

Measuring the brand loyalty of customers towards online booking platforms

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree *Master of Business
Administration* at the North-West University

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Graduation: May 2020

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the brand loyalty of consumers in the online booking platform industry. The Mabalingwe Nature Reserve served as a case study while the Moolla and Bisschoff brand loyalty model was used to measure brand loyalty across 12 antecedents. The original model was developed for the fast-moving consumer goods industry, but also validated in various sectors such as the banking industry, pharmaceutical industry, services and agriculture. The objectives of this study were to validate the model for use in online booking platforms, to measure the reliability of the data and then to measure the relative importance of the twelve brand loyalty antecedents. Online questionnaires were distributed via an online link by the booking managers of Mabalingwe Game Reserve, and 131 responses were captured. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy indicated a statistically adequate sample. The questionnaire was validated, and the data was found reliable. The most important brand loyalty antecedents are Customer satisfaction and Brand trust. Culture is the least important brand loyalty antecedent. Regarding latent variable identification, *Brand quality* and *Brand relationship* are the most important factors (explaining a variance of 13.1% and 8.7%, respectively), while *Economic conditions* represent the least factor (3.0%). The study culminated in a model to measure brand loyalty of online booking platforms. This model can be operationalised by managers, researchers and also academia.

Keywords: Brand loyalty, online booking platforms, customer satisfaction, brand management, factors, model

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank

- God, for the opportunity that He has blessed me with.
- Monique Leigh, for all her assistance, support and motivation throughout the study.
- My supervisor, Prof. Christo Bisschoff, for all his assistance and guidance throughout the study.
- My father, Henri, for all his advice, guidance and support he gave me.
- Antoinette Bisschoff, for language, typographic and technical editing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Meaning
CS	Customer Satisfaction
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
WOM	Word of mouth
SSA	Statistics South Africa
IBM	International Business Machines
4 P's (Marketing mix)	Product, Price, Promotion, Place
CA	Competitive advantage
PMS	Property Management System

CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Customer loyalty is one of the most important constructs in marketing, and much of management's effort is directed at fostering loyalty among customers. The importance of loyalty stems from its positive consequences in terms of customer retention, repurchases, long-term customer relationships and profitability.

David Ogilvy, regarded by many as the "father of advertising," defined brand as "the intangible sum of a product's attributes" (Avian, 2019). A brand can be defined as "a person's perception of a product, service, experience, or organisation" (Lloyd, 2019). Companies use branding for two main reasons: to capture and attract market share (new customers, new clients and new consumers) and secondly to retain their existing market share. Loyal customers are a very important aspect of any successful organisation because loyal customers always come back for repeated purchases. By making use of branding, companies create a loyalty base of customers where they can use that loyal customer base as leverage to be competitive in the market.

Customer loyalty is the result of a customer choosing a certain product or service of one organisation over its competitors' products or services. When a customer or consumer is loyal towards a specific organisation or brand they usually won't be easily influenced or affected by their competitors' price or availability of products or services. Loyal customers would rather wait for a product or service to become available or even pay more for it rather than switching to competitive products or services (Chambers, 2019).

Repeated purchases are more likely to happen when customers trust the organisation and have an emotional connection with the brand even though they don't even realise it. Customer loyalty is when an organisation consistently satisfies customers' needs and expectations (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003).

The online booking platforms industry can be influenced by the loyalty of its consumers. Online booking platforms bring people together; it is the link between property owners or managers and guests (people that book accommodation). An

online booking platform is a software platform that can be used by both parties at the same time either by owners or guests. It is a software platform that helps the owners manage their rental properties and secure bookings at a specific time and also helps the prospective guests find accommodation on their travels whether it's for business or leisure (Odgers, 2019).

Branding in any industry is not different from branding in the online booking platform industry. As soon as the organisation has established its brand, it creates a competitive advantage in a very competitive industry (Camelia, 2005:5). A well-established brand generates a loyal customer base, where customers experience a limited risk and value for money environment. An active customer and loyalty base are essential for sustainable business, no matter the size of the organisation (Harvey & Houlihan, 2018).

Information that was gathered regarding customer loyalty towards a specific brand is precious information for managerial purposes of the organisation. Customer loyalty information can be used to better understand how customers experience the organisation's brand and can be used to plan strategically and to implement a successful marketing strategy. According to Kyriakidis and Rach (2010), only a third of companies measure their brand performance.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The core problem that initiated this study is to determine what online platform Mabalingwe Nature Reserve should use to market accommodation at the resort. Almost just as important is the loyalty of Mabalingwe's customers to their selected online booking platform because if the resort uses a specific platform, it needs to be sure that a returning customer would make a booking using the same booking platform. In that way the resort can select the appropriate online booking platform(s) to not only target customers, but also ensure that returning customers would make a booking using the platform they are listed on. This study, therefore, firstly identifies the relevant booking platforms that customers have used to make their booking at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve, and secondly, to measure their brand loyalty towards these online booking platforms.

There is fierce competition between online booking platforms with numerous service providers such as Lekkeslaap, Booking.com, SafariNow, Hotels.com and Trivago, to name but a few. However, a few online booking platforms have succeeded to dominate the market; is this also the case in booking accommodation at Mabalingwe game reserve? Are booking platforms able to differentiate them for their competitors, and are they able to brand loyalty for their services? (Rick, 2013). These are the problems facing management at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve in their quest to list the resort at the “right” booking platforms.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Primary research question

The primary objective of this study was to measure brand loyalty of the consumers of online booking platforms in the case study setting of Mabalingwe Nature Reserve.

1.3.2 Secondary research objectives

The following secondary objectives serve the primary objective:

- Provide a demographic profile of respondents
- Identify the most preferred online booking platform of guests staying at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve
- Determine if customers are satisfied with the online booking platforms that they use
- Measure the brand loyalty towards the online booking platforms’ antecedents

1.4 LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study was to measure the brand loyalty of consumers in the online accommodation booking platforms industry. This study uses a case-study approach and performs an in-depth analysis on brand loyalty of online booking platforms. The study employs the Moolla and Bisschoff (2012:80) model as theoretical foundation and empirical guideline to measure the 12 brand loyalty antecedents. These antecedents are *Customer satisfaction*, *Switching cost*, *Brand trust*, *Repeat purchases*, *Involvement*, *Proceed to value*, *Commitment*,

Relationship proneness, Brand affect, Brand relevance, Brand performance and Culture.

The study is supported by literature investigation on the brand loyalty antecedents. The literature study consists of an analysis of previous brand loyalty studies as well as a review of the Moolla and Bisschoff model. This includes the applicability of the model for the online booking platform environment. All information sourced for the literature study was sourced from the Internet, the North-West University library's electronic database, articles in journals and text from books. Some articles in magazines, informal surveys, research papers and other popular media also proved interesting and valuable.

The empirical study used the case-study format. Mabalingwe Nature Reserve, located in the Limpopo province 30km outside of Bela-Bela on the R516 road towards Thabazimbi, served as the case organisation. Mabalingwe Nature Reserve has a strict no day visitors' policy which means every guest entering the nature reserve has a confirmed accommodation booking within the nature reserve. Most of these bookings are made online via booking platforms.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.5.1 Empirical study

The empirical study entails investigating brand loyalty within online booking platform brands. The selected questionnaire collects data across twelve major loyalty antecedents using a 5-point Likert scale. An adequate sample size is statistically confirmed by employing the Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin test of sampling adequacy. The reliability of the data, validity of the questionnaires as well as the correlations between the variables are determined. The model was statistically measured and compared against the outcomes already presented in literature in both the FMCG industry (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012), the pharmaceutical industry (Du Plooy, 2012) and the service industries (Salim, 2011; Müller, 2012). This study aims to empirically investigate the brand loyalty of the online booking platform industry of guests who booked online at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve.

1.5.2 Research design

A quantitative research design collected all information required in this study. Quantitative data can be defined as data in the form of numbers where each set of data has a specific numerical value. This type of data is expressed in quantifiable information that can be used for statistical analysis or a mathematical calculation. Questionnaires' poles and services are usually used to collect quantitative data that is used for statistical analysis (Bhat, 2019). See study followed the steps as indicated in the table below to sequence the quantitative study (Thompson, 2017).

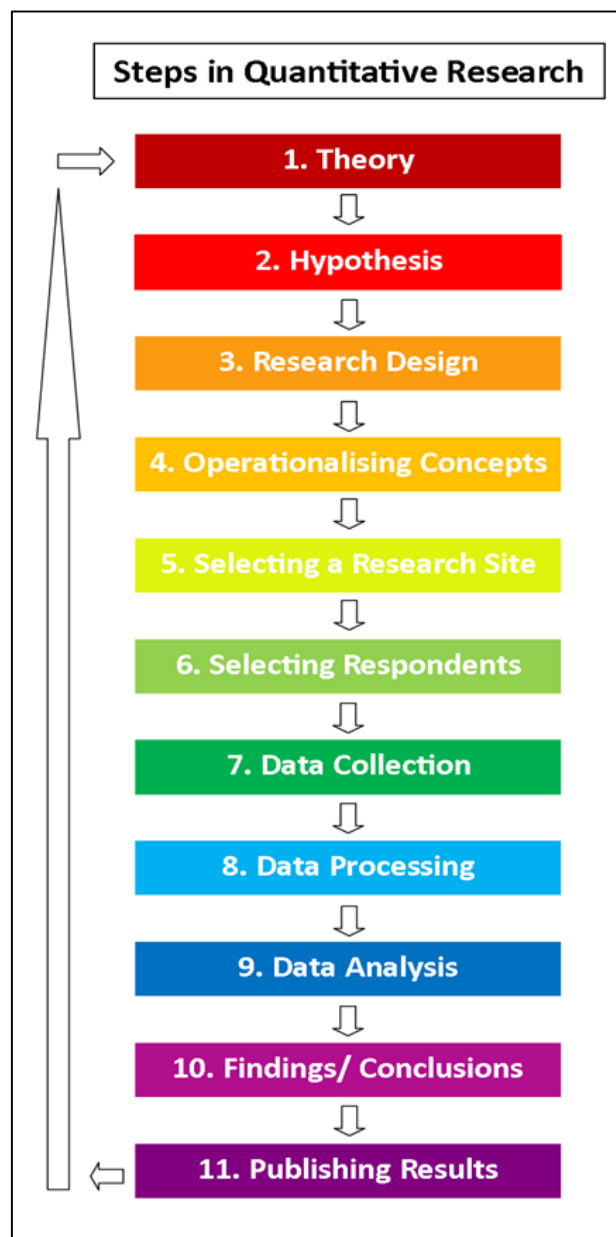


Figure 1: Steps in Quantitative research

(Source: Thompson, 2017)

1.5.3 Questionnaire

The original questionnaire was developed by Moolla and Bisschoff (2012) and was designed for the fast-moving consumer goods industry. The original questionnaire was adapted to be suitable for this study and to measure brand loyalty of consumers in the online booking platforms industry. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; Section 1 captured demographic and profiling information. The section also has two screening questions to ensure that only respondents who made online bookings complete the survey. Section 2 consisted of 50 close ended questions which captured responses on a five-point Likert scale. The data collection period took approximately six weeks to distribute the questionnaires via an online link that was distributed by the booking manager of Mabalingwe Nature Reserve.

1.5.4 Population

The population consists of all the customers who visited Mabalingwe Nature Reserve and who made use of an online bookings platform to do so during the first eight months of 2019. Mabalingwe Nature Reserve was chosen for this study because of convenience for the researcher and also the fact that nature reserves are popular throughout the winter season. Mabalingwe further has an established online booking system which made data easily accessible.

1.5.5 Sample

No sample was drawn. The population was targeted as specified above.

1.5.6 Data collection

Data was collected online via Google Forms. This is a suitable method to collect the data because the online booking requires computer-literate customers who chose to use electronic media as a booking option. It is therefore postulated that they would prefer an online survey instrument rather than any other means of response. The data collection process consisted of a number of steps and is discussed in chapter 3.

1.5.7 Data analysis

A quantitative research design was used for this study, therefore hypotheses needed to be formulated and then tested. All data that has been captured through the distribution of questionnaires were processed in a software platform called SPSS (statistical package for social science); all data that has been captured were then analysed.

1.5.8 Statistical techniques used to analyse the data

The Statistical Package for Social Science (Version 25) (IBM SPSS, 2018) was used to analyse the data by testing the data against the following four techniques. Firstly, the Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin test was done to determine the adequacy of the sample size. Secondly, a test to determine the strength of the relationship among variables was performed by calculating the significance levels ($p \leq 0.05$). In this case, Bartlett's test of sphericity was used. After both the KMO and Bartlett's tests delivered satisfactory results, data analysis continued towards multivariate statistical analysis, specifically exploratory factor analysis. Lastly, the reliability of the data was determined by means of calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The data analysis flow and sequence are explained in Figure 2.

