loaded onto Factor 8. The factors loadings

ranged from 0.60 and 0.74. Only one item (B37) did not load on any factor and is therefore disregarded from further analysis. As all the items (B34, B35, B36 and B38) that loaded together onto Factor 8 focus on buying behaviour, Factor 8 is named *Buying Behaviour*. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor is 0.78, greater than 0.60. Therefore the scale measuring *Buying Behaviour* is regarded as valid and reliable based on the results provided. For the purpose of this study, *Buying Behaviour* is hence defined as the customers' shopping preference at a specific store, loyalty to that store and recommendation of the store to other customers. Table 5.13 summarises the validity and reliability results of Factor 9.

Table 5.13:   Validity and reliability for Factor 9

Factor 9	Summary for scale: Mean= 10.3720 Std.Dv.= 2.41190 *Cronbach's alpha: 0.814110* Standardized alpha: 0.814308 Average inter-item corr.: 0.686779			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B17	The store's prices match its product quality.	0.831145	0.686779	-
B18	The store provides good value for money.	0.765994	0.686779	-

Items B17 and B18 were originally developed to measure *Brand Image*. Despite an acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha of 0.68, > 0.60), only factors with three or more loadings are acceptable for validity purposes (Suhr 2006:4). Therefore, Factor 9 is disregarded for further analysis.

Table 5.14 summarises the validity and reliability results of Factor 10.

Table 5.14:   Validity and reliability for Factor 10

Factor 10	Summary for scale: Mean= 20.5749 Std.Dv.= 3.92935 *Cronbach's alpha: 0.767712* Standardized alpha: 0.768568 Average inter-item corr.: 0.455613			
	Items	Factor loading	Item-Total Correl.	Alpha if deleted
B02	The store offers high quality products and services.	0.671086	0.565942	0.713524
B03	The store provides satisfactory customer service.	0.589680	0.612009	0.689438
B05	The store products' quality is better than its competitors' quality.	0.562023	0.556897	0.719928
B04	The main reason why I choose the store is because of the products sold.	0.558773	0.540753	0.726607

Four items (B02, B03, B04 and B05) of the six items originally developed for *Brand Quality* (B01, B02, B03, B04, B05 and B06) loaded onto Factor 10. The factor loading ranged from 0.56 to 0.67, showing validity of the factor. Two items (B01 and B06) did not load onto any factor and are therefore disregarded from further analysis. All the items (B02, B03, B04 and B05) that loaded together were originally *Brand Quality* items, hence Factor 10 was named *Brand Quality*. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.77 (> 0.60), providing evidence of reliability. *Brand Quality* is therefore defined as the superiority of both the product and service standards as perceived by the customers.

5.3.1 REVISED HYPOTHESISED MODEL

Based on the results of the EFA, some variables were disregarded while other variables were renamed. There was therefore a need to reformulate and propose new operational definitions for the variables. The reformulated definitions are summarised in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15: Reformulated operational definitions

VARIABLES	OPERATIONALISATION
Brand Quality	Superiority of both the product and service standards as perceived by the customers.
Brand Image/Reputation	Extent to which the brand meets the customers' expectations, and positive or negative impressions, as well as associations that the brand inspires in the customers' minds compared to that of competitors.
Staff Service	Friendly, fair and informative In-store interaction between the store personnel and the customers.
Store Physical Environment	Pleasant and easy shopping environment with enough clean facilities provided by the store.
Reference Groups	People within the social environment whose opinion is important to the customer that will help to achieve a sense of belonging.
Cultural Clothing	Cultural conformation as a driver of dressing style and clothing shopping.
Cultural Assimilation	Cultural openness and self-identification.
Buying Behaviour	Customers shopping preference at a specific store, loyalty to that store and recommendation of the store to other customers.

A new hypothesised model, as provided in Figure 5.3, can be drawn from the reformulated operational definitions.

Figure 5.3: New hypothesised model of factors influencing buying behaviour in the retail clothing industry
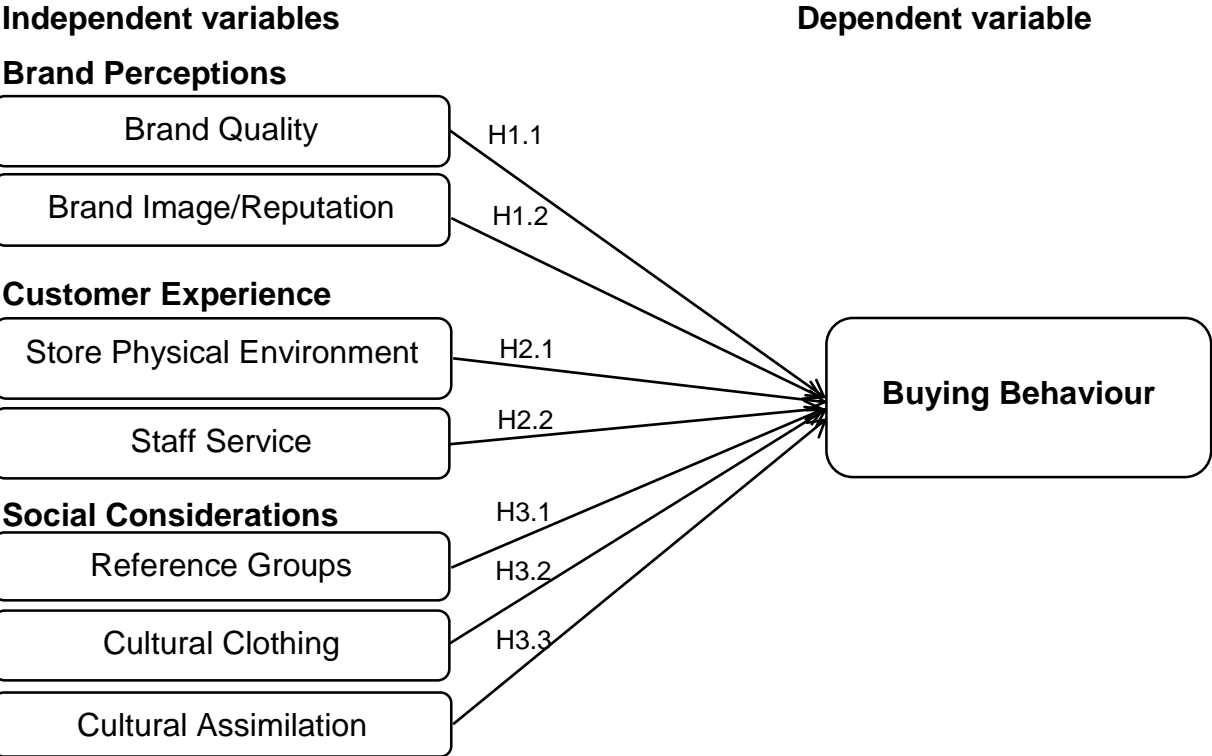
As shown in Figure 5.3, the EFA results lead to the following factor structure:

- For *Brand Perceptions* variables, *Brand Quality* remains unchanged while *Brand Image* and *Brand Reputation* are grouped under the same variable, *Brand Image/ Reputation*.
- The *Customer Experience* variables remain the same.
- Regarding the *Social Considerations* variables, *Reference Groups* remain unchanged whereas *Culture/Subculture* is divided into *Cultural Clothing* and *Cultural Assimilation.*

5.3.2 REVISED HYPOTHESES

The modifications in the hypothesised model lead to the following modifications in the research hypotheses:

The original hypothesis H[1] stating that here is a positive relationship between *Brand Perceptions* (as measured by *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image*) and *Buying Behaviour* is reformulated into two hypotheses:

H[1.1]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[1.2]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Image*/Reputation and *Buying Behaviour*.

The original hypothesis H[2] stating that there is a significant positive relationship between *Customer Experience* (as measured by *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*) and *Buying Behaviour* is reformulated into two hypotheses:

H[2.1]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[2.2]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour*.