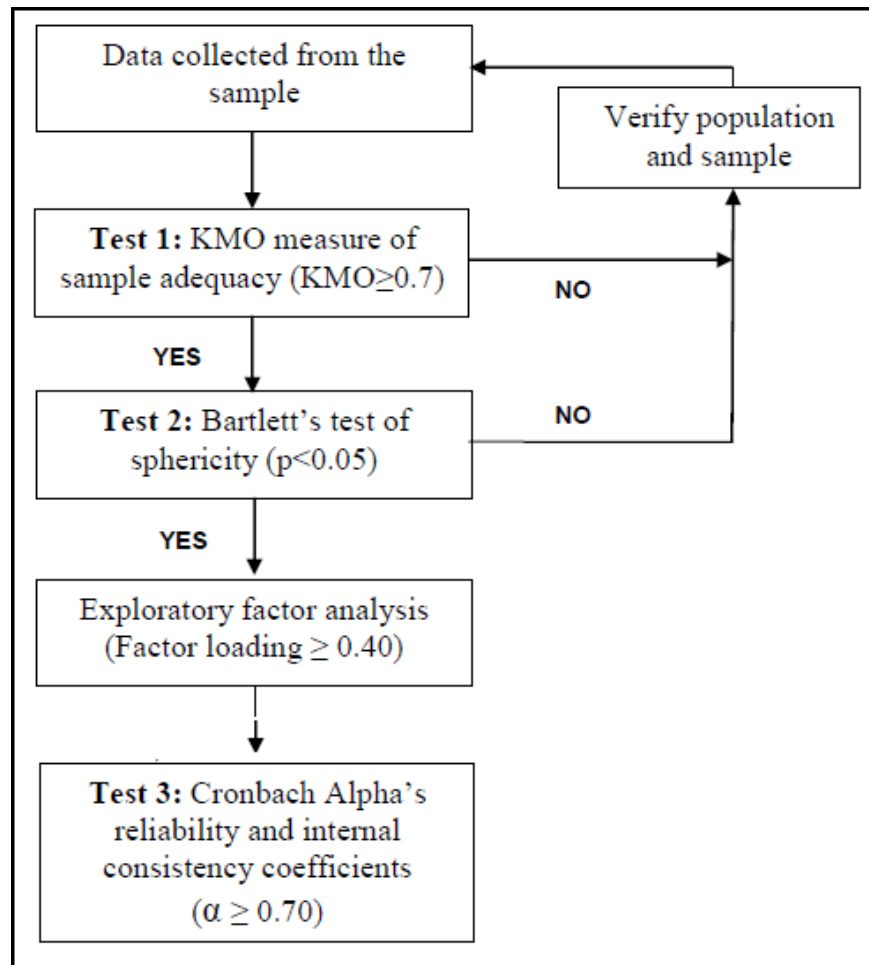


Figure 2 : Data analysis flow chart

Adapted from Scholtz (2014:6)

1.5.8.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test is a measure of sampling adequacy and determines if the data is adequate for analysis. The test measures sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and for the complete model (Stephanie, 2016). KMO determines the correlations between different questionnaire variables. KMO values should preferably exceed 0.70 to indicate good sample adequacy (Field, 2009:668).

1.5.8.2 Bartlett's test of sphericity

The significance of the study is examined by Bartlett's test of sphericity and is an indication of the suitability and validity of all the responses collected. The Bartlett's test of sphericity is used as an indicator for both suitability of the data and relationship strength among variables. Bartlett's significance should be significant ($p \leq 0.05$) (Field, 2009:668).

1.5.8.3 Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis is a statistical analysis that is used to reduce a large number of observed variables to smaller components called factors. The technique also reduces a large number of variables into a smaller, more manageable set of variables. Exploratory factor analysis is, therefore, a useful tool that investigates the relations between the observed variables and smaller number of underlying factors (Field, 2009:387).

1.5.8.4 Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient

Determination of Cronbach alpha, to ensure that data collected were reliable. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.00, the higher the internal consistency and reliability of the data and a coefficient of 0.70 or higher is regarded to signify appropriate reliability and consistency (Pallant, 2010:6).

1.5.9 Research ethics

The study was submitted for scrutiny and approval to the North-West University's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Ethics Committee. The committee approved the study as a low-risk study and registered the study with a formal ethics number *NWU-01320-19-A4*.

1.5.10 Importance and benefits of the proposed study

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in the South African economy. According to Smith (2019), the tourism industry contributes 1.5 million jobs in South Africa and was responsible to contribute R425.8 billion to the economy in 2018. Tourism represented 8.6% of all activity in the South African economy and that makes South Africa the largest African tourist economy on the continent. 64% of all tourists that travelled was for leisure and 44% of all tourism expenditure was from international tourists and 56% was from domestic tourists.

That makes the online booking platform a very important industry in the South African economy because online booking platforms are the link between all transactions in the tourism industry. The booking platforms link the consumer with the supplier. Online booking platforms not only provide the ability to book accommodation but also plan travel trips, plan activities, find new destinations and give owners of tourism

property the ability to manage their properties to the best of their abilities to ensure that their leisure businesses run its accommodation booking efficiently.

The results of the study will help future entrepreneurs and business people in the tourism industry to better understand customer loyalty and help them to better understand how customers see a brand.

1.5.11 Limitations of the study

The possible limitations of this study are:

- Limited secondary data with respect to the online bookings at South African resorts could be located. This could be ascribed to the fact that South Africa is a developing country with often limited and outdated information being available. In addition, no South African data on brand loyalty could be located that specifically deals with online booking platforms. As a result, it was difficult to gain proper insight into the South African customers' brand loyalty when making an online booking for accommodation. On the other hand, this limitation was an inspiration to continue to investigate online booking brand loyalty.
- In terms of the empirical study, the main limitation is the fact that the sample consisted of respondents from one nature reserve. This is directly correlated with the case-study design used in this study. Having said that, bookings at similar nature reserves (and even other South African resorts) should obtain benefit from the findings in this study. A second limitation is the use of a convenience sample to collect data. This could have limited the representativeness of the sample, however, no evidence to this effect was found in the results. The third limitation of the study originates from the fact that the study was also limited to one province (and one nature reserve) in South Africa. This limits the operationalisation of the results to other provinces and may also do so for other types of leisure resorts. Care should, therefore, be taken before the results are generalised to the larger industry. Future studies could, therefore, expand this research by identifying a more representative sample which could include all nine South African provinces and also some other leisure resorts.

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Brand loyalty:	“Brand loyalty is the tendency of consumers to continuously purchase one brand’s products over another” (TrackMaven, 2019).
Customer satisfaction:	“Customers derive satisfaction from a product or a service based on whether their need is met effortlessly, in a convenient way that makes them loyal to the firm” (Accounting dictionary, 2018).
Competitive advantage:	“Conditions that allow an organisation or country to produce a good or service of equal value at a lower price or in a more desirable fashion” (Investopedia, 2018).
Brand:	“A brand is the image and personality of a product or service that a business provides. A product’s features, such as logos or slogans, make it unique and different” (Market Business News, 2019)
Switching cost:	“Switching costs are the costs that a consumer incurs as a result of changing brands, suppliers, or products” (Investopedia, 2019).

1.7 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

For this study, the following structure was followed in measuring brand loyalty of customers in the online booking platform industry.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

In this chapter, a brief introduction of brand loyalty and online booking platforms were provided. The problem statement, primary and secondary objectives of the study, an

overview of the research design and methodology; and limitations of study are presented.

Chapter 2: Literature study

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature study on what brand loyalty entails, the antecedents of brand loyalty (as applied to the online bookings platform industry), the benefits of having a brand loyal customer, and how brand loyalty is measured using an established model.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In this chapter, the empirical study on the antecedents of brand loyalty is conducted. The demographic profile of respondents, the validity of the questionnaire, the reliability of the data and the importance of each brand loyalty antecedent are determined. The chapter also presents the results from the exploratory factor analysis and culminates in an adapted model to measure to measure brand loyalty for online booking platforms.

Chapter 4 Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter provides various conclusions and recommendations based on the theoretical analysis in chapter two and the empirical study in chapter three. The chapter concludes with potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: BRANDS AND BRAND LOYALTY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review focusses on the theoretical analysis of past studies that relate to brand and brand loyalty and online booking platforms. Brand loyalty has more than one definition and people might perceive brand loyalty differently. Some place more emphasis on repeat purchases, others regard preferences and various degrees of dedication and commitment towards a specific brand to be loyal, while some regard customer satisfaction similar to brand loyalty. This study focuses on brand and brand loyalty and online booking platforms. In the past hotels, resorts, game reserves or any other accommodation related venue used their websites to promote their products and services. Nowadays these accommodation venues are listed on online booking platforms that generate the majority of their bookings.

This study underpins the definition by TrackMaven (2019):

“Brand loyalty is the tendency of consumers to continuously purchase one brand’s products over another.”

Another modern definition by Gunelius (2019) states that:

“Brand loyalty is when consumers purchase a specific brand over and over above competitors’ brands because they recognise the brand that meets all their expectations and satisfy their needs. They feel comfortable with the brand on a personal level.”

Gunelius (2019) continues by stating that the repeated purchase action of a brand by consumers can be a conscious or unconscious purchase behaviour; that is because consumers trust the brand and the brand will deliver to satisfy the consumers’ needs and meet their expectations. Loyal customers won’t necessarily purchase competitors’ products when their preferred brand is not available. They will even go as far as to visit multiple shops to locate their desired brand because they are comfortable with the specific and trust the brand (Gunelius, 2019). In this regard, Carol (2019) adds that brand loyalty is a positive association that consumers have towards a particular brand’s product which is demonstrated by their repeated purchase behaviour, despite the fact that an alternative competitive brand’s similar products are available to choose from.

Regarding the measurement of brand loyalty, the tried and tested model developed by Moolla and Bisschoff (2012) was used to measure brand loyalty in the online booking platform industry. The twelve antecedents of brand loyalty form the theoretical core of this chapter.

2.2 BRAND

2.2.1 Defining a brand

The traditional definition of a brand is seen as an organisation's logo, sign, name or any other invisible or visible association that represents an organisation so that customers can differentiate its products from their competitors (Shen, 2018). Shen (2018) continues to state that a well-known brand would affect the customers' perceptions and has the potential to evoke comfortability and relaxing feelings during their purchase process.

The term "brand" is defined by the influential American Marketing Association (2019) as:

"A brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers".

Alan (2019), however, notes that there is some confusion of what a real brand is. He defines the term brand by breaking it down into the following definitions:

- "It is a relationship you have with the organisation or a brand on a psychological and emotional level"
- "It is a type of product or service that has been manufactured or delivered by a specific organisation under a specific name"
- It is an organisation's name, symbol, design term or any other attributes that identify an organisation's products and distinct it from their competitors". A brand is the personality of an organisation or business."

Other authoritative brand definitions of a brand are:

"A brand is defined as a name, term, sign symbol (or a combination of these) that identifies the maker or seller of the product" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2019)

"Marketing tool that allows consumers to recognise the maker of a product" (Tailor, 2019).

A brand name is a strategic tool that helps organisations to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Customers expect products to have branding and they often build relationships with brands that they trust. As a result, they will frequently purchase these brands even if identical competitive branded products are available. Some customers will only purchase a particular brand, and not even consider substitute products. They will display high levels of brand loyalty and rather go without the specific product although there are acceptable alternatives on the market (Tailor, 2019). For example, in purchasing a new mobile phone, customers will not accept viable Huawei phones but insist on buying an Apple iPhone 11 because of their brand loyalty to Apple Inc. (Geldenhuys, 2019). Similarly, some shoppers shop only at Pick n Pay for their groceries; this shows loyalty to the retail chain.

2.2.2 Benefits of brands

Branding is not only part of an organisation's product strategy but can also be used as a differentiator for the organisation name which acts as the corporate brand (such as Walmart, Shoprite, Checkers, Ford). Linda (2019) postulates that maintaining or building a strong brand has multiple benefits but we can focus on five major benefits:

- **Customer recognition** – When an organisation has a relatively strong position in the market it will help to build custom recognition more easily and when customers are searching for a particular product, they will recognise an organisation's product or service delivery and will take that into consideration when deciding in their decision making and purchase process. When companies have a brand that is easily recognisable customers tend to buy from a known brand over an unknown brand even if they don't have past experiences with that particular brand and put their trust into a name that they have heard of.
- **Competitive edge in the market** - Being competitive in today's marketplace is very important. Every organisation has its competitive advantage (CA) over its competitors and that makes each brand or organisation unique in its own way. A competitive edge differentiates your brand from your competitors' brand. As soon as companies have built a recognisable brand and customers

are able to differentiate a brand from its competitors then one can say they have a competitive advantage.

- **Easy introduction of a new product** – Launching new products can be a difficult task for any business but when an organisation already has a strong brand in the industry or a loyal customer following, it is sometimes easier and cheaper to launch a new product or service.
- **Customer loyalty and shared values** – Customer loyalty is when the customer experience satisfaction from a particular product or brand and when their expectations have been met. Customers who share values with the brand is usually easier to attract.
- **Enhanced credibility and ease of purchase** – By meeting customers' expectations companies can increase their credibility. When customers build a relationship and start trusting the brand the credibility of the organisation or brand enhances thus leads to ease of purchases or even repeated purchases because trust has been built.

O'Cass and Ngo (2007), two renowned branding experts, suggest that there are eight benefits to branding and not just five; they did identify the same five benefits that Linda (2019) do, but O'Cass and Ngo (2007) identified three other important benefits to branding: *Consistency*, *Attract talent* and *Gives confidence*.

- **Consistency** refers to a situation when once a business's branding is in place, it helps to set a foundation to build upon for marketing purposes. As soon as the foundation is put in place a business can build marketing in such a way that whatever the product or service there will be a set standard for any marketing strategies.
- **Attract talent**: Businesses with great branding will attract talented people (influencers) that can be associated with the brand. Customers will find comfort and trust in a brand if they know that a famous person or celebrity is associated with the brand that they are interested in. It adds creativity to their marketing strategy.
- **Gives confidence**: A sophisticated brand can bring confidence not only to the customer but also to the business owner. With good branding, all of the time,

work, money and energy that have gone into a brand comes together and showcase a complete and professional presentation that gives business owners the confidence in their brands.

Bhasin (2019), however, does not agree with either O'Cass and Ngo (2007) or Linda (2019). He suggests that there are not five nor eight main benefits to a brand, but claims that there are nine. According to Bhasin (2019), one benefit that is frequently overlooked when it comes to brand benefits is to:

“Attract investors: The power to attract investors is a very powerful tool to utilise, especially when funds are required. When an organisation has established its identity (brand) in the market and the brand is well known, the brand will become appealing to any investor. A well-known brand that performs well will always have the ability to attract investors.”

2.3 BRAND LOYALTY

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2019), loyalty can be defined as a quality or a feeling to be devoted or attached to something. According to Collins Dictionary, brand loyalty is feelings of friendship, duty or support towards something or someone. Brand loyalty is a customer and organisation relationship establisher, first customers buy a specific product from a specific organisation to see if the product can satisfy their needs or meet their expectations.

As soon as trust is established customers can start building their relationship with a brand, and as soon as trust is established customers become committed to a specific brand and is more likely to buy from the same brand over and over and be less influenced by competitors' products (Pawpa, 2018).

Giddens (2010), states that an organisation's success depends mainly on its ability to establish a loyal customer base. Brand loyalty is the ultimate goal for any organisation to develop with its customers and ensures sustainability. Saleh (2019), agrees with Giddens (2010) and states that it can cost up to five times more to attract new customers versus to keep your existing customers; he suggests that it is the first

rule of business is to keep customers and build a loyal relationship to secure future sales.

That's why one should look at marketing strategies and develop a sustainable competitive advantage by establishing a loyal relationship with customers, satisfy their needs and meet their expectations. As long as the customer's attitude stays positive towards a specific brand, they are more likely to execute repeated sales.

Great interest has been shown in recent years that marketing research plays a very important role in establishing brand loyalty, by making use of marketing strategy companies can create strong loyalty towards their own products to eliminate the chances of a customer being influenced by their competitor's marketing campaigns (Lamb, 2015).

2.3.1 Benefits of brand loyalty

Both parties can benefit from brand loyalty, the organisation as well as the customers themselves, from the customers perspective being loyal to a specific brand, can pay off in various ways. For example, when a customer is loyal towards an organisation, he or she has established trust in that brand and knows what to expect from the product or service they know whether the product or service will meet their expectations or satisfy their needs.

Some companies even have a loyalty program where customers can benefit in various ways by doing business with an organisation in the long run. Brand loyalty gives companies the opportunity to positively influence customers so that they will not be easily influenced by competitors' marketing strategies, loyal customers can help the organisation grow in profit margins, improve marketing strategies and help create new business opportunities (Hill, 2018).

According to a study by Helgesen (2000), it has been found that there is a positive relationship between customer profitability and customer loyalty. This means the organisation that focuses on establishing a high level of customer loyalty will be more likely to experience increased profits.

Benefits that organisations obtain from establishing higher levels of customer loyalty are:

- Creating a higher entry barrier for competitors
- Create capacity and capability to react and counter on competitive threats
- Increase profit margins and
- Create a less sensitive customer base; people are prone to be less sensitive when they are loyal

2.4 ONLINE BOOKING PLATFORMS

An online booking platform is applied software that is used to manage reservations (Medium.com, 2019). The internet has dramatically changed the way we conduct business over the past two decades especially in the online booking platforms industry. In the past in the online booking platforms industry customers would have to call in to make a reservation for a specific date, the owner or manager of the property would then have to consult their calendar to see if those dates are available. If those dates are not available the owner or manager would've had to advise the customer to choose another date, and they will go back and forth until they reach an agreement for a specific date and time that suits both parties; the same procedure would have to be performed to check availability.

Today the procedure is much more user-friendly and more advanced – a typical booking process example would be the customer searches for his/her preferred booking platform online, choose their destination and check on the calendar if that specific destination is available and if so, pay and make the booking without any human intervention.

An online reservation platform is a software platform that is installed onto a website or app, allowing customers to book, reserve, and pay for activities and services online. Owners who list their properties on online booking platforms have different needs and features that they want to use on the online booking platforms; these features can be explained as below (Bookeo, 2019):

- **Real-time booking and availability** eliminate the need for constantly attending to the phones. Instead, prospective guests and owners have immediate and 24/7 access to book accommodation.
- **Attractive call to action** is to have a layout that prominently displays your call to action button makes it easier for prospective guests to further engage with your business and complete the booking process.
- **Social media integration** incorporates a safe and easy way for prospective guests to book and pay for accommodation also increases visibility and improves the total amount of confirmed bookings.
- **Visual Online Calendar** is an online calendar easily shows both the prospective guest and owner what rooms are still available and what has been booked in an easy, visual format.

2.5 THE MOOLLA AND BISSCHOFF MODEL

Only by measurements can we characterise success across all industries (Kyriakidis and Rach, 2010:7). Kyriakidis and Rach (2010:8) also conveyed an astonishing fact that only one third of organisations measure the performance of their brand.

An effective marketing strategy can be developed to maintain and implemented by utilising valuable information that has been retrieved about customer loyalty. It has been agreed upon by researchers that in a marketing sense, loyalty is a concept that is very complex and that most research academics use the compound definition of brand loyalty, as proposed by Jacoby (1971:25), that there are only a few people in agreement when it comes to measuring brand loyalty. The research of brand loyalty has become more and more intense, the measurement models have been purified and representative of the segments and goods it represents.

However, the construction of an accurate and reliable measurement tool has always been a challenge for researchers. A tool to measure and confirm brand equity research statistically. When a large number of products and variables are involved, the challenge becomes even greater. However, the biggest challenge is when multiple antecedents of behaviour are added when brand loyalty is being measured (Moolla and Bisschoff, 2012).

2.5.1 Brand Loyalty Antecedents

Moolla (2012) developed a brand loyalty conceptual framework to identify the antecedents that influence behaviour related to brand loyalty. The framework was developed and the twelve most important brand loyalty influences were identified (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012). The most important factors that play a role in the measurement of brand loyalty in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry was the primary aim of Moolla's study. According to Moolla (2012), a number of influences of brand loyalty have been identified and tested over the years. Moolla (2010) first identified 26 influences based on brand loyalty studies in his literature review, by much admired academics such as Schijins (2003), Rundle-Thiele (2005), Musa (2005), Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007), Traylor (1981), Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), Dick and Basu (1994), Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), Park (1996), Jensen and Hansen (2006), Giddens (2001), Maritz (2007) Kim et al. (2008). (all cited by Moolla and Bisschoff (2012)). These 26 influences are shown in the figure below.

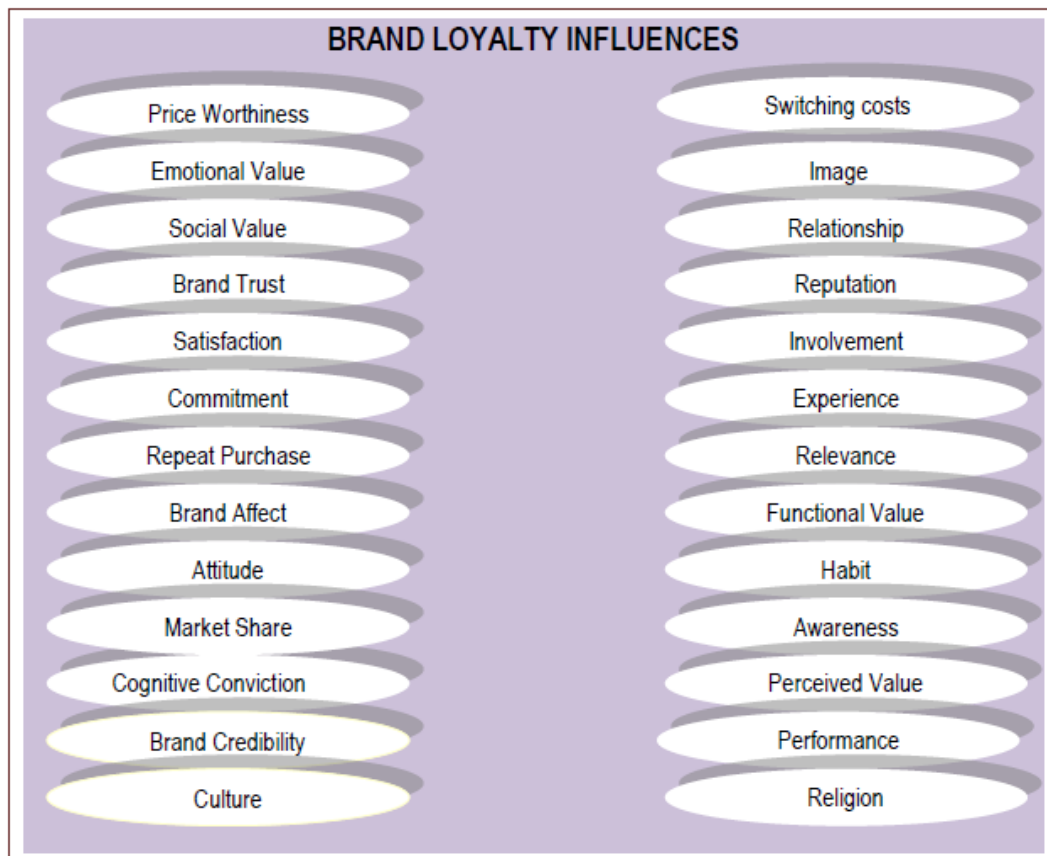


Figure 3: Initial key brand loyalty influences

Source: Moolla and Bisschoff (2012:126)

Moolla and Bisschoff (2012) reduced the original 26 influences to 12 brand loyalty influences and then conducted an empirical study. More than 500 consumers were included in Moolla's analysis and all of them had access to wide ranges of fast-moving consumer goods (Moolla and Bisschoff, 2012). The reduced set of antecedents, and final model consisting of twelve consumer brand loyalty antecedents, appears in Figure 4.



Figure 4: A conceptual brand loyalty framework

Source: Moolla and Bisschoff (2012)

In Moolla and Bisschoff (2012)'s study, the results of the empirical study have shown that each of the 12 antecedents in the FMCG industry influenced brand loyalty in a

different manner. The findings in this study, suggested that the influences of brand loyalty were regarding the psychological influences and that it had a larger impact than the brand performance influences. However, the conceptual framework that was established to measure consumer brand loyalty in the study was regarded as the most important findings. Each of the twelve antecedents is discussed below.

2.5.1.1 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is defined as an overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with goods or services over time (Fornell et al., 1996). Customer satisfaction is influenced by specific product or service features and perceptions of quality. Satisfaction is also influenced by customers' emotional responses (Zeithmal & Bitner, 2003:87-89.). Increased customer satisfaction can provide organisation benefits like customer loyalty, extending the life cycle of a customer, expanding the life of merchandise, customer purchases and increases customers' positive word of mouth communication. When the customer is satisfied with the product or service of the organisation, the result could be that customers purchase more frequently and to recommend products or services to potential customers. It is impossible for any business to grow when customer needs are not met (Tao, 2014:259).

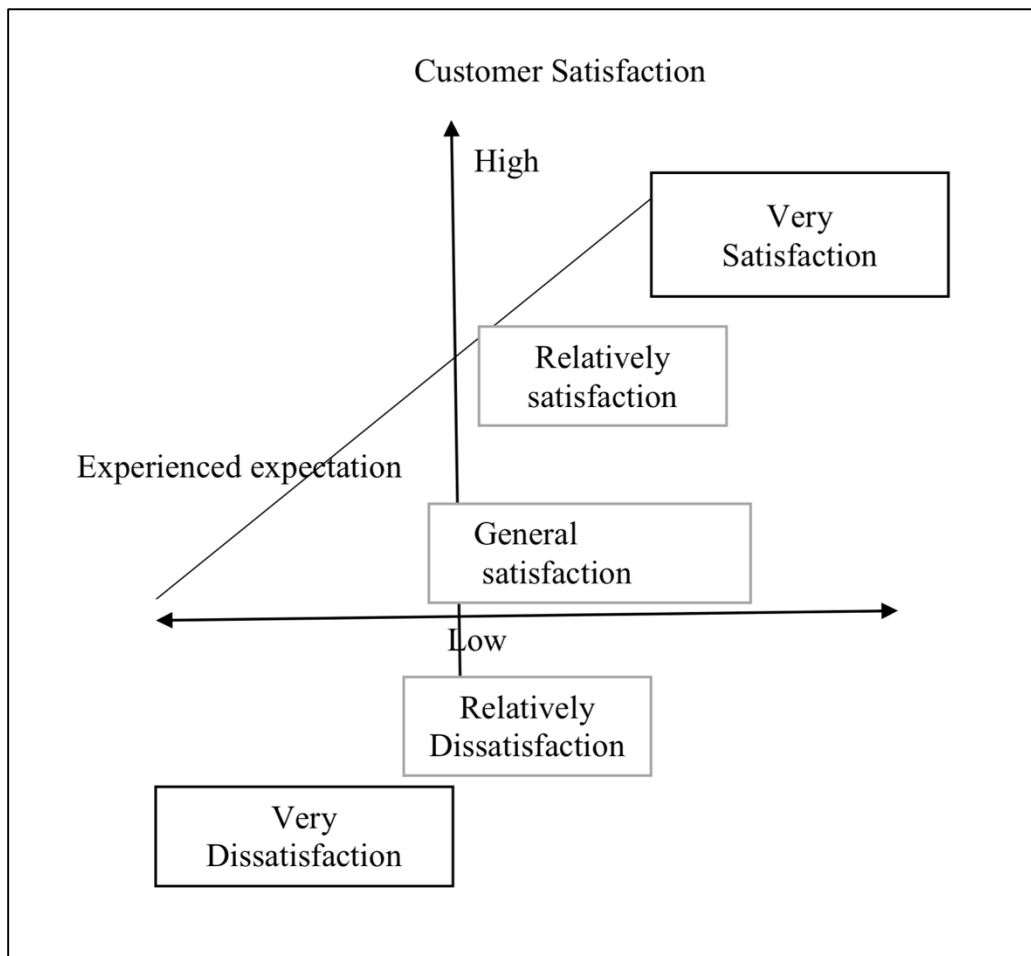


Figure 5: Customer satisfaction analysis model

Source: Adapted from Tao (2014:261)

2.5.1.2 Switching costs

Switching costs, also known as switching barriers, are the costs associated with a customer switching from one supplier to another. The concept of switching costs comes from the idea of building a loyal customer base. Businesses use many different strategies to maintain a loyal customer base, such as loyalty reward programmes. However, another strategy that businesses use to retain their customers, is to create high switching barriers, in other words, making it difficult and costly for them to leave (Debitoor dictionary, 2019). Switching cost is referred to as the cost of forfeiting a benefit. If this cost is less than the benefit that is gained from a new supplier, the customer will switch to the new supplier of the benefit. Hence, a customer will be less likely to switch suppliers if they believe it will be more costly for them to switch, than to stay where they are.