The original hypothesis H[3] stating that there is a significant positive relationship between *Social Considerations* (as measured by *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*) and *Buying Behaviour* is reformulated into three hypotheses:

H[3.1]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[3.2]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[3.3]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour*.

5.4   DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES

In addition to demographic information, statistical analyses were also conducted on independent variables, namely *Brand Quality, Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image* (measuring *Brand Perceptions*), *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*

(measuring *Customer Experience), Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture* (measuring *Social Considerations*), as well as for the dependent variable, *Buying Behaviour*. The minimum sample size required was 200 respondents, however, to avoid low response rates, the questionnaire was handed out to 232 respondents, of which 207 were returned completed and usable. Although the questionnaire used a seven-point Likert scale, for brevity purposes the results were categorised as follows:

- 1.0 to 2.0 as strongly disagree,
- 2.0 to 3.5 as disagree,
- 3.5 to 4.5 as neutral,
- 4.5 to 6.0 as agree,
- 6.0 to 7.0 as strongly agree.

Table 5.16 presents the mean and standard deviation of the independent and the dependent variables.

Table 5.16:   Frequency distribution of variables (N=207)

Variables	Mean	1.0 to 2.0 Strongly disagree		2.0 to 3.5 Disagree		3.5 to 4.5 Neutral		4.5 to 6.0 Agree		6.0 to 7.0 Strongly agree	
Brand Quality	5.1314	1	0.48%	13	6.28%	36	17.39%	109	52.66%	48	23.19%
Brand Image/Reputation	5.0738	0	0%	11	5.31%	39	18.84%	126	60.87%	31	14.98%
Store Physical Environment	5.2289	2	0.97%	5	2.42%	30	14.49%	120	57.97%	50	24.15%
Staff Service	4.8631	4	1.93%	21	10.14%	50	24.15%	86	41.55%	46	22.22%
Reference Groups	2.9783	49	23.67%	80	38.65%	44	21.26%	29	14.10%	5	2.42%
Cultural Assimilation	3.3454	28	13.53%	79	38.16%	61	29.47%	31	14.98%	8	3.86%
Cultural Clothing	5.6876	0	0%	9	4.35%	27	13.04%	54	26.09%	117	56.52%
Buying Behaviour	5.2464	0	0%	8	3.86%	39	18.84%	98	47.34%	62	29.95%

For each variable, the category that totalised the most respondents is marked in colour. To be more specific, Table 5.16 displays that 60.87% of the respondents (126 respondents) agreed with *Brand Reputation* related items. *Store Physical Environment* (mean = 5.22) related items also gathered a huge agreement, as 120

respondents (57.97%) expressed their agreement. In addition, 109 respondents (52.66%) agreed with the items related to *Brand Quality* (mean = 5.13) while 98 respondents (47.34%) agreed with *Buying Behaviour* related items and 41.55% of the respondents (86 respondents) agreed with *Staff Service* related items. Most of the respondents strongly agreed with the *Cultural Clothing* items, as 'Strongly agree' totalised 117 respondents (56.52%).   Both *Reference Groups* and *Cultural Assimilation*'s answers expressed respondents' disagreement. While 38.65% of the (80 respondents) respondents disagreed with the *Reference Groups* related items, 79 respondents (38.16%) disagreed with *Cultural Assimilation* related items.

5.5   EMPIRICAL RESULTS ON THE VARIABLE RELATIONSHIPS

In this section, the correlations and relationships between the independent and the dependent variables are discussed. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were used to assess the correlations between the variables investigated, while multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the independent variables have an influence on the dependent variable.

5.5.1   PEARSON'S PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATIONS

The correlations between the various variables investigated in this study are presented in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17: Pearson's correlation coefficients

| Variable | Marked correlations are significant at p < .050 N=207 | | | | | | | |
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Brand Quality	1.0000 p= ---	*0.4867* *p=0.000*	0.0176 p=0.801	*0.4964* *p=0.000*	0.0880 p=0.207	*0.1387* *p=0.046*	*0.4386* *p=0.000*	*0.3926* *p=0.000*
2. Staff Service	*0.4867* *p=0.000*	1.0000 p= ---	0.0817 p=0.242	*0.3451* *p=0.000*	0.0978 p=0.161	0.1257 p=0.071	*0.4830* *p=0.000*	*0.3660* *p=0.000*
3. Reference Groups	0.0176 p=0.801	0.0817 p=0.242	1.0000 p= ---	*0.1475* *p=0.034*	*0.4546* *P=0.000*	0.0418 p=0.550	0.0516 p=0.461	0.0343 p=0.623
4. Image/ Reputation	*0.4964* *p=0.000*	*0.3451* *p=0.000*	*0.1475* *p=0.034*	1.0000 p= ---	*0.1660* *p=0.017*	*0.2051* *p=0.003*	*0.3569* *p=0.000*	*0.4305* *p=0.000*
5. Cultural Assimilation	0.0880 p=0.207	0.0978 p=0.161	*0.4546* *p=0.000*	*0.1660* *p=0.017*	1.0000 p= ---	*0.2730* *p=0.000*	0.0892 p=0.201	0.0793 p=0.256
6. Cultural Clothing	*0.1387* *p=0.046*	0.1257 p=0.071	0.0418 p=0.550	*0.2051* *p=0.003*	*0.2730* *p=0.000*	1.0000 p= ---	0.0927 p=0.184	*0.2477* *p=0.000*
7. Store Physical Environment	*0.4386* *p=0.000*	*0.4830* *p=0.000*	0.0516 p=0.461	*0.3569* *p=0.000*	0.0892 p=0.201	0.0927 p=0.184	1.0000 p= ---	*0.4167* *p=0.000*
8. Buying Behaviour	*0.3926* *p=0.000*	*0.3660* *p=0.000*	0.0343 p=0.623	*0.4305* *p=0.000*	0.0793 p=0.256	*0.2477* *p=0.000*	*0.4167* *p=0.000*	1.0000 p= ---

Table 5.17 shows that there are positive correlations between all the variables used in this study although all the correlations are not statistically significant. The identified correlations were either moderate, weak, or had no significance. Regarding the moderate correlations ($0.30 < r < 0.50$), they were identified between:

- *Brand Quality* and *Staff Service* ($r = 0.4867$);

- *Brand Quality* and *Brand Image/Reputation* ($r = 0.4964$);

- *Brand Quality* and *Store Physical Environment* ($r = 0.4386$);

- *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour* ($r = 0.3926$);

- *Staff Service* and *Brand Image/Reputation* ($r = 0.3451$);

- *Staff Service* and *Store Physical Environment* ($r = 0.4830$);

- *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour* ($r = 0.3660$);

- *Reference Groups* and *Cultural Assimilation* ($r = 0.4546$);

- *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Store Physical Environment* ($r = 0.3569$);

- *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Buying Behaviour* ($r = 0.4305$); and

- *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour* ($r = 0.4167$).

A moderate positive correlation means that a change in one variable can incur a positive but moderate change in the correlated variable.

Similarly, weak correlations ($0.10 < r < 0.30$) were noted between:

- *Brand Quality* and *Cultural Clothing* ($r = 0.1387$);
- *Reference Groups* and *Brand Image/Reputation* ($r = 0.1475$);
- *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Cultural Assimilation* ($r = 0.1660$);
- *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Cultural Clothing* ($r = 0.2051$);
- *Cultural Assimilation* and *Cultural Clothing* ($r = 0.2730$); and
- *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour* ($r = 0.2477$).

A weak positive correlation means that a change in one variable can incur a positive but weak change in its correlated variable.

There is no significant correlation ($p > 0.05$) between:

- *Brand Quality* and *Reference Groups;*
- *Brand Quality* and *Cultural Assimilation;*
- *Staff Service* and *Reference Groups;*
- *Staff Service* and *Cultural Assimilation;*
- *Staff Service* and *Cultural Clothing;*
- *Reference Groups* and *Cultural Clothing;*
- *Reference Groups* and *Store Physical Environment;*
- *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour;*
- *Cultural Assimilation* and *Store Physical Environment;*
- *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour; and*
- *Cultural Clothing* and *Store Physical Environment.*

No significant correlation means that a change in one variable will not significantly cause a change in the other variable.