2.5.1.3 Brand trust

Brand trust can be seen as one of the most valuable intangible assets that a business can have. According to Warc (2019), brand trust reflects a consumer's expectation that a brand's products, services or more broadly, corporate behaviour, reflects the promise the organisation has made. Brand trust is more important than ever because today's consumers are bombarded with options. What was often once a choice between two brands is now a global mix of hundreds, which has consumers asking who they know and trust before making a purchasing decision.

2.5.1.4 Repeat purchases

Repeat purchase is described as when a consumer purchases the same brand than he or she purchased on a previous purchase occasion (All Business, 2019). Repeat purchase is often a measure of loyalty to a brand by consumers and is often taken into account by marketing research professionals to evaluate a business (Business dictionary, 2019). Businesses can increase their brand loyalty and repeat purchases in the way they persuade a customer to try a new product or service.

2.5.1.5 Involvement

Involvement in terms of brand loyalty context can be explained as several types such as ego involvement, purchase involvement or good involvement. Individuals that are more involved in a purchase or process will be more loyal due to their inputs (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012:81).

2.5.1.6 Perceived value

Consumers don't purchase products primarily for their functions. In fact, function is simply a means to deliver what a customer really wants: benefits. A customer buys a product for the perceived benefit he will gain from it. This perceived benefit, in addition to his opinion of the product, is what creates customer perceived value.

2.5.1.7 Commitment

According to Mack (2019), commitment and trust are two fundamental factors that must exist to maintain a successful relationship. This belief is better known as the *Commitment trust theory*. Relationship marketing involves honouring customers' commitments and meeting their needs. This directly contributes to establishing a

bond between the business and the customer. Businesses should, therefore, focus on using the principles of relationship marketing to forge long-term bonds with their customers, and not fall in the trap to chase short-term profits.

Commitment has been considered as one of the key factors affecting customer loyalty that played a central role in the B2B environment (Rauyruen et al., 2007:29). In addition, commitment has played a mediating role with antecedents in order that it leads to customer loyalty in relationship marketing (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Positive intentions to maintain and strengthen a business relationship are created by commitment (Cater & Cater, 2010:1325), thus customer loyalty is positively influenced by commitment (Sumaedi, 2015:409).

2.5.1.8 Relationship proneness

The relationship proneness of a buyer is viewed as the behavioural tendency of a buyer to actively maintain and enhance a relationship with one particular seller. Researchers use the term relationship proneness to reflect the consumer's relatively stable and conscious tendency to engage in relationships with sellers of a particular product category (Feng et al., 2015:203). Relationship proneness has been associated with an interest for stable exchanges, and has been measured in terms of "willingness to be a regular customer" and "a steady customer", and for "going the extra mile" to buy at the same brand (De Wulf et al., 2001:48).

2.5.1.9 Brand affect

Brand affect describes the relationships between brand and consumers under certain categories and it can be considered as the general evaluations of the consumers for a brand (Matzler et al., 2006:432). Brand affect can be defined as a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82). Considering the creation of brand relations and its sustainability, it is stated that brand affect should be considered as an important antecedent of brand loyalty (Matzler et al., 2006:433).

2.5.1.10 Brand relevance

According to Lloyd (2019), differentiation is almost just as important as relevance. Marketers, brand managers and business strategists have been highly focussed on

using differentiation as strategic thrust. However, customers are also drawn to product and service relevance. When a brand establishes a meaningful market position through personal relevance, the brand inherently also focuses on the evoked emotions of the customer. These emotions support, highlight and extend the brand relevance further.

2.5.1.11 Brand performance

Brand performance refers to the relative measurement of a brand's success in the marketplace (O'Cass & Ngo, 2007). For example, it can be argued that market share is actually a measure of brand overall performance and also brand achievement (Keller & Lehmann, 2003). Brands can play a key role in the organisation's success by developing competitive advantages among products via performance of a brand. The differences among products or services through branding delivers a number of benefits to the business companies which include building consistent quantity and income for a long time, resisting attack, getting higher fair share, plus more importantly much better cash flow and earnings (Awan, 2014:30). Importantly, the idea of brand performance resides in the marketplace while the strength of companies' brands is evidenced by its current market share, sales growth and profitability. Brand performance can also be found in the brand by achieving the company's established objectives for it in the marketplace.

2.5.1.12 Culture

There have been many definitions of culture over the years as researchers try to assess one of the most influential but elusive phenomena in Marketing. Zimmerman (2017) defines culture as the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Cole (2019) developed a similar definition "the values, attitudes, beliefs, artefacts and other meaningful symbols represented in the pattern of life adopted by people that help them interpret, evaluate and communicate as members of society".

2.5.2 Measuring brand loyalty using the Moolla and Bisschoff Model

A questionnaire was developed by Moolla (2010) where the importance of the antecedents had to be indicated by customers in maintaining and creating brand loyalty towards the selected FMCG products. Moolla structured and designed the

questionnaire as stated by the guidelines of Leung (2002:144) who supplied guidelines in five areas of questionnaire design. A process of comparisons between three variables at a time by respondents was the technique that Moolla incorporated.

Each of the antecedents had to be evaluated and compared to the remainder of antecedents by respondents through a process (Moolla, 2010:146). Table 2 outlines the antecedents and the number of items per antecedent. There is a total of fifty items in the twelve antecedents and ranges from three to five items per antecedent.

Table 1: Number of questions per antecedent

No.	Influence	Number of Items
1	Customer Satisfaction	5
2	Switching Costs/Risk Aversion	5
3	Brand Trust	4
4	Relationship Proneness	4
5	Involvement	4
6	Perceived Value	4
7	Commitment	5
8	Repeat Purchase	5
9	Brand Affect	3
10	Brand Relevance	4
11	Brand Performance	3
12	Culture	4
Total number of items		50

Source: Moolla (2010:149)

Table 2 below indicates the original questions in the questionnaire and its sources from which Moolla refined the measuring criteria. The table also shows the measuring criteria as they were adapted to apply in measuring brand loyalty of the electronic booking platforms.

Table 2: Origins of questionnaire items

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
Customer Satisfaction	CUS01	I am very satisfied with the FMCG brands I purchase	I am very satisfied with the online booking system that I use	Delgado et al. (2003:53)
	CUS02	Distinctive product attributes in FMCG keep me brand loyal	Distinctive attributes of the booking system I am currently using keep me loyal towards the brand	Saaty (1994:21).
	CUS03	My loyalty towards a particular FMCG brand increases when I am satisfied about that brand	My loyalty towards the booking system increases when I am a satisfied customer	Anderson and Sullivan (1993:125)
	CUS04	I do not repeat a purchase if I am dissatisfied about a particular FMCG brand	I do not book again on the same booking system if I am dissatisfied about the brand	Chen and Lue (2004:26)
	CUS05	I attain pleasure from the FMCG brands I am loyal towards	I attain pleasure from the booking system I am loyal towards	Leuthesser & Kohli (1995:17)
Switching Cost/Risk Aversion	SCR01	I do not switch FMCG brands because of the high cost implications	I do not switch booking system because of the high cost implications	Klemperer (1987:388)
	SCR02	I do not switch FMCG brands because of the effort required to reach a level of comfort	I do not switch booking system because of the effort required to reach a level of comfort	Beggs and Klemperer (1992:56)
	SCR03	I avoid switching FMCG brands due to the risks involved	I avoid switching online booking system due to the risks involved	Self-generated item

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
	SCR04	I switch FMCG brands according to the prevailing economic conditions	I switch online booking system according to the prevailing economic conditions	Kim et al. (2003:27)
	SCR05	I prefer not to switch FMCG brands as I stand to lose out on the benefits from loyalty programmes	I prefer not to switch online booking systems as I stand to lose out on the benefits from loyalty programs	Klemperer (1995:520)
Brand Trust	BTS01	I trust the FMCG brands I am loyal towards	I trust the online booking system I am loyal towards	Halim (2006:1)
	BTS02	I have confidence in the FMCG that I am loyal to	I have confidence in the online booking system that I am loyal to	Morgan and Hunt (1994:23)
	BTS03	The FMCG brands I purchase has consistently high quality	The online booking system I make use of has consistently high quality	Reast (2005:11)
	BTS04	The reputation of a FMCG brand is a key factor in me maintaining brand loyalty	The reputation of the online booking system is a key factor in me maintaining brand loyalty	Raimondo (2000:33)
Relationship Proneness	RPR01	I prefer to maintain a long-term relationship with a FMCG brand	I prefer to maintain a long-term relationship with the online booking system	Dwyer (1987:18)
	RPR02	I maintain a relationship with a FMCG brand in keeping with my personality	I maintain a relationship with an online booking system in keeping with my personality	Bloemer (1999:106)
	RPR03	I maintain a relationship with an FMCG brand that focuses and communicates with me	I maintain a relationship with an online booking system that focuses and communicates with me	Davis (2002:10)

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
	RPR04	I have a passionate and emotional relationship with the FMCG brands I am loyal to	I have a passionate and emotional relationship with the online booking system I am loyal to	Reast (2005:10)
Involvement	INV01	Loyalty towards a FMCG brand increases the more I am involved with it	Loyalty towards an online booking system increases the more I am involved with it	Quester and Lim (2003:29)
	INV02	Involvement with a FMCG brand intensifies my arousal and interest towards that brand	Involvement with an online booking system intensifies my arousal and interest towards that brand	Knox and Walker (2001:121)
	INV03	I consider other FMCG brands when my involvement with my FMCG brand diminishes	I consider other online booking system when my involvement with my online booking system brand diminishes/decreases	Self-generated item
	INV04	My choice of a FMCG brand is influenced by the involvement others have with their FMCG brand	My choice of an online booking system is influenced by the involvement others have with their brands	Quester and Lim (2003:25)
Perceived Value	PVL1	My FMCG brand loyalty is based on product quality and expected performance	My online booking system loyalty is based on service quality and expected performance	Olson (2008:246)
	PVL02	I have an emotional attachment with the FMCG brands I am loyal towards	I have an emotional attachment with the online booking system I am loyal towards	Petromilli, Morrison & Million (2002:22)
	PVL03	Price worthiness is a key influence in my loyalty towards FMCG brands	Price worthiness is a key influence in my loyalty towards an online booking system	Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007:233)

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
	PVL04	The FMCG brands that I am loyal to enhances my social self-concept	The online booking system that I am loyal to enhances my social self-concept	Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007:233)
Commitment	COM01	I have pledged my loyalty to particular FMCG brands	I have pledged my loyalty to a particular online booking system	Kim et al. (2008:111)
	COM02	I do not purchase/sample other FMCG brands if my FMCG brand is unavailable	I book at other online booking systems if my preferred brand is not available	Self-generated item
	COM03	I identify with the FMCG brands that I consume and feel as part of the brand community	I identify with the online booking system and feel as part of the brand community	McAlexander et al. (2002:18).
	COM04	The more I become committed to a FMCG brand, the more loyal I become	The more I become committed to an online booking system, the more loyal I become	Fullerton (2005:100)
	COM05	I remain committed to FMCG brands even through price increases and declining popularity	I remain committed to an online booking system even through price increases and popularity decreases	Foxall (2002:18)
Repeat Purchase	RPS01	My loyalty towards FMCG brands is purely habitual	My loyalty towards an online booking system is purely habitual	Gordon (2003:333)
	RPS02	I do not necessarily purchase the same FMCG brands all the time	I do not necessarily book at the same online booking system all the time	Self-generated item
	RPS03	I always sample new FMCG brands as soon as they are available	I always sample new online booking systems as soon as they are available	East and Hammond (1996:165)

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
	RPS04	I establish a FMCG brand purchasing pattern and seldom deviate from it	I establish a booking pattern and seldom deviate from it	Heskett (2002:356)
	RPS05	Loyalty programmes are reason I repeat FMCG brand purchases	Loyalty programs are reason I repeatedly book at a certain online booking system	Sharp et al. (2003:20)
Brand Affect	BAF01	I attain a positive emotional response through the usage of a FMCG brand	I attain a positive emotional response, booking at a certain online booking system	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:146)
	BAF02	The FMCG brands that I am loyal towards makes a difference in my life	The online booking system that I am loyal towards makes a difference in my life	Moorman et al. (1992:45)
	BAF03	I am distressed when I am unable to use/purchase a particular FMCG brand	I am distressed when I am unable to book at a particular online booking system	Matzler (2006:430)
Brand Relevance	BRV01	The FMCG brands that I am loyal towards stands for issues that actually matters	The online booking system that I am loyal towards stands for issues that actually matters	Minninni (2005:24)
	BRV02	The FMCG brands that I am loyal towards has freshness about them and portray positive significance	The online booking system that I am loyal towards has freshness about them and portray positive significance	Henkel, Tomczak, Heitmann & Herrmann (2007:311)
	BRV03	I know that an FMCG brand is relevant through the brand messages communicated.	I know that an online booking system is relevant through the brand messages communicated	Moore, Fernie & Burt (2008:922)