The weakest significant correlation observed is between *Cultural Clothing* and *Brand Quality* ($r = 0.1387$)*,* while the strongest significant relationship noted is between *Brand Quality* and *Brand Image/Reputation* ($r = 0.4964$). This means that in the clothing retail industry, while there is a weak link between *Cultural Clothing* and *Brand Quality*, *Brand Quality* and *Brand Image/Reputation* are strongly linked.

5.5.2 MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS

A multiple regression analysis was undertaken to determine the nature of the relationships between the independent variables, namely *Brand Quality, Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*, *Reference Groups, Cultural Assimilation* and *Cultural Clothing* and the dependent variable (*Buying Behaviour*). The results of multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 5.18.

Table 5.18:   **Multiple regression analysis**

N=207	Regression Summary for Dependent Variable: Buying Behaviour R= .55893266 R²= .31240571 Adjusted R²= .28821898 F(7,199)=12.916 p					
	b*	Std.Err. of b*	B	Std.Err. of b	t(199)	p-value
Intercept			0.879312	0.497183	1.768588	0.078495
Brand Quality	0.105713	0.075158	0.110606	0.078636	1.406551	0.161120
Staff Service	0.110511	0.072086	0.095833	0.062512	1.533046	0.126853
Reference Groups	-0.012170	0.066903	-0.009632	0.052950	-0.181909	0.855839
Brand Image/Reputation	*0.235790*	*0.070631*	*0.260211*	*0.077946*	*3.338352*	*0.001006*
Cultural Assimilation	-0.038177	0.069027	-0.031465	0.056890	-0.553080	0.580829
Cultural Clothing	*0.161092*	*0.062481*	*0.148948*	*0.057771*	*2.578250*	*0.010652*
Store Physical Environment	*0.221938*	*0.070368*	*0.248609*	*0.078824*	*3.153986*	*0.001860*

From Table 5.18, it is clear that there are significant positive relationships between three independent variables, namely *Brand Image/Reputation* ($b = 0.2602$; $p < 0.05$), *Cultural Clothing* ($b = 0.1489$; $p < 0.05$) and *Store Physical Environment* ($b = 0.2486$; $p < 0.05$) and the dependent variable *Buying Behaviour*. The strongest statistically significant positive relationship was found between *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Buying Behaviour* ($b = 0.2602$; $p < 0.05$) while the weakest was between *Cultural Clothing* ($b = 0.1489$; $p < 0.05$) and *Buying Behaviour*. No statistically significant

relationships were found between *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour*, *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour*, *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour*, and *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour*.

In other words, positive perceptions held on *Brand Image/Reputation* are likely to have a positive influence on *Buying Behaviour*. In the same way, positive perceptions held on *Cultural Clothing* are likely to have a positive influence on *Buying Behaviour*, and positive perceptions held on *Store Physical Environment* are likely to have a positive influence on *Buying Behaviour*.

Therefore, multiple regression analysis' results provided support for three of the seven hypotheses formulated, namely:

$H^{1.2}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Buying Behaviour*.

$H^{2.1}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour*.

$H^{3.2}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*.

On the basis of the above hypotheses and empirical results, the hypotheses $H^{1.2}$, $H^{2.1}$ and $H^{3.2}$ are accepted, as significant positive relationships were found between each of these independent variables (*Cultural Clothing*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Brand Image/Reputation*) and the dependent variable (*Buying Behaviour*).

Based on the multiple regression analysis' results, no support was found for the following four hypotheses:

$H^{1.1}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour*.

$H^{2.2}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour*.

$H^{3.1}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour*.

$H^{3.3}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour.*

The acceptance decisions of the formulated hypotheses are summarised in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19:   Acceptance decision of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Proof	Decision
There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour.*	b = 0.1106 t = 1.4066 p = 0.1611	Reject
There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Buying Behaviour*	**b = 0.2602** **t = 3.3384** **p = 0.0010**	**Accept**
There is a significant positive relationship between *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour*.	**b = 0.2486** **t = 3.1540** **p = 0.0019**	**Accept**
There is a significant positive relationship between *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour.*	b = 0.0958 t = 1.5330 p = 0.1269	Reject
There is a significant positive relationship between *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour.*	b = -0.0096 t = -0.1819 p = 0.8558	Reject
There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*.	**b = 0.1489** **t = 2.5783** **p = 0.0107**	**Accept**
There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour.*	b = -0.0315 t = -0.5530 p = 0.5808	Reject

5.6   RESULTS OF THE *T*-TEST AND ANOVAS

Further statistical analyses, namely a *t*-test and ANOVAS were conducted to determine the influence of *Gender, Age* and *Population Group* on respondents' answers regarding the dependent variable (*Buying Behaviour*) and the independent variables which showed significant relationships with the dependent variable (*Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*).

5.6.1   RESULTS OF *T*-TEST

A *t*-test was run to determine the influence of *Gender* on perceptions regarding the dependent variable (*Buying Behaviour*) and on selected independent variables

(*Cultural Clothing*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Brand Image/Reputation*). The following hypotheses were formulated:

H^{0a}: There is no difference between the mean scores of *Gender* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H^{0b}: There is no difference between the mean scores of *Gender* and *Brand Image/Reputation*.

H^{0c}: There is no difference between the mean scores of *Gender* and *Store Physical Environment*.

H^{0d}: There is no difference between the mean scores of *Gender* and *Cultural Clothing*.

As it is generally assumed that males and females have different buying patterns, the influence of respondents' gender on their perceptions regarding the dependent variable and the selected independent variables was to be determined through *t*-test. The *t*-test results are summarised in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20: *T*-test summary of Gender on variables

Dependent Variable	*t*-value	P
Buying Behaviour	0.745714	0.456695
Independent Variables	t-value	p
Brand Image/Reputation	0.719371	0.472731
Store Physical Environment	0.154192	0.877610
Cultural Clothing	-0.162945	0.870723

(p<0.05)

As displayed in Table 5.20, there is no significant difference in responses based on *Gender* of respondents regarding *Buying Behaviour*. Therefore, males and females do not have different buying behaviour. In the same way, no significant differences were found based on *Gender* and respondents' answers on *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. This implies that males and females do not have different perceptions regarding *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*.

5.6.2   RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was undertaken to determine whether respondents from different age and population groups have different perceptions regarding *Buying Behaviour*, *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. Therefore, the study also aims to determine whether the South African cultural diversity can lead to diversity in buying patterns, and whether age differences can also lead to different buying patterns. For these reasons, the influence of *Age* and *Population Group* on respondents' buying patterns was investigated.

The following hypotheses regarding the demographic variable *Age* were formulated to be tested:

H^{0e}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Age* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H^{0f}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Age* and *Brand Image/Reputation*.

H^{0g}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Age* and *Store Physical Environment*.

H^{0h}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Age* and *Cultural Clothing*.

Table 5.21 presents the ANOVA results of the influence of the demographic variable *Age* on *Buying Behaviour*, *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*.

Table 5.21:   **ANOVA results for *Age***

Dependent Variable	F-value	p
Buying Behaviour	0.421072	0.793335
Independent Variables	F-value	p
Brand Image/Reputation	1.428934	0.225674
Store Physical Environment	1.099916	0.357764
Cultural Clothing	*2.664994*	*0.033643*

(p<0.05)

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No significant differences were found regarding how the various age groups perceive *Brand Image/Reputation* and the *Store Physical Environment*. However, Table 5.21 shows a significant difference of how the different age groups perceive *Cultural Clothing* (F = 2.664994; p<0.05). To determine how the various age groups perceive *Cultural Clothing*, the post-hoc Scheffe test was undertaken and the results are sumarised in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22: **Scheffe test results of the influence of Age on Cultural Clothing**

Age group	18-24 years M=5.7760	25-34 years M=5.6790	35-44 years M=5.6410	45-54 years M=5.6667	55+ years M=4.4583
18-24 years		0.990460	0.996374	0.999487	*0.034156*
25-34 years	0.990460		0.999981	1.000000	0.080638
35-44 years	0.996374	0.999981		0.999999	0.232209
45-54 years	0.999487	1.000000	0.999999		0.353477
55+ years	*0.034156*	0.080638	0.232209	0.353477	

(p<0.05)

From Table 5.22, it is evident that there is a statistical significant difference in perceptions on *Cultural Clothing* between respondents aged 18-24 years and respondents aged 55 years and older (p<0.05). The difference in mean scores suggests that respondents aged 18-24 years (M=5.7760) regard the purchase of *Cultural Clothing* as more important than respondents older than 55 years (M=4.4583).

The following hypotheses regarding the demographic variable *Population Group* were formulated to be tested:

H^{0i}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Population Group* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H^{0j}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Population Group* and *Brand Image/Reputation*.

H^{0k}:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Population Group* and *Store Physical Environment*.

H[0l]:   There is no difference between the mean scores of *Population Group* and *Cultural Clothing*.

Table 5.23 presents the ANOVA results of the influence of *Population Group* on *Buying Behaviour*, *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*.

Table 5.23:   ANOVA results for *Population Group*

Dependent Variable	F-value	p
Buying Behaviour	0.955295	0.414877
Independent Variables	F-value	p
Brand Image/Reputation	*3.115259*	*0.027245*
Store Physical Environment	1.737999	0.160395
Cultural Clothing	*5.192998*	*0.001777*

(*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001)

No significant difference was found in the various *Population Groups*' perceptions on *Store Physical Environment*. It is seen from Table 5.23 that there are significant differences in the perceptions of the various *Population Groups* regarding *Brand Image/Reputation* ($p<0.05$) and *Cultural Clothing* ($p<0.01$). To determine where the difference in perceptions lies, the post-hoc Scheffe test was undertaken. Table 5.24 sumarises the results of the Scheffe test of the influence of *Population Group* on *Brand Image/Reputation*.

Table 5.24:   Scheffe test results of the influence of *Population Group* on *Brand Image/Reputation*

Population group	Asian M=5.1143	Black M=5.0367	Coloured M=5.4037	White M=4.8140
Asian		0.998388	0.932307	0.925813
Black	0.998388		0.168345	0.618282
Coloured	0.932307	0.168345		*0.032402*
White	0.925813	0.618282	*0.032402*	

(p<0.05)

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As evident in Table 5.24, no significant differences were found between the various populations groups regarding their perceptions of *Brand Image/Reputation*, except between the White and Coloured population groups (p<0.05). This difference is translated by the mean scores suggesting that the respondents of Coloured ethnicity (M=5.4037) are more *Brand Image/Reputation* conscious than the respondents of White ethnicity (M=4.8140).

Results of the Scheffe test undertaken to measure the influence of *Population Group* on *Cultural Clothing* are presented in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25:   Scheffe test results of the influence of *Population Group* on *Cultural Clothing*

Population group	Asian M=5.8000	Black M=5.9351	Coloured M=5.5290	White M=5.1938
Asian		0.994841	0.964200	0.711327
Black	0.994841		0.214889	*0.003092*
Coloured	0.964200	0.214889		0.555416
White	0.711327	*0.003092*	0.555416	

(p<0.05)

No significant differences were found on how various *Population Groups* perceive *Cultural Clothing*, except between the respondents of the White and Black ethnicity. Table 5.25 shows a statistical significant difference at p<0.05. The difference in mean scores suggests that Black respondents (M=5.9351) regard the purchase of *Cultural Clothing* as more important than respondents of White ethnicity (M=5.1938).

5.7   SUMMARY

This chapter provided a discussion of the empirical results pertaining to this study. descriptive statistics were first reported from Section A of the measuring instrument encompassing respondents' demographic data (Gender, Population Group and Age), the preferred mode of payment, the people whom respondents usually shop for and the clothing stores where they usually shop.

Thereafter, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were investigated. First, an EFA was conducted on the measuring instrument's Section B and Section C items to determine the validity. This led to slight changes such as the merging, renaming and splitting of some variables. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were then calculated for the established variables to identify reliability levels. The amendments made to variables led to the re-operationalisation of variables to present the new hypothesised model.

Following the validity and reliability analyses of the measuring instrument, the chapter investigated the correlations and relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The Pearson's product moment correlations were calculated and revealed that all the variables of the study were positively correlated, though the correlations were weak or moderate. In the same way, a multiple regression analysis was conducted on all the variables and it was reported that only three variables, namely *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing* had significant positive relationships with the dependent variable *Buying Behaviour*. In addition, a *t*-test and ANOVAS were undertaken to determine the relationships between respondents' demographic information and their perceptions regarding the variables with significant positive relationships with *Buying Behaviour*. Furthermore, post-hoc Scheffe tests were conducted to determine the nature of the relationships between the variables that recorded statistical significant relationships with a particular demographic aspect.

The following chapter, which is the final chapter of this study, will provide a summary of the whole study, a report on the main empirical results found in Chapter Five and the recommendations to relevant role players in the clothing retail industry that can be made accordingly. The recommendations to be made are meant to assist business managers in better understanding and grasping customers' buying behaviour in order to remain sustainable while addressing customers' needs more effectively. Lastly the final chapter will also state this study's limitations and make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presented the statistical results of the empirical investigation conducted to achieve the objectives pertaining to this research. In the current chapter which is the final chapter, a broad overview of the study and a brief summary of the previous chapters will be provided. Thereafter, a discussion of the main empirical results and the most relevant conclusions related to those results will be highlighted. Similarly, recommendations, based on the empirical results, will be suggested. Lastly, the limitations and contributions of this study will be presented before further research perspectives will be suggested.

6.2   BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

This section will present an overview of the different chapters that were developed in this study.

6.2.1   OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One poses customers as the cornerstone and the reason-being of any business. In other words, for any manager to make a business profitable and sustainable, it is important to grasp customers' real needs and expectations. Furthermore, in order to build a long lasting and win-win relationship, managers need to address customers' needs and expectations efficiently and effectively. Understanding customers' needs thus implies understanding customers' buying patterns and what factors drive those patterns, regardless of the business type. In addition, the South African clothing retail industry is experiencing a steady growth, resulting in more visibility at global level with clothing retailers such as Mr Price expanding internationally. For this reason, the retail industry is becoming increasingly competitive and has to adapt to national, regional and global changes to keep up with new retail trends to remain competitive. Furthermore, with the soar of certain social

classes and specific type of customers such as the "Black diamond" and the "buppies" allocating an important part of their incomes to clothing shopping, it is important for managers to adjust to fashion pertaining to customers and market volatility. In addition, as South Africa is the "Rainbow Nation" it, presents a diversity that may imply diversity in terms of buying behaviour.

For the above mentioned reasons, the purpose of this study was to investigate which variables influence buying behaviour in the South African clothing retail industry. As the literature revealed numerous variables, the variables selected to investigate in this study were *Brand Perceptions* (as measured by *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image), Customer Experience (*as measured *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*), and lastly the *Social Considerations* (as measured by *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*), and their possible influence was to be investigated on customers' *Buying Behaviour*. The primary objective was to investigate how *Brand Perceptions* (*Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image), Customer Experience (Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*), and lastly *Social considerations* (*Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*) influence customers' *Buying Behaviour*. The following secondary objectives to the study were identified to assist in achieving the primary objective:

- To do an in-depth overview of the literature related to brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour.
- To conduct a literature overview on the retail industry in South Africa.
- To develop a hypothesised model showing the relationships between brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations (independent variables) and buying behaviour (dependent variable).
- To develop a measuring instrument to empirically test the relationships formulated in the hypothesised model.
- To empirically test the relationships formulated in the hypothesised model.
- To report on the data analysis resulting from the relationships empirically tested.

- To make recommendations that will assist clothing retail managers in assessing brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can be used to foster purchase decisions.