Antecedent	Code	Original FMCG measuring criteria	Adapted measuring criteria for electronic booking platforms	Source
	BRV04	The FMCG brands that I am loyal towards are constantly updating and improving so as to stay relevant	The online booking system that I am loyal towards are constantly updating and improving so as to stay relevant	Self-generated item
Brand Performance	BPF01	I evaluate a FMCG brand based on perceived performance	I evaluate an online booking system based on perceived performance	Musa (2005:47)
	BPF02	I will switch FMCG brand loyalty should a better performing FMCG brand be available	I will switch online booking system should a better performing online booking system be available	Baldauf, Cravens & Binder (2003:222)
	BPF03	I am loyal only towards the top performing FMCG brand	I am loyal only towards the top performing online booking system	Wong and Merrilees (2008:377)
Culture	CUL01	My choice of FMCG brands is in keeping with the choice made by other members in my race group	My choice of online booking system is in keeping with the choice made by other members in my race group	Self-generated item
	CUL02	My loyalty towards an FMCG brand is based on the choice of FMCG brand used by my family	My loyalty towards an online booking system is based on the choice of online booking system used by my family.	Kotler and Keller (2006:177)
	CUL03	Religion plays a role in my choice and loyalty of FMCG brands	Religion plays a role in my choice and loyalty of online booking system	Self-generated item
	CUL04	Family used FMCG brands indirectly assure brand security and trust.	Family used online booking system indirectly assures brand security and trust.	McDougall and Chantrey (2004:9)

Source: Adapted from Moolla (2010:147) and Hill (2018:42)

2.6 SUMMARY

Brand loyalty has been measured by various studies in South Africa across different industries. Some of these studies also incorporated and made use of the Moolla and Bisschoff model. The Moolla and Bisschoff model was also used as measuring tool in this study and will measure brand loyalty of customers in the online bookings platform industry and to what extent the twelve antecedents have on the brand loyalty of customers.

In the next chapter, the empirical study consisting of the research methodology and results obtained from the Moolla and Bisschoff model will be analysed and discussed. The model will also be validated and tested for reliability.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology as well as the results obtained from the Moolla and Bisschoff questionnaire will be presented in this chapter. The sampling procedure, the adapted questionnaire, data collection and the demographics analysis are discussed in this chapter. The questionnaire was analysed using a number of statistical techniques to determine the sample adequacy, validity of the questionnaire and reliability of the data. In this chapter, data obtained from the respondents was analysed, and statements about brand loyalty in the hospitality industry are made.

This chapter has three objectives in presenting the empirical results. They are to:

1. determine if the Moolla and Bisschoff model is an applicable model for this study;
2. measure brand loyalty in the hospitality industry; and to
3. determine if some of the twelve influences have sub-influences.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The model by Moolla and Bisschoff provides a validated questionnaire. However, because this questionnaire was successfully adapted by various researchers in a number of different industries (such as health [generic and original medicines], banking, public services and agriculture), the standard questionnaire (as discussed in Chapter 2), was adapted to investigate brand loyalty of online booking platforms. The questionnaire was validated by using exploratory factor analysis after scrutinising the sample with the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and the data with Bartlett's test of sphericity.

The questionnaire consists of four parts, namely:

1. The **letter of consent** as the first page of the questionnaire. Here respondents gave consent that their information may be used. They are also specifically referred to the demographic information and that they have given consent specifically for profiling purposes only. The demographic data was not used for comparative analysis.

2. **A screening question** is also added to ensure the customers do indeed form part of the target population.
3. **Section 1: Demographics** – this section gathered information regarding the respondents' biographical and demographical profile. Questions concerning profiling variables were as follow:
 - What is your age?
 - How often do you use online booking systems for accommodation?
 - Who made the booking for your previous accommodation visit?
 - What is your reason for booking accommodation?
 - Please indicate your top 3 online booking systems.
4. **Section 2: Likert-scale questions** that measured the respondents' brand loyalty towards the online booking platform they used to make a booking at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve on a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.)

3.2.2 Study population

The study population consisted of tourists who visited Mabalingwe Nature Reserve during the first eight months of 2019. They were individuals who had made an online accommodation booking. The guests that had booked accommodation were asked to complete the questionnaire because they are the people that have experienced the online booking process first-hand. No sample was drawn. All the guests defined as per the population received the questionnaire to complete.

3.2.3 Location of the unit of analysis

For this study data was collected in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve located in the Limpopo province, 30 km outside of Bela-Bela on the R516 towards Thabazimbi. There are no day visitors allowed in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve; therefore, all the guests at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve had made a booking for accommodation in the reserve. Thus, people from all over the world that visited Mabalingwe Nature Reserve during the eight months were asked to take part in this study to measure brand loyalty on online bookings platforms.

3.2.4 Accessibility of unit of analysis

The final questionnaire's Google Forms address was provided to the bookings manager of Mabalingwe Game Reserve – VEA Transfers (Pty) Ltd. The bookings manager sent a collective email to all the customers who stayed at Mabalingwe Game Reserve in the first eight months of 2019. This email contained an invitation letter to participate in the study. After the respondents had completed the questionnaire, the results were automatically sent to the researcher. All the questionnaires were completed anonymously.

3.2.5 Suitability of unit of analysis

An alternative unit of analysis would not have been suitable for this study, because the respondents who took part in this study will have had an experience in terms of making use of an online booking platform. An alternative unit of analysis in terms of geographical location could have been used, but this population was suitable owing to the fact that the sample population was relatively easy to reach.

3.2.6 Data collection

Data was collected online via Google Forms. This is a suitable method to collect the data because the online booking requires computer-literate customers who chose to use electronic media as a booking option. It is therefore postulated that they had preferred an online survey instrument rather than any other means of response. The data collection consisted of a number of steps. These are:

Step 1: Obtain authorisation from the Mabalingwe Game Reserve to conduct the research.

Step 2: The final questionnaire's Google Forms address was provided to the bookings manager of Mabalingwe Game Reserve – VEA Transfers (Pty) Ltd. The bookings manager had sent a collective email to all the customers who stayed at Mabalingwe Game Reserve in the first eight months of 2019. This email contained an invitation letter to participate in the study.

Step 3: The letter contained a live link on which the customers could click to transfer them to the first page of the questionnaire, where they found the letter of consent.

Step 4: After clicking on the link, the customers would receive the first page of the questionnaire – this was the consent form. They had to agree by clicking on “Yes” after reading the informed consent form. If they clicked on the “No” tick box, they were thanked for their time and not receive the questionnaire to complete.

Step 5: If they agreed and gave consent for their data to be used, the questionnaire opened up and the customers could now complete the questionnaire.

Step 6: After completion, the data was automatically saved with the other responses. It is not possible to connect any respondent to any specific data entry. The data remains anonymous.

3.3 EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.3.1 Demographics

In Figure 6 below, the reader can see the age categories of the respondents who participated in this study.

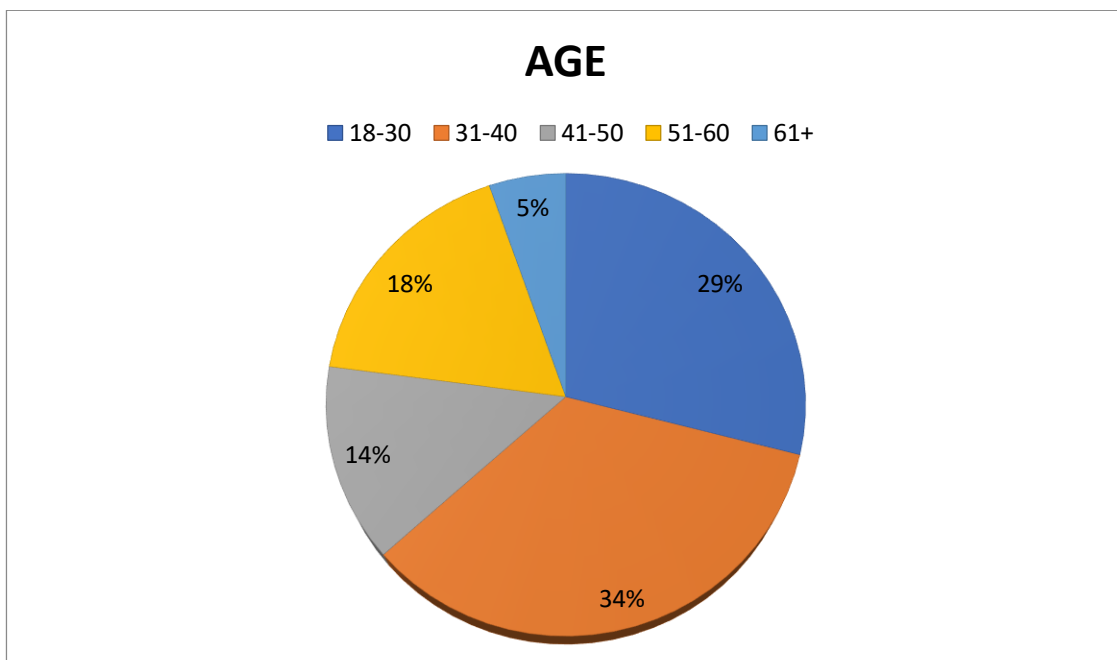


Figure 6: Age of respondents

Figure 6 shows that the largest group was aged 31-40 years and consisted of 34% of all respondents and the second largest group was aged 18-30 and made up 29% of all respondents. These two groups together make up 63% of all the respondents that participated in this study. The third largest group was aged 51-60 years of age and consisted of 18% of the study population. The two smallest groups were 41-50 years of age which consisted of 14% of the study population and 61+ years of age which consisted of 5% of the study population.

3.3.2 Online booking behaviour

The online booking behaviour of the respondents is illustrated in the figures below.

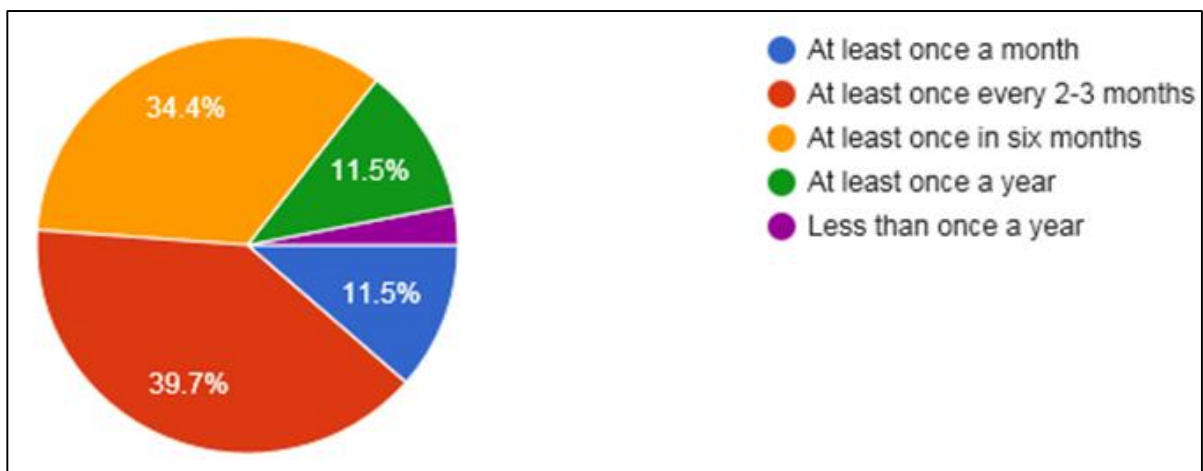


Figure 7: How often do you use online booking platforms for accommodation?

From figure 7 above it is evident that the majority (39,7%) of the respondents make use of an online booking platform at least once every 2-3 months. 34,4% of the respondents indicated that they make use of an online booking platform at least once in six months. A conclusion can, therefore, be made that the respondents make use of an online booking platform regularly, towing to the fact that only 3,1% indicated that they make use of an online booking platform less than once a year.

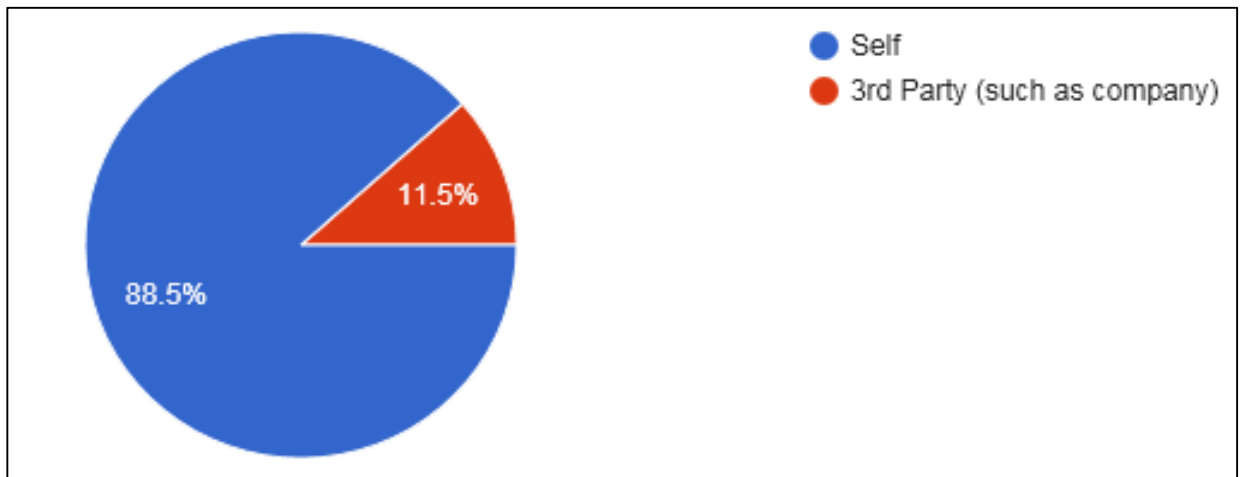


Figure 8: Who made the booking for your previous accommodation visit?

From the data received from the respondents via the questionnaire, it can be seen that the respondents who completed the questionnaire had indicated that they (88,5%) had made their own booking for their previous accommodation visit. Some 11,5% of the respondents used a third party to make the booking on their behalf.

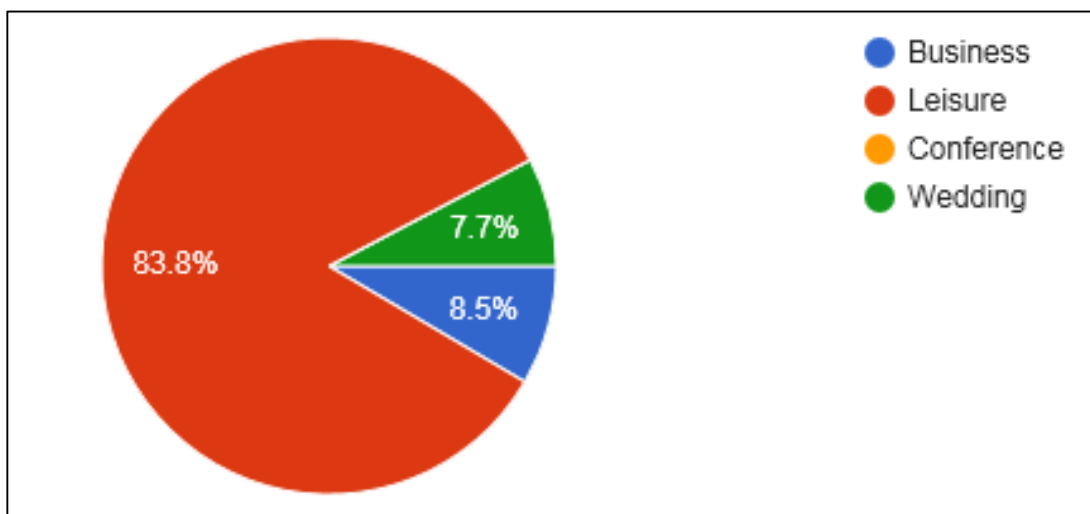


Figure 9: What is your reason for booking accommodation?

Some 109 out the 131 respondents indicated that the reason for booking accommodation was for leisure, and the rest (16,2%) of the respondents indicated that they had booked accommodation for the following reasons at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve: weddings and for business.

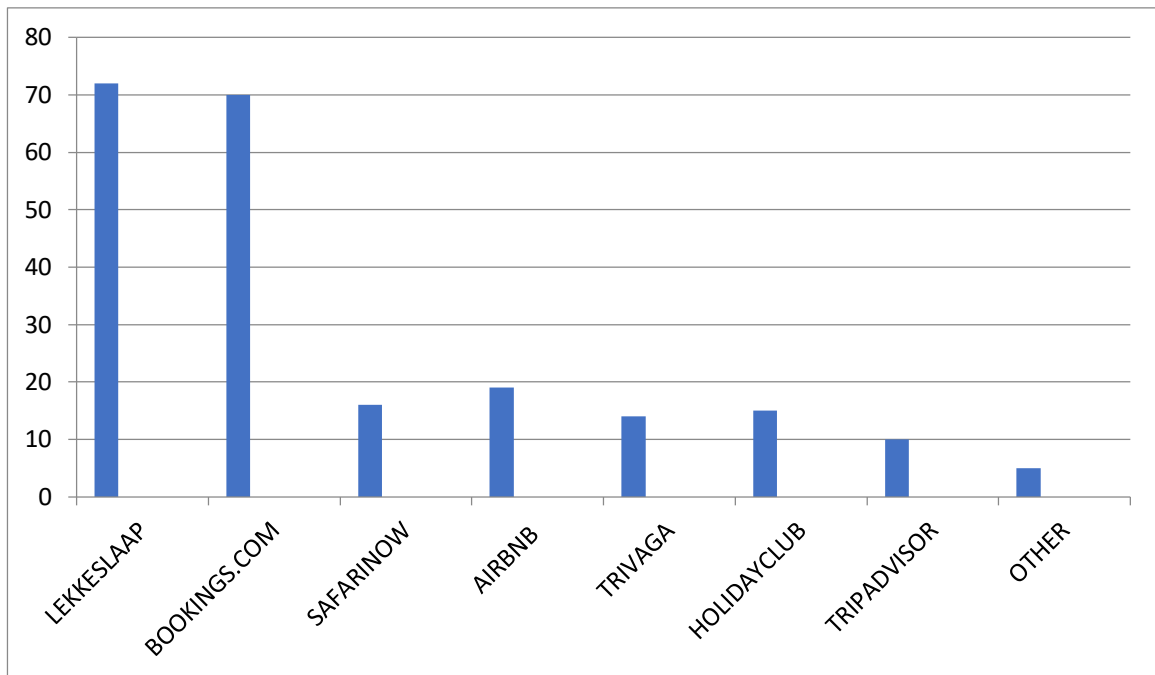


Figure 10: Top online booking platforms

Table 3: Top online booking platform

Booking platform	Frequency	Percentage
Lekkeslaap	72	34.95%
Bookings.com	70	33.98%
Safarinow	16	7.76%
Airbnb	19	9.22%
Trivago	14	6.79%
Holidayclub	15	7.28%
Other	<5	<1%

The top online booking platforms that respondents make use of to book accommodation at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve can be summarised as 68.93% (consisting of 34.95% + 33.98%) of the respondents indicated that they make use of Lekkeslaap and Booking.com. Therefore, these two booking platforms are the current market leaders. Lekkeslaap is a South African Booking platform and Booking.com is an international booking platform; both platforms seem to be equally important in generating online bookings at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve.

Table 4:Online booking platform usage frequency

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Do you always try to use the same booking platform brand?		
Yes	103	78.6
No	28	21.4
Does your preferred booking platform brand have a loyalty programme?		
Yes	52	29.4
No	79	44.6
Do you make use of the loyalty programmes?		
Yes	41	23.2
No	89	50.3

From table 5 above it is evident that the respondents are somewhat loyal to the booking platforms that they use, because 78,6% indicated that they always try to use the same booking platform brand. Some 44,6% of the respondents indicated that their preferred booking platform brand does not have a loyalty programme, where 29,4% of the respondents indicated that their preferred online booking brand has a loyalty programme. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that customers do not prefer the booking platform that they usually book on just for loyalty benefits, they will consider booking on other platforms. Some 89 of the 131 respondents have indicated that they make use of the loyalty programme of their preferred booking platform.

3.3.3 The validity of the Moola and Bisschoff model

The validity of the model to measure brand loyalty (to actually measure what it is supposed to measure) is crucial because the Moolla and Bisschoff Model have been developed for fast-moving consumer goods. However, it was successfully applied in many application settings to measure brand loyalty. The model proved its worth as brand loyalty measurement instrument in the pharmaceutical industry, agriculture, services industry, dog-food industry and others, but not yet for online booking platforms. As a result, the validity requires substantiation for use in an online booking platforms application setting. This is statistically done by subjecting each brand loyalty antecedent to a factor analysis to confirm if the measuring criteria, indeed, measures the specific loyalty antecedent (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012; Salim, 2011;

Wiese, 2014; Hill, 2018). The results of the statistical validation of the model for the online booking platforms appear in the table on the next page.

Table 5 follows on the next page

Table 5: Validity results of factor analysis on individual loyalty antecedents

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	FACTOR LOADINGS		PERCEIVED VALUE	FACTOR LOADINGS		BRAND AFFECT	FACTOR LOADINGS
ANTECEDENT	1		ANTECEDENT	1		ANTECEDENT	1
B1.1	.806		B5.4	.835		B9.3	.875
B1.2	.804		B5.1	.623		B9.2	.847
B1.3	.790		B5.3	.621		B9.1	.652
B1.5	.691		B5.2	.634			
Variance explained	50.445%		Variance explained	73.064%		Variance explained	63.626%
SWITCHING COSTS	FACTOR LOADINGS		6 INVOLVEMENT	FACTOR LOADINGS		BRAND RELEVANCE	FACTOR LOADINGS
ANTECEDENT	1	2	ANTECEDENT	1		ANTECEDENT	1
B2.3	.833		B6.1	.826		B10.2	.889
B2.2	.791		B6.2	.697		B10.3	.850
B2.1	.778		B6.3	.609		B10.4	.822
B2.5	.603		B6.4	.434		B10.1	.620
B2.4		.895					
Variance explained	69.764%		Variance explained	43.195%		Variance explained	64.360%
BRAND TRUST	FACTOR LOADINGS		COMMITMENT	FACTOR LOADINGS		BRAND PERFORMANCE	FACTOR LOADINGS
ANTECEDENT	1		ANTECEDENT	1	2	ANTECEDENT	1
B3.1	.908		B7.4	.853		B11.2	.819
B3.2	.906		B7.1	.836		B11.1	.781
B3.3	.889		B7.3	.818		B11.3	.585
B3.4	.786		B7.5	.711			
			B7.2		.974		
Variance explained	76.380%		Variance explained	73.219%		Variance explained	54.115%
4 RELATIONSHIP PRONENESS	FACTOR LOADINGS		8 REPEAT PURCHASES	FACTOR LOADINGS		BRAND AFFECT	FACTOR LOADINGS
ANTECEDENT	1		ANTECEDENT	1	2	ANTECEDENT	1
B4.2	.850		B8.4	.811		B12.4	.900
B4.1	.798		B8.1	.763		B12.2	.891
B4.4	.783		B8.5	.756		B12.3	.813
B4.3	.666		B8.2		.877	B12.1	.811
			B8.3		.752		
Variance explained	60.371%		Variance explained	68.386%		Variance explained	73.064%

From the table, it is evident that all the loyalty antecedents are indeed measured by their respective measuring criteria because all the criteria load under their respective antecedents. One criterion (B1.4, pertaining to Customer service) was discarded from the analysis because its factor loading was below the required 0.40 minimum factor loading set for this study. There are also three antecedents that consist of a sub-factor each. These loyalty antecedents are *Switching cost*, *Repeat purchases* and *Commitment*. Their sub-factors have been labelled and indicated in brackets in the table below.

Table 6: The KMO, Bartlett's test, variance explained and reliability of the brand loyalty antecedents

Antecedents	KMO	Bartlett	Variance	Cronbach
				Alpha
Customer satisfaction	0.76	0.00	50.45	.692
Switching cost				
(Prevailing economic conditions)	0.67	0.00	69.76	.716
Brand trust	0.83	0.00	76.38	.896
Relationship proneness	0.72	0.00	60.37	.773
Perceived value	0.57	0.00	73.06	.614
Involvement	0.49	0.00	43.19	.525
Commitment				
(Flexibility)	0.71	0.00	73.22	.734
Repeat purchases				
(Experiment with competitors)	0.59	0.00	68.39	.555
Brand affect	0.60	0.00	63.63	.712
Brand relevance	0.76	0.00	64.36	.797
Brand performance	0.57	0.00	54.12	.561
Culture	0.78	0.00	73.06	.876

The value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) should be either .6 or above. For our example, KMO is .74 which is well within acceptable limits. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should be significant (less than .05) and in this example we have met this criterion as the test is significant ($p=.00$). Only 4 out of the 12 antecedents scored a KMO less than 0.6. Some 8 out of the 12 antecedents have scored a KMO above 0.6 which is well within the acceptable limits. The Bartlett test is significant

(less than .05), indicating that the correlation matrix is significantly different from an identity matrix, in which correlations between variables are all zero (Miljko, 2017).

3.3.4 Reliability of results with Cronbach Alpha.

Cronbach alpha coefficients are calculated to determine that the collected data is reliable and internally consistent. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.00, the higher the reliability and the internal consistency of a scale is. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher is desirable and represents satisfactory reliability and consistency (Pallant, 2010:6). More specifically, Cronbach alpha coefficients are interpreted as shown in the table below.

Table 7: Cronbach's alpha coefficient interpretation

Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Interpretation
$\alpha > 0.9$	Excellent
$0.8 < \alpha < 0.9$	Good
$0.7 < \alpha < 0.8$	Acceptable
$0.6 < \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable
$0.5 < \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

Source: George and Mallery (2003:231)

According to Field (2009:669) a Cronbach alpha coefficient is acceptable above 0.7. The majority of the Cronbach alpha coefficients of the brand loyalty antecedents were above 0.7. According Goforth (2015), the standards for what makes a "good" α coefficient are entirely arbitrary and depend on your theoretical knowledge of the scale in question, many methodologists recommend a minimum α coefficient between 0.65 and 0.8 (or higher in many cases); α coefficients that are less than 0.5 are usually unacceptable. Therefore, all the brand loyalty antecedents can be accepted for this study due to the fact that all the antecedents have scored a Cronbach alpha coefficient above 0.55.