6.2.2   OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO

A literature overview of the global and South African retail industry was conducted in Chapter Two. This Chapter first highlighted the main characteristics of the current (2013/2014) global retail industry that is identified as a fast moving and fast growing industry shaped by the increasing use of innovative technologies and ever-changing customer behaviours. The chapter also presented the North American retailers as the global leaders of the retail industry, followed by European countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom. However, BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) markets, African emerging markets (such as South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria) and Latin America markets (such as Chile and Uruguay) were also presented as exponentially growing clothing retail industries.

In terms of global clothing retail, Bangladesh, China, Vietnam, Cambodge and India were presented as the most important clothing production hubs due to lower production opportunities. With regards to the South African retail industry, the country was presented as the business' gateway to the continent and the retail leader on the continent. Following the global trend, the South African retail is a growing industry employing a large part of the population. South African retail industry growth is driven by the expansion of shopping malls and large supermarket chains such as Pick n Pay, Spar, Checkers, Shoprite and OK. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted some characteristics of the South African retail industry, such as consumers' preference for convenience shopping, the large consumption of consumer goods the emergence of higher income class inside the Black population and their spending power, and the spread of the second economy. The South African clothing industry, led by local clothing retailers such as Foschini group, Edcon group, Truworths and Woolworths, is also driven by the spending power of the Black population and the expansion of shopping malls. That expansion attracts more global brands, resulting in more competition from internationally established brands.

6.2.3 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER THREE

In Chapter Three, a comprehensive literature review of buying behaviour and variables possibly influencing buying behaviour was provided. This chapter summarised various studies that had given attention to variables influencing buying behaviour, with a focus on the following selected variables: *Brand Perceptions* (as measured by *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image), Customer Experience* (as measured by *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*), and lastly the *Social Considerations* (as measured by *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*).

Buying behaviour was defined as the process undertaken by a customer while searching, evaluating, and processing the information pertaining to a product before making a purchase decision. The whole process was also described as involving a post-purchase evaluation. Thereafter, *Brand Perceptions* and its measuring variables, namely *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image,* were defined. *Brand Perceptions* was defined as the trade-off between customer satisfaction and the efforts engaged to reach that level of satisfaction. *Brand Quality* was presented as the level of superiority and excellence customers perceive in a product. Regarding *Brand Reputation,* it was associated with the favourable or non-favourable views customers hold in their minds regarding a brand while *Brand Image* was defined as the global impressions, associations, beliefs and attitudes that the brand inspires on the customers' minds. The second set of variables presented in this chapter was *Customer Experience* and its measuring variables, namely *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*. *Store Physical Environment* referred to any interaction between the brand and the customers during the in-store experience, and *Staff Service* referred to the quality of the service delivered by the in-store staff. *Customer Experience* was hence presented as the set of emotions and sensations created by the store physical environment and interaction between the customer and the store's staff. In addition, a list of actions was suggested to improve the customer experience. Lastly, the *Social Considerations* comprised of variables, namely *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*. *Reference Groups* was defined as a collection of people sharing the same type of principles and views and regularly interacting with the customer while *Culture/Subculture* was referred to as the external

aspects of a lifestyle inherited and accustomed over the generations by a social group. Therefore, *Social Considerations* was defined as the social environment (including aspects such as reference groups, culture and subculture) influencing buying behaviour. After discussing all the variables pertaining to this study, the hypothesised model highlighting the independent variables (*Brand Perceptions* measured by *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image, Customer Experience* measured by *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*, and lastly the *Social Considerations* measured by *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*) and the dependent variable (*Buying Behaviour*) was presented.

6.2.4   OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER FOUR

The research methodology adopted in this study was described in Chapter Four. The research methodology encompasses all the methods used to empirically test the research hypotheses developed in the hypothesised model. Given the nature of the problem statement as well as the primary and secondary research objectives, the positivistic research paradigm was applied. A sample was 200 was drawn from clothing stores in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. The convenience sampling method was implemented to identify respondents, as it is a time and cost effective sampling method. The research instrument used for this study was a self-constructed and self-administered questionnaire, which was based on items adapted from previous scales found in secondary sources. The questionnaire consisted of three sections, where Section A gathered respondents' demographic information, Section B related to respondents' perceptions and shopping patterns in the clothing store they attended the most, and Section C considered respondents' social considerations in clothing stores in general. The questionnaire was handed out to 232 respondents, of which 207 were returned completed and usable. The importance of validity and reliability of the questionnaire were discussed, together with methods to implement to ensure the measuring instrument's validity and reliability. The descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to be used for data analysis were discussed. These techniques involved descriptive statistics such as the mean, frequency, standard deviation, and inferential statistics such as EFA, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations, multiple regression analysis, a *t*-test and ANOVA tests.

6.2.5 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter Five provided the empirical results of the statistical techniques used to address the secondary research objectives of this study. The chapter first presented descriptive statistics of the respondents' demographic information.

Regarding the demographic information, the majority of respondents were less than 35 years old, more female respondents than men respondents completed the questionnaire, especially respondents from the Black ethnic group. This shows that, consistently with the prior research, the Black youth has a growing purchasing power. The validity of the measuring instrument was confirmed through an EFA that resulted in re-defining some variables according to the item loadings. All the factor loadings above 0.50 were considered valid, and from the eight original variables (seven independent variables and one dependent variable), the EFA suggested to add two new factors, as the results found ten factors based on the factor loadings. However, since a variable needs a minimum of three items to be accepted, two factors were eliminated as they only had two items loading on each. Therefore, even though the hypothesised model and research hypotheses were modified through renaming some variables, its structure remained unchanged, with seven independent variables and the initial dependent variable. Following the EFA, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the internal consistency of the factors resulting from the EFA, as that would confirm the reliability of the measuring instrument. With alpha coefficients ranging between 0.68 and 0.85 for the eight variables, the measuring instrument used for this study was regarded as reliable. Based on the EFA results, the hypotheses were reformulated as follows:

$H^{1.1}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Quality* and *Buying Behaviour.*

$H^{1.2}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Brand Image/Behaviour* and *Buying Behaviour.*

$H^{2.1}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour.*

$H^{2.2}$:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Staff Service* and *Buying Behaviour.*

H[3.1]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Reference Groups* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[3.2]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*.

H[3.3]:   There is a significant positive relationship between *Cultural Assimilation* and *Buying Behaviour*.

Correlations and relationships between variables were also shown in Chapter Five, using Pearson's product moment correlations and multiple regression analysis for relationship testing. The Pearson's product moment correlations showed that all the variables investigated in this study were positively correlated, although all the correlations were not significant. The strength of the significant correlations ranged from weak to moderate, with the weakest correlation being between *Cultural Clothing* and *Brand Quality*, and the strongest between *Brand Quality* and *Brand Image/Reputation*. The multiple regression analysis evidenced significant positive relationships between the dependent variable *Buying Behaviour* and three independent variables, namely *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. The multiple regression analysis' results showed that there were significant positive relationships between *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Buying Behaviour* (H[1.2]), between *Store Physical Environment* and *Buying Behaviour* (H[2.1]), and between *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour* (H[3.2]).

Therefore, hypotheses H[1.2], H[2.1] and H[3.2] were accepted, as significant positive relationships were found between *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*. Hypotheses H[1.1], H[2.2], H[3.1] and H[3.3] were rejected as no significant relationships were found between the variables as suggested by these hypotheses.

In addition to correlations and relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, a *t*-test and ANOVAS were undertaken in order to determine the influence of demographic factors on the perceptions respondents had about the selected variables. Hence, the influence of *Gender, Age* and *Population Group,* on respondents' answers regarding *Buying Behaviour, Brand Image/Reputation, Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing* was assessed. While *Gender* showed no

significant difference in responses regarding *Buying Behaviour, Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*, there was a significant relationship between *Age* and *Cultural Clothing*. In the same way, there was a significant relationship between *Population Group* and the variables *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Cultural Clothing*.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE MAIN EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Significant relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable were reported. The sections to follow will give more insight on those relationships and discuss the recommendations that can be made to business managers in the clothing retail industry accordingly. In this way, the final secondary objective formulated in this study will be achieved.

With regards to the main empirical finding of this study, despite a positive correlation between all the variables and *Buying Behaviour*, three variables appear to be significantly related to *Buying Behaviour*, namely *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. This indicates that while shopping for clothing, respondents are more interested in buying brands from stores carrying a good reputation, providing an enjoyable shopping experience, and stocking clothing that assist customers in relating to their own culture. Consequently, clothing retailers should work on improving their image, strive to keep their stores pleasant for shopping in terms of layout and facilities and convey cultural values in their clothing.

6.3.1 BRAND IMAGE/REPUTATION

Brand Image/Reputation, was the *Brand Perceptions*' variable that showed a significant positive relationship with *Buying Behaviour*. Therefore, the perceptions customers hold on the image and reputation of a brand has a significant positive influence on their *Buying Behaviour*. Consequently, the following recommendations, about *Brand Image/ Reputation* can be made:

- Retailers should tailor their offers to their customers' lifestyle so that customers will identify themselves with the brand.

- Stylish clothes make customers feel prestigious or like they are wearing prestigious clothes. Thus, offering stylish clothes will lead to the brand being perceived as prestigious in the customer mind. Prestige was identified by Batra and Homer (2004:318) as an intangible value that improves brand image.

- Brand quality was presented by Walsh and Beatty (2007:133) and Musteen *et al.* (2012:5) as a measure of brand reputation, therefore ensuring good quality clothes and service in the stores can help retailers improve their reputation.

- In addition, Walsh and Beatty (2007:133) and Musteen *et al.* (2012:5) also listed corporate citizenship and social responsibility as drivers of good reputation. Retailers can thus get more involved in social and community activities to ensure positive views from customers.

- Hu *et al.* (2009:116) linked brand image to the service experience, and how the service is delivered. This implies that staff also assists in creating a positive brand image. Thus, effective management and good staff can also boost brand image and reputation.

- Retailers must use effective communication through multichannel communication, as brand image is also associated with the brand communication to stakeholders (Kim *et al.* 2008:250). Being present on the Internet through online advertisements, social media and blogs, as additional communication channels can assist retailers in building a stronger image and reputation.

6.3.2   STORE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Store Physical Environment was the *Customer Experience* variable that had a significant positive relationship with *Buying Behaviour*. Therefore, *Store Physical Environment* is a factor that has a significant positive influence on customers' *Buying Behaviour*. The following recommendations, about *Store Physical Environment* can be made to clothing retailers:

- Retailers should make sure that the store's changing rooms are always clean and well equipped with enough mirrors, hangers or benches to suit

customers' convenience. Store managers should encourage staff to ensure that cubicles are kept clean and in good state every time a customer is done using it.

- In addition, keeping the store atmosphere and ambiance agreeable (Laine 2010:3), for example by making use of air freshener with a pleasant smell can make customers feel welcome and increase visits in the store, which ultimately should improve buying behavior through an increase in sales.

- The music played in the store should not be loud, as it may irritate customers. In addition, the music should fit in with the store's theme, the type of clothing sold and the type of clientele (Wall & Berry 2007:61).

- The store layout should make navigation through the store easy for customers by labeling sections, and they should be able to easily access the clothes they want (Kamaladevi 2010:49).

- Organise the store in a way that would reduce risks of store congestion (Tendai & Crispen 2009:104).

- Organise aisles in a logical way, complementary clothes next to each other. For example, it is easier to shop when the shirts section is found next to the suits or blazers section (Miksen 2014).

- Furthermore, the way mannequins are dressed should be attractive enough to give a good display of the items available in the store as well as the dressing options available (Miksen 2014). The clothes should be well fitted on the mannequins, have no wrinkles, stains or scratches.

- The store appearance should be eye-catching from outside to encourage customers to come inside and ultimately make a purchase (Amoudom & Ben-Shabat 2012).

- Manage inventory effectively to make sure the store do not run out of any product as it can prompt customers to switch to other stores (Leone *et al.* 2006:136).

- As it is sometimes irritating to be searched when leaving a store, the post shopping experience can be improved by replacing security search with technology that can detect unpaid items.

- Manage customers' claims and complaints (for example return, exchange and refund policies) effectively to leave a positive experience in the customers' minds (Parson 2011).

6.3.3 CULTURAL CLOTHING

This study's results suggest that *Cultural Clothing* is the respondents' most important social consideration, as it displays the strongest significant positive relationship with *Buying Behaviour*. In other words, *Cultural Clothing* is a factor that has a significant positive influence on customers' *Buying Behaviour*. Regarding this specific variable, the following recommendations can be made to clothing retailers:

- South Africa is being labeled as the "Rainbow Nation" for its ability to make people from different ethnicity, background and culture live together and come together as a nation for the best (Seekings 2008:6). Elements translating aspects of the "Rainbow Nation" can be incorporated in the clothing production, to reflect that pride of being called a South African.
- In addition, to reach culture conscious customers, retailers can also develop clothing lines displaying popular expressions, messages and values proper to specific cultures, and make sure they cover the South African diversity while doing so.
- To acknowledge the rise of the Black middle class purchasing power (ThomasWhite 2011), clothing retailers can develop clothing lines for which public figures representing that rise can be associated with their brands. It would help clothing retailers to gain customers in that particular social class that see those public figures as role models.
- In a broader way, clothing retailers can portray the South African diversity by associating their brands with public figures from different backgrounds and ethnicity to gain customers in each cultural segment.
- Retailers can also associate their brands with popular cultural programs in media to increase their brand awareness among culture conscious audiences and ultimately acquire more customers. For example, sponsor the clothing of

the presenter of a cultural show and promote it to increase brand awareness and support from customers following the show.

6.3.4   DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

As most of the respondents were relatively young (younger than 35 years old), were female and belonged to the Black ethnic group, the results were consistent with prior research that highlighted the soar of Black youth purchasing power. It would be beneficial for retailers to adapt their offerings to a young and mostly female clientele, to be able to reap benefits from the women's propensity to shop for clothing. In addition, as the respondents are mostly younger than 35 years, proposing clothing that matches the dressing style of South Africans aged around that age could also help retailers increasing sales and ultimately profits.

Despite not stated as an objective of this study, additional inferential statistics were undertaken to investigate the influence of *Gender*, *Age* and *Population Group* on respondents' answers regarding *Buying Behaviour*, *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. A *t*-test was performed for *Gender* while ANOVAS were used for *Age* and *Population Group*.

As multiple regression analysis revealed that *Brand Image/Reputation, Store Physical Environment and Cultural Clothing* were significantly related to *Buying Behaviour*, there was a need to investigate whether that would translate into an influence of *Gender* on the perceptions regarding the significant independent variables. The *t*-test results showed that whether the respondent was a male or a female, there was no significant difference on answers related to *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*.

The ANOVA conducted on *Age* resulted in concluding that there was a significant relationship between *Age* and *Cultural Clothing*. A post-hoc Scheffe provided more details on the nature of the relationship. The Scheffe test showed that a significant difference occurred in answers from respondents aged 18-24 years and respondents aged 55 years and older. As those two age groups represent two very distinct stages in life, they also present distinct perceptions of *Cultural Clothing*, as the younger group regard *Cultural Clothing* as more important than the older group.

From the above finding, it appears that it would be more profitable for clothing retailers to add a cultural value to the style of clothing destined to serve customers aged between 18-24 years, as they appear to be more culture-conscious than those of 55 years and older.

In the same way, an ANOVA was conducted on *Population Group*. As a result, *Population Group* was found to have significant relationships with *Brand Image/Reputation* and *Cultural Clothing*.

A Scheffe test was undertaken to determine the nature of the relationship between *Population Group* and *Brand Image/Reputation*. The results evidenced that there was a statistical significant difference in perceptions of *Brand Image/Reputation* between White respondents and Coloured respondents, with Coloured respondents more *Brand Image/Reputation* conscious than White respondents.