3.3.5 Descriptive statistics per brand loyalty antecedents

The data from the validated questionnaire was used to measure brand loyalty antecedents. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics on customer satisfaction. The mean values and standard deviation values were calculated. The table also shows how many of the respondents answered the criteria. The mean values of the Likert scale are interpreted as suggested Bisschoff and Hough (1995). This interpretation was successfully applied by numerous researchers in other Likert scale application settings (Bisschoff & Lotriet, 2008; Siqebengu, 2017; Shaikh, 2017) and also in other brand loyalty studies (Salim, 2011, Wiese, 2014; Hill, 2018):

- < 3: Lower importance; Dissatisfaction; Immediate action required
- 3-3.5: Important; Satisfaction; Develop to become excellent
- >3: Very important; Very satisfied/Excellent; Maintain to stay on top

The standard deviation provides a secondary measure; it indicates whether the respondents agree on the questions, and to what extent (Bisschoff & Hough, 1995).

Table 8: Descriptive statistics the brand loyalty antecedents

Antecedents	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
1-Customer Satisfaction		3.958	
B1.1: I am very satisfied with the online booking system that I use	130	4.14	.567
B1.2: Distinctive attributes of the booking system I am currently using keep me loyal towards the brand	131	3.86	.811
B1.3: My loyalty towards the booking system increases when I am a satisfied customer	131	4.17	.703
B1.5: I attain pleasure from the booking system I am loyal towards	131	3.78	.807
2-Switching cost		3.014	
B2.1: I do not switch booking system because of the high cost implications	130	2.78	1.049
B2.2: I do not switch booking system because of the effort required to reach a level of comfort	131	3.10	1.189
B2.3: I avoid switching online booking system due to the risks involved	130	3.12	1.100
B2.4: I switch online booking system according to the prevailing economic conditions	131	3.04	.964
B2.5: I prefer not to switch online booking systems as I stand to lose out on the benefits from loyalty programs	131	3.03	1.170

3-Brand trust		4.03	
B3.1: I trust the online booking platform I am loyal towards	131	4.03	.733
B3.2: I have confidence in the online booking platform that I am loyal to	131	4.02	.739
B3.3: The online booking platform I make use of has consistent high quality	131	4.01	.770
B3.4: The reputation of the online booking platform is a key factor in me maintaining brand loyalty	131	4.05	.716
4-Relationship Proneness		3.45	
B4.1: I prefer to maintain a long-term relationship with the online booking platform	131	3.63	.844
B4.2: I maintain a relationship with an online booking platform in keeping with my personality	131	3.37	.906
B4.3: I maintain a relationship with an online booking platform that focuses and communicates with me	131	3.83	.776
B4.4: I have a passionate and emotional relationship with the online booking platform I am loyal to	131	2.95	1.118
5-Perceived Value		3.45	
B5.1: My online booking platform loyalty is based on service quality and expected performance	131	4.09	.779
B5.2: I have an emotional attachment with the online booking platform I am loyal towards	131	2.85	1.053
B5.3: Price worthiness is a key influence in my loyalty towards an online booking platform	131	3.96	.798
B5.4: Perceived Value [The online booking platform that I am loyal to enhances my social self-concept]	131	2.92	1.038
6-Involvement		3.55	
B6.1: Loyalty towards an online booking platform increases the more I am involved with it	131	3.74	.790
B6.2: Involvement with an online booking platform intensifies my arousal and interest towards that brand	131	3.47	.897
B6.3: I consider other online booking platform when my involvement with my online booking platform brand diminishes/decreases	131	3.81	.776
B6.4: My choice of an online booking platform is influenced by the involvement others have with their brands	131	3.17	1.031

7-Commitment		3.19	
B7.1: I have pledged my loyalty to a particular online booking platform	131	2.80	1.077
B7.2: I book at other online booking platforms if my preferred brand is not available	131	3.92	.680
B7.3: I identify with the online booking platform and feel like part of the brand community	131	3.24	.977
B7.4: The more I become committed to an online booking platform, the more loyal I become	131	3.53	.897
B7.5: I remain committed to an online booking platform even through price increases and popularity decreases	129	2.47	1.068
8-Repeat purchases		3.12	
B8.1: My loyalty towards an online booking platform is purely habitual	130	3.09	1.007
B8.2: I do not necessarily book at the same online booking platform all the time	131	3.56	.938
B8.3: I always sample new online booking platforms as soon as they are available	131	2.98	1.078
B8.4: I establish a booking pattern and seldom deviate from it	129	2.95	1.099
B8.5: Loyalty programmes are the reason I repeatedly book at a certain online booking platform	131	2.98	1.133
9-Brand Affect		2.83	
B9.1: I attain a positive emotional response, booking at a certain online booking platform	130	3.17	.949
B9.2: The online booking platform that I am loyal to makes a difference in my life	131	2.81	1.031
B9.3: I am distressed when I am unable to book at a particular online booking platform	131	2.51	1.084
10- Brand relevance		3.54	
B10.1: The online booking platform that I am loyal towards stands for issues that actually matters	130	3.09	.952
B10.2: The online booking platform that I am loyal towards has a freshness about them and portray positive significance	130	3.61	.792
B10.3: I know that an online booking platform is relevant through the brand messages communicated	130	3.63	.779
B10.4: The online booking platform that I am loyal towards is constantly updating and improving so as to stay relevant	129	3.83	.751
11-Brand Performance		3.77	
B11.1: I evaluate an online booking platform based on perceived performance	130	3.82	.840
B11.2: I will switch online booking platform should a better performing online booking platform come available	131	4.02	.832
B11.3: I am loyal only towards the top performing online booking platform	131	3.51	.923

12- Culture		2.34	
B12.1: My choice of online booking platform is in keeping with the choice made by other members in my race group	131	2.30	1.050
B12.2: My loyalty towards an online booking platform is based on the choice of online booking platform used by my family.	130	2.48	1.115
B12.3: Religion plays a role in my choice and loyalty of online booking platform	131	2.11	1.107
B12.4: Family used online booking platform indirectly assures brand security and trust.	131	2.50	1.267

Customer satisfaction

It is clear from table 8 above that customer satisfaction showed a significant good (3,958) performance. A mean of 4.17 out of 5 was achieved for the statement B1.3 “Loyalty increases when satisfied”. Customer satisfaction can have a great influence on the brand loyalty of the respondents.

Switching cost

Switching costs are the costs that a consumer incurs as a result of changing brands. An average mean score was obtained of 3.014 for the antecedent switching cost. A conclusion can be made that the respondents avoid switching booking platform brands.

Brand trust

Brand trust reflects the respondents’ ability to rely on the brand to perform the promises the brand has made. An average mean was obtained of 4.03, therefore we can conclude that the respondents trust and have confidence in the booking platform that they make use of. The antecedent brand trust scored the highest average mean.

Repeat purchases

Repeat purchases can be seen as a reflection of loyalty towards the booking platform brand, and this measurement is often taken into account by marketing research professionals to evaluate a brand. The overall mean score has been reached, 3.12. It is evident from table 8 above that the respondents had a positive attitude towards the brand, and to build and maintain relationships with the online booking brand that they make use of.

Perceived value

The average score for the antecedent perceived value has obtained a mean of 3.455. Statement B5.3 has scored a mean of 3.96, which indicated that price is a key influencer of brand loyalty towards an online booking platform. One way to improve perceived value of the brand is to change the perception of respondents towards the brand.

Involvement

Involvement is a motivation stance and motivation factor in the consumer's mind. In table 8 above the involvement antecedent have scored an average mean of 3.55. Therefore, we can conclude that involvement is present in the booking process.

Commitment

Commitment is when the respondent has dedicated him or herself to the brand they use. Statement B7.5 scored a mean of 2.47 out of 5 on the 5-point Likert scale, which indicated that respondents will become less committed to the brand and less loyal when the price is a factor. The average mean score for the commitment antecedent is 3.192 which indicated that the respondents are somewhat committed to the online booking platform that they make use of.

Repeat Purchases

The antecedent Repeat purchases has an average mean of 3.45, which indicated that respondents will make use of other online booking platforms, but they rather make use of the same online booking platform as it is habitual.

Brand affect

Brand affect can be described as the respondent's emotional response towards an online booking platform brand as a consequence of having an experience with the online booking platform brand. The overall mean of the antecedent brand affect scored 2.83. Therefore, the mean score reflects that the respondents have a positive emotional connection with the online booking platform that they make use of. The brand affect antecedents scored the second lowest of the antecedents.

Brand relevance

The antecedent brand relevance has an average mean of 3.54, which indicated that respondents' perceptions toward the brand is such that the online booking platform is

updating and improving to stay relevant. The respondents have indicated that the brand is relevant and moving forward.

Brand performance

It is clear from table 9 above that the brand performance showed a significant good (3.783) score. Respondents have indicated that they will change online booking platforms if other online booking platforms are performing better, therefore the loyalty of the respondent will depend on the performance of the brand. Brand performance can have a great influence on the brand loyalty of the respondents.

Culture

It is clear from table 9 above that the antecedent, culture showed a low mean (2.34) score. This antecedent has the lowest mean score of all the antecedents, which indicates that the respondents' choice of online booking platforms does not depend on aspects such as race, religion or culture.

The relative importance of the antecedents is summarised in Table 9.

Table 9: The relative importance of the antecedents

No.	Antecedents	Average mean
1	Customer satisfaction	3.958
2	Switching cost	3.014
3	Brand trust	4.03
4	Relationship proneness	3.45
5	Perceived Value	3.45
6	Involvement	3.55
7	Commitment	3.19
8	Repeat purchases	3.12
9	Brand affect	2.83
10	Brand relevance	3.54
11	Brand performance	3.78
12	Culture	2.34

3.3.6 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis requires data that is suitable for the study. To test the suitability of the data the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test were performed. To extract meaningful data successfully, data should have the following properties: low sphericity and an adequate sample.

3.3.6.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test

The sample adequacy was calculated by using the KMO model. A sample adequacy value higher than 0.700 is suitable for factor analysis. Also, Bartlett's test for sphericity was used to determine the sphericity of the data. Sphericity of data below 0.05 is needed for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure should be greater than .70 and is inadequate if less than .50. The KMO test tells us whether or not enough items are predicted by each factor. The Bartlett test should be significant (i.e., a significance value of less than .05); this means that the variables are correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis as in this case (IBM, 2019).

Table 10: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.741
	Approx. Chi-Square	3767.726
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	1225
	Sig.	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score exceeds the 0.700 requirements with a score of 0.741. The Bartlett's test score is 0.000 and is lower than 0.05. This means that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

3.3.6.2 Total Variance Explained

The Total Variance Explained table shows how the variance is divided among the 13 possible factors. All the factors have eigenvalues (a measure of explained variance) greater than one, which is a common criterion for a factor to be useful. When the eigenvalue is less than one the factor explains less information than a single item would have explained. Factors are retained based on their eigenvalues being higher than one. The percentage of variance explained should, ideally, not be less than 60%; this study explains a cumulative variance of 72,70%. (See Table 12 for the variance and cumulative variance explained per factor).

3.3.6.3 Point of inflection

The Point of Inflection is a secondary measure to determine how many factors to retain from the rotated factor matrix. It graphically explains factor variances and is used to measure the discrepancy between the factors. The Point of Inflection is shown in Figure 10 below.

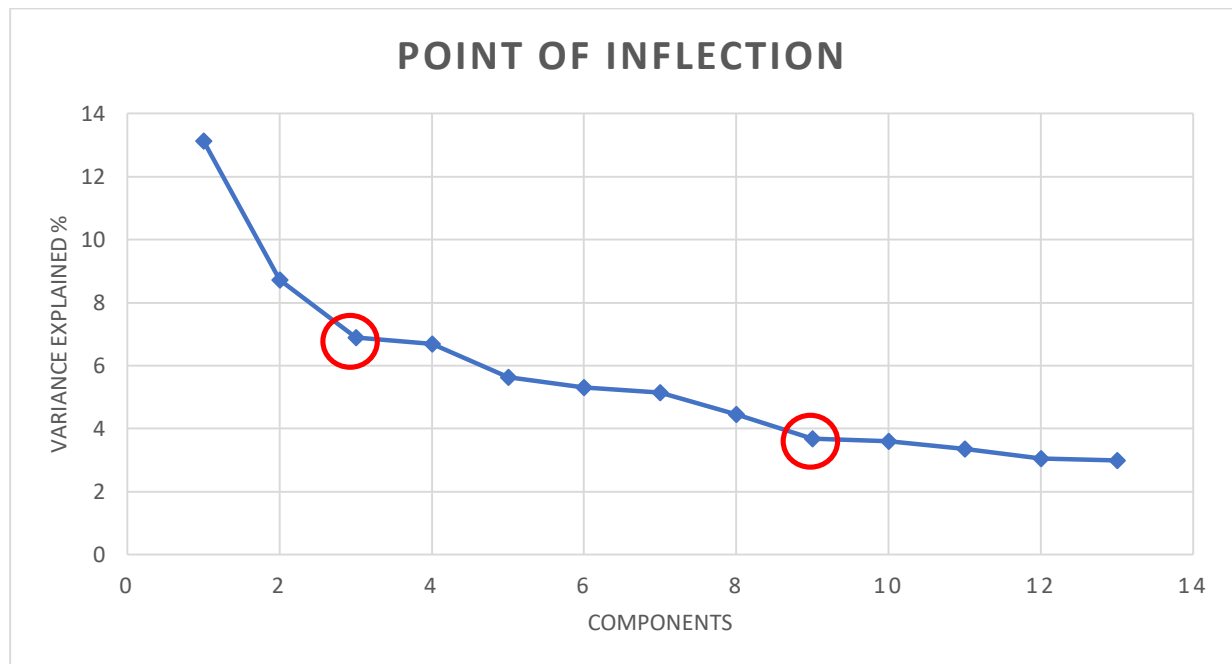


Figure 11: Point of inflection

From the figure it is clear that two points of inflection exist; Factors 3 and 9. However, the cumulative variance explained after these factors (28.76% and 59.68%, respectively) suggest that these points of inflection should not be applied because in an exploratory study the researcher aims to clarify and explain as much as possible about the variables; this is done by retaining the maximum cumulative variance.