In the light of these results, it can be recommended to retailers to strive to maintain a good image and reputation in order to retain and gain more Coloured respondents, but also to grow awareness for their brand reputation among the White population. The Nelson Mandela Metropole presents suburbs with a dominance of specific ethnicities. For example, engaging into social and community activities in areas dominated by the Coloured population would result in increasing brand image and reputation, since Coloured were found to be more *Brand Image/Reputation* conscious.

The post-hoc Scheffe test showed significant statistical differences in the responses of respondents of Black ethnicity when compared to respondents of White ethnicity regarding *Cultural Clothing*. In other words, Black respondents proved to be more culture-conscious in the way they dress compared to White respondents.

South Africa is experiencing numerous post-apartheid trends such as the Black population increasingly affirming their attachment to their culture. In addition, the Black population presents more diversity in terms of language diversity, for example. It would be profitable for retailers to adjust to the trend, not by pursuing support exclusively from the Black population, but by proposing clothing lines that would

serve that niche, especially with the rise of the middle class among the Black population. Moreover, retailers can increase their visibility in social and cultural events that gather a majority of the Black population by dressing Black public figures and incorporating them in marketing activities.

To recapitulate, this section gathered some recommendations made to retailers on *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing*. These recommendations confirmed the previous research presented in the literature and adapted them to the South African environment and clothing retail industry. As mentioned in the literature, *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment* and *Cultural Clothing* have an influence on customers' *Buying Behaviour*. With regards to *Brand Image/Reputation*, Leone *et al.* (2006:132) argued that the influence is reciprocal between brand reputation and buying behaviour, because the more a brand is repurchased, the more its reputation increases. In terms of brand image and buying behaviour, the most recurring idea is that the more the brand image matches the customers' self-image and social image, the more it influences their purchase decision. In the same way, regarding *Store Physical Environment*, Kamaladevi (2010:49) stated that the easier customers can find their way in the store and access the products they need or want, the more likely it is that a purchase transaction will take place. With regards to results and recommendations on *Cultural Clothing*, Grant and Stephen (2005:455) noted that at different age stages of their lives, customers perceive different social influences as important and base their purchasing decisions upon those social influences. Therefore, retailers should strive to create a positive brand image and reputation, arrange their stores' layout in a way that would make shopping easier for customers and also know the expectations of their culture-conscious customers.

6.4   CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study has contributed to the body of literature on buying behaviour, especially in the field of clothing retail. Numerous factors such as prices, promotions and brand perceptions have been assumed to have an influence on customers' buying behaviours. However, this study contributed to the field of study by extending the factors to consider when aiming at improving buying behaviour. This study initially

focused on *Brand Perceptions* (as measured by *Brand Quality*, *Brand Reputation* and *Brand Image*), *Customer Experience* (as measured by *Store Physical Environment* and *Staff Service*), and *Social Considerations* (as measured by *Reference Groups* and *Culture/Subculture*). Consequently, the study confirmed significant positive relationships between *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment*, *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*.

The hypothesised model that was developed for this study was the first that was putting together *Brand Quality, Brand Image/Reputation, Store Physical Environment, Staff Service, Reference groups, Cultural Clothing*, and *Cultural Assimilation* to investigate their influence on *Buying Behaviour*. The development of the hypothesised model significantly contributed towards having a better understanding of customers' perceptions of the selected variables, and ultimately how these variables could trigger their purchase decisions. Figure 6.1 is reference to the hypothesised model used for this study.

Figure 6.1:   Hypothesised model used for the study
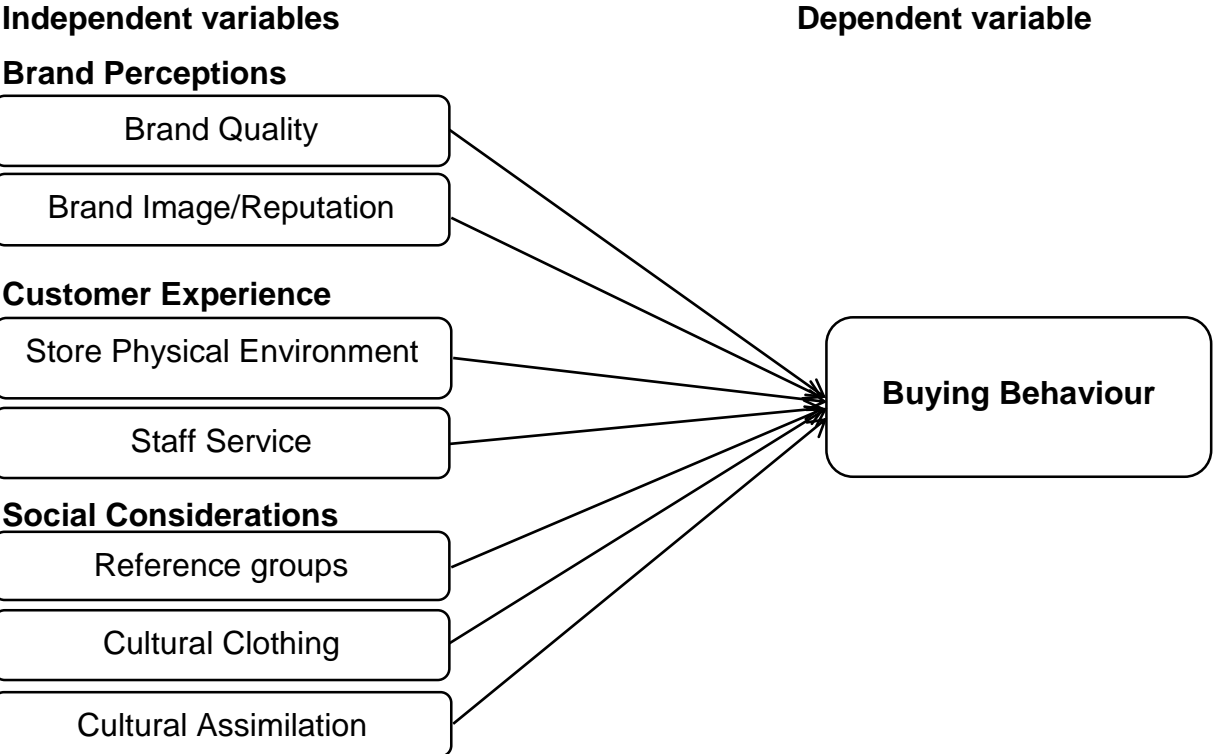
In addition, the measuring instrument that was used for this study was proven to be valid and reliable, and helped in finding the pertinent relationships between *Brand Image/Reputation*, *Store Physical Environment*, *Cultural Clothing* and *Buying Behaviour*. That measuring instrument can thus serve as a basis for developing other research instruments that will investigate similar variables as those considered in this study.

As a result, this study enumerated some recommendations and suggestions that should enable retailers to create a positive image and reputation in customers' minds. In addition, the recommendations and suggestions made should assist retailers in arranging the stores in a more attractive way for customers and reach more culture-conscious customers. Ultimately, all these recommendations should help retailers in stimulating customers' purchase decisions and building a stronger relationship with those customers.

6.5   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study aimed at making a pertinent contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to buying behaviour in the clothing retail industry. This study hence gave insights on the concepts of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations, and investigated their influence on buying behaviour in the clothing retail industry. However, while conducting this study a number of limitations were encountered, leading to making suggestions for future research.

The first limitation to mention is the sampling method used, namely the convenience sampling technique. Using convenience sampling poses a threat in terms of representativeness, as respondents are not chosen on the basis of rigorous methods ensuring that all the significant groups of the population are represented in the sample. This makes it impossible to generalise the results of this study to the whole clothing retail industry nationwide. A database providing a sample frame from which probability samples of respondents could be drawn would be a more effective method in future research.

Another limitation, still regarding sampling, is the sample size. As a sample of 207 respondents was used for this study, it disables the ability to accurately generalise the results to the population of the Nelson Mandela Metropole. To avoid this sample size limitation, a larger sample size in future research would assist in representing a bigger part of the studied population and yielding more meaningful results.

Another limitation encountered in this study was the difficulty to collect respondents' perceptions while they were experiencing the brand. Some respondents were approached in clothing stores but were not keen on having their shopping interrupted by a questionnaire completion. In the future, it would be more significant to find a way collect respondents perceptions while they are in a store, as it will be easier for them to relate to the questions. That could be achieved by either developing a shorter questionnaire, or obtaining respondents' agreement for the completion of the questionnaire prior to their visit to a clothing store.

Furthermore, the choice of variables used for this study also present a limitation. Even though this study strived to cover a satisfying amount of variables influencing customers' buying behaviours, there are numerous other variables that could also influence buying behaviour in the clothing retail industry. Therefore, future studies to be conducted on buying behaviour in the clothing retail industry should also consider including other variables. For example, specific factors of store physical environment, such as store layout, can be investigated in the future.

6.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study aimed at investigating variables influencing buying behaviour in clothing retail industry in order to enable retailers to better address customers' needs and make their businesses more profitable and sustainable through increasing buying from customers (sales). The study presented a deeper insight of how brand perceptions (through brand quality and brand image/reputation), customer experience (through store physical environment and staff service), and social considerations (through reference groups, cultural clothing and cultural assimilation) can lead customers to make clothing purchases.

Recommendations were made to retailers to help them make use of the results of this study in a way that would benefit their businesses. These recommendations were practical recommendations adapted to the South African context, based on previous research as presented in the literature, but also on the basis of perceptions expressed by respondents (clothing retail industry customers) in this study's empirical investigation. To be more specific, the recommendations attempted to equip retailers with tools to boost purchases by improving their image/reputation, improving their store environment and adapting their clothing lines to culture-conscious customers' needs.

The application of this study's recommendations should assist retailers in building a better brand image, a stronger reputation, a more conducive store environment, clothing appropriate for specific cultures and increased sales (through the

improvement of customers' buying behaviour). This may ultimately lead to more successful clothing retailers.

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ANNEXURE A:

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

for tomorrow

Unit for Applied Management Sciences
Summerstrand South Campus
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
Tel. +27 (0)41 504 1124 Fax. +27 (0)41 504 4840

July 2014

Dear Respondent

RESEARCH PROJECT: VARIABLES INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY

ETHICS APPROVAL REFERENCE: H14-BES-BUS-050

Thank you for your willingness to assist us in this research project by taking a few minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire.

This research regarding variables influencing buying behaviour in the South African clothing retail industry is a study functioning under the supervision of the Department of Business Management at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth.

South Africans allocate approximately 10% of their income to clothing expenditures. It is hence of utmost importance to conduct research on South Africans' clothing buying behaviours. Buying behaviour is the process during which customers search, evaluate, process the information linked to a purchase, then decide whether or not to make the purchase, before a post-purchase assessment.

The current research study will focus on the influence of brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations on buying behaviour. The primary objective of the study is to investigate how brand perceptions, customer experience and social considerations can influence purchases.

Please complete the attached questions as they apply to yourself and also note that the participation is not compulsory. The first set of questions contains a number of statements relating to brand perceptions, customer experience, social considerations and buying behaviour. Please indicate the extent of your agreement with these statements by placing a cross (X) in the appropriate column. There are no right or wrong answers, and only your responses are important. The next set of questions asks for basic demographic data concerning yourself.

Even though no confidential information is required, your responses will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Also note that you have no obligation to complete the questionnaire and you may withdraw at any time.

Thank you for your willingness to contribute to the success of this research project.

Yours faithfully

Xavier Owona
Researcher
NMMU

Dr Janine Krüger
Supervisor
NMMU

Prof Chantal Rootman
Cosupervisor
NMMU

Section A: Demographic Information:

The following questions ask for basic information about you. Please indicate your response by making a cross (X) in the appropriate numbered block, as requested.

1. Please indicate your **gender**:

1. Male	
2. Female	

2. Please indicate to which **population group** you belong:

1. Asian	
2. Black	
3. Coloured	
4. White	
5. Other, please specify:	

3. Please indicate your **current age**:

1. 18-24 years	
2. 25-34 years	
3. 35-44 years	
4. 45-54 years	
5. 55+ years	

4. Please indicate your usual **mode of payment** when purchasing clothes:

1. Cash	
2. Credit card	
3. Store account 6 months	
4. Store account 12 months	
5. Lay-by	
6. Other, please specify:	

5. Please indicate who **you usually shop for** (may tick more than one):

1. Yourself	
2. Partner	
3. Children	
4. Other, please specify	

6. Please indicate **which clothing store** you usually shop at (may tick more than one):

	Greenacres	Walmer Park	Other centre
1. Edgars			
2. Foschini			
3. Markham			
4. Mr Price			
5. Woolworths			
6. Other, please specify:			

Section B: Perceptions and buying behaviour at the clothing store where respondents do most of their shopping

	Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements below about clothing shops in general.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral or no opinion	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	BRAND QUALITY							
1	The store tailors its product offerings to meet my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The store offers high quality products and services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	The store provides satisfactory customer service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I am satisfied with the store's ability to provide the products I need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	The store products' quality is better than its competitors' quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	The main reason why I choose the store is because of the products sold.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	BRAND REPUTATION							
7	I choose to shop at the store because of its reputation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	The store has a good reputation compared to its competitors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	The store is well-known.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	The store is regarded as a leader in the market.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Other customers have recommended the store to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	BRAND IMAGE							
12	I identify with the store's brand image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	I visit the store because its products fit in with my lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	The store is regarded as selling stylish products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	I regard the store's brand as expensive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	The store has a unique image compared to the others in the same industry.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	The store's prices match its product quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	The store provides good value for money.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	I prefer buying the store's clothing labels.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	STORE'S PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT							
20	The store is always well stocked.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	The store has attractive décor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	The store's changing rooms are clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	The store has enough changing rooms.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	The store's window display is eye-catching.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	The store's overall atmosphere makes shopping enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	It is easy to find what I am looking for in the store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	The shopping experience at the store is pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	STAFF SERVICE							
28	The staff in the store is helpful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	The staff in the store is friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	The store's refund procedure is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	The store's exchange procedure is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	The staff in the store has good knowledge of the products they sell.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	It is easy to open an account at the store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements below about clothing shops in general.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral or no opinion	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
BUYING BEHAVIOUR							
34	I recommend this store to other customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	I frequently visit this store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	I remain loyal to this store when shopping for clothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	I prefer buying well-known brands of clothing.							
38	I prefer shopping in this store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

#	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral or no opinion	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	BUYING BEHAVIOUR							
34	I recommend this store to other customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	I frequently visit this store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	I remain loyal to this store when shopping for clothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	I prefer buying well-known brands of clothing.							
38	I prefer shopping in this store.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section C: Social considerations and perceptions of respondents on shopping at clothing stores in general

#	Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements below about clothing shops in general.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral or no opinion	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
	REFERENCE GROUPS							
39	I seek my friends' opinion before shopping.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	I dress similar to those in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41	It is important that other people like the products I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42	It is important that other people like the brands I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43	I achieve a sense of belonging by buying the same brands my friends buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44	I buy from stores where people who are important to me encourage me to buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	CULTURE/SUBCULTURE							
45	I regard my culture as important.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46	I am proud to be identified with my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47	I shop in stores where members of my culture are employed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48	I like to be exposed to other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49	I buy local brands that relate to my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50	The way I dress is influenced by my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51	I prefer wearing clothes representing my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52	I find it necessary to dress similarly to other members of my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53	I change my buying opinions to conform to those of my culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you for your participation

ANNEXURE B:

ETHICS CLEARANCE

ANNEXURE C:

CERTIFICATE OF PROOF-READING

Savanna Tai

Trading as Abonite (Pty) LTD
Registration no. 2014/129444/07

Presents

CERTIFICATE of PROOF-READING

to

Rene Xavier Owona Ndi

confirming that the dissertation entitled,

"VARIABLES INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING RETAIL INDUSTRY" has been proof-read by Ms Savanna Tai of the company Abonite (Pty) Ltd.

December 1, 2014