3.3.6.4 Rotated factor matrix

The rotated factor matrix shows the factor loadings and also which criteria loaded onto which of the 13 factors. The minimum factors loading is 0.40, and criteria with factor loadings below 0.40, were discarded from the analysis. (See table 12 below)

Table 11: Rotated factor matrix, variance explained and reliability of coefficients

Measuring criteria	Factors												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
B3.2	.842												
B3.1	.841												
B3.3:	.820												
B1.1:	.811												
B1.2	.727												
B1.5	.638												
B1.3	.627												
B4.3	.521												
B3.4	.504												
B5.1:	.462												
B4.4:		.775											
B5.2		.763											
B5.4		.656											
B4.2:		.618											
B6.2:		.533											
B9.1		.481											
B7.3:		.473											
B4.1:		.467											
B10.1:													
B12.4			.859										
B12.2:			.847										
B12.1:			.786										
B12.3:			.781										

B10.3	.743								
B10.2:	.720								
B10.4:	.702								
B11.3	.538								
B7.5:	.529								
B8.4:		.816							
B8.1:		.679							
B7.1:		.591							
B2.2:			.786						
B2.1			.727						
B2.3:			.718						
B6.4:			.436						
B9.2:				.734					
B8.5:				.661					
B2.5:				.643					
B9.3:				.574					
B8.2:					.786				
B7.2:]					.722				
B8.3:					.664				
B6.3:						.660			
B6.1:						.643			
B5.3:							.818		

B11.2:												.645		
B11.1:												.635		
B1.4:													.761	
B2.4:														-.618
Variance explained %	13.14	8.73	6.89	6.70	5.63	5.41	5.13	5.56	3.68	3.61	3.35	3.06	2.99	
Cumulative variance explained %	13.14	21.88	28.76	35.50	41.08	46.39	51.53	55.99	59.68	63.29	66.40	69.70	72.70	
Cronbach Alpha	0.896	0.868	0.876	0.775	0.721	0.721	0.735	0.617	0.554	***	0.628	***	***	

The items cluster into these 13 factors. These factors are discussed below.

Factor 1: Brand quality

Factor 1 has a total of 10 statements: statement numbers: B3.2, B3.1, B3.3, B1.1, B1.2, B1.5, B1.3, B4.3, B3.4 and B5.1.

All the statements in factor 1 deals with Brand Quality. Statements B3.2, B3.1, B3.3, B1.1 and B1.2 all have a factor loading of more than .700 and it can be suggested that people that make use of online booking platforms regard these statements as significant. Factor 1 explains a variance of 13.143.

Factor 2: Brand relationship

Factor 2 has eight statements: statement numbers: B4.4, B5.2, B5.4, B4.2, B6.2, B9.1, B7.3 and B4.1.(b10.1). All the statements in Factor 2 deal with the Brand relationship. Statements B4.4 and B5.2 have factor loading of more than 0.700, while all remaining statements in factor 2 have factor loadings of more than the 0.400 cut-off point. Factor 2 explains a variance of 8.731.

Factor 3: Culture

Factor 3 has four statements namely: B12.4, B12.2, B12.1 and B12.3 and deals with people's cultural influences on a brand. All four statements have a factor loading of more than 0.700 which means customers of online bookings platforms suggest it is significant. Factor 3 explains a variance of 6.885.

Factor 4: Improvement

Factor 4 has five statements and these statements deal with Improvements or Innovating. Only three of the five statements, namely: B10.3, B10.2 and B10.4 have a factor loading of more than 0.700. Factor 4 explains a variance of 6.690.

Factor 5: Commitment

Factor 5 has only three statements namely: B8.4, B8.1 and B7.1. Factor 5 deals with Commitment. Only one of the statements has a factor loading of more than 0.700, and it is B8.4. Factor 5 explains a variance of 5.632.

Factor 6: Switching cost/risk

Factor 6 has four statements namely: B2.2, B2.1, B2.3 and B6.4. The statements in factor 6 deals with the risk/cost of switching brands. Statement B2.2, B2.1, B2.3 has a factor loading of more than 0.700 but statement B6.4 has a factor loading of just above the cut-off at 0.436 which relates to customers of online booking platforms who is less sensitive to statement B6.4. Factor 6 explains a variance of 5.312.

Factor 7: Loyalty

Factor 7 has four statements namely: B9.2, B8.5, B2.5 and B9.3. Factor 7 deals with the loyalty of the customers that use online booking platforms. Only statement B9.2 has a factor loading of more than 0.700. Statement B9.2 indicates that the online booking platform customers use makes a difference in their lives. Factor 7 explains a variance of 5.142.

Factor 8: Flexible

Factor 8 has three statements namely: B8.2, B7.2 and B8.3. Factor 8 deals with how flexible the user is by using different online booking platforms. Only statement B8.3 is just under 0.700 with 0.664 and statements B8.2 and B7.2 are above 0.700. Factor 8 explains a variance of 4.462.

Factor 9: Involvement

Factor 9 has only two statements, namely: B6.3 and B6.1 and both of the statements are under 0.700 which relates to customers of online booking platforms are less sensitive for statement B6.3 and B6.6. Factor 9 explains a variance of 3.680.

Factor 10: Value

Factor 10 has only one statement namely: B5.3 and deals with the value for money customers receive. The factor loading for B5.3 is very high. The respondents have indicated that the value for money is very important. Factor 10 explains a variance of 3.610.

Factor 11: Curiousness

Factor 11 has two statements namely: B11.2 and 11.1 and deals with how curious customers are. Statement B11.2 and B11.1 indicate that people will test new online booking platforms when they become available. Factor 11 explains a variance of 3.352.

Factor 12: Dissatisfied

Factor 12 consists of only one statement namely: B1.4, and deals with when a customer is dissatisfied. The factors could not be omitted because of the strong factor loading on the statement; Statement B1.4 has a factor loading of 0.761. The statement refers to dissatisfied customers who will not repeat to book their accommodation using the same online booking platform. Factor 12 explains a variance of 3.057.

Factor 13: Economic conditions

Factor 13 also consists of just one statement namely: B2.4 and has a negative factor loading of -0.618. This statement strongly deals with economic conditions and it indicates that people are not affected by the prevailing economic conditions when it comes to deciding which booking online booking platform to use.

3.4 INTEGRATED MODEL TO MEASURE BRAND LOYALTY IN THE ONLINE BOOKING PLATFORM INDUSTRY

In this study, a new model was developed to measure brand loyalty in specifically the online booking platform industry. The bookings made by respondents at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve were used as a case-study approach. The model was developed in three stages.

- In the **first stage**, brand loyalty antecedents were obtained through the research study done by Moolla and Bisschoff. These antecedents were tested in a wide array of other industries and found to be applicable.
- In the **second stage**, these brand loyalty criteria were classified into 12 brand loyalty antecedents namely: Customer satisfaction, Switching cost, Brand trust, Repeated purchases, Perceived value, Involvement, Commitment, Repeat purchases, Brand affect, Brand relevance, Brand performance and Culture.
- In the **third and final stage** the model has subjected the measuring criteria to exploratory factor analysis to identify the 13 variables of brand loyalty namely:

Involvement, Value, Curiousness, Dissatisfied, Economic condition, Brand quality, Brand relationship, Culture, Improvement, Commitment, Switching cost/risk, Loyalty and Flexibility. The integrated model can be seen in the figure below

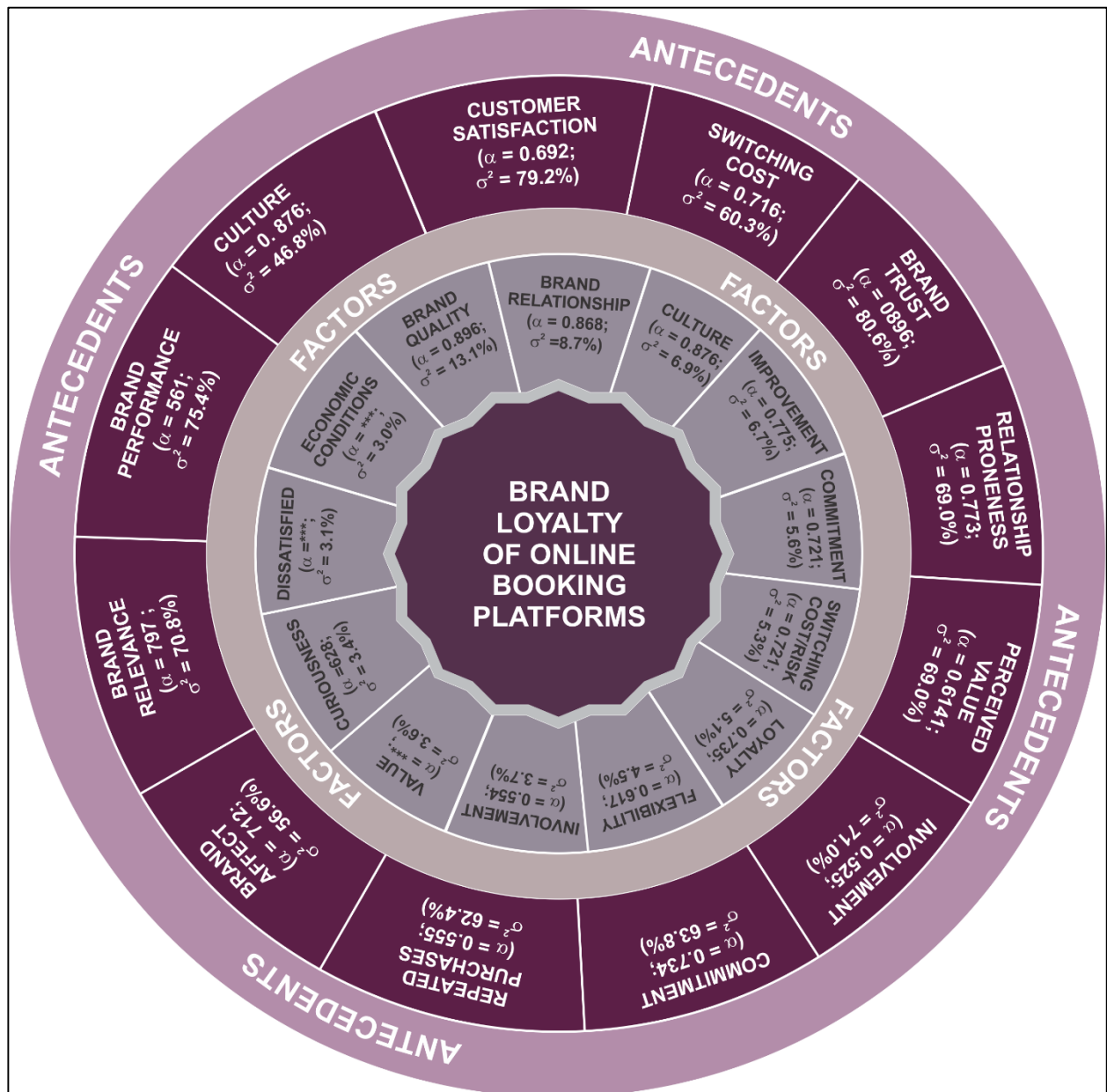


Figure 12: Integrated model to measure brand loyalty in the online booking platform industry

From the above model, it is evident that all 12 the original antecedents (as identified by Moolla and Bisschoff) are important in measuring the brand loyalty of online booking platforms. The model also shows the relative importance of each of the antecedents in percentage format, and it is evident that *Brand Trust* (80.6%) and *Customer satisfaction* (79.2%) are the two most important antecedents in booking platform loyalty. *Culture* is

the least important antecedent in online booking platforms (46.8%). Regarding the factors, the model shows that *Brand quality* and *Brand relationship* are the most important latent variables (explaining a variance of 13.1% and 8.7%, respectively). *Economic conditions* represent the least important latent variable (3.0%).

This model presents a practical tool that can be used by researchers, marketers and also management to measure brand loyalty in the online booking platform industry. Measuring represents the first step towards managing brand loyalty, and with the increase in the number of booking platforms and also their differentiating competitive thrusts, active management of brand loyalty can ensure sustainable business from loyal online customers.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the empirical study to evaluate the brand loyalty in the online bookings industry at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. The study population consisted of 131 respondents. This chapter discussed the statistical techniques applied. The reliability of the data was determined by Cronbach alpha coefficient. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was used to test the sample adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity was used to validate the questionnaire. Further inferential and descriptive statistics were conducted to measure the mean and standard deviation of the different brand loyalty antecedents.

Additionally, the questionnaire was validated by factor analysis, the brand loyalty antecedents were measured, and by using exploratory factor analysis, 13 factors were extracted that do account for brand loyalty. These factors are *Brand quality*, *Brand relationship*, *culture*, *Improvement*, *Commitment*, *Switching cost/risk*, *Loyalty*, *Flexibility*, *Involvement*, *Value*, *Curiousness*, *Dissatisfaction* and *Economic conditions*.

The final chapter concludes the study by providing conclusions, recommendations and areas for future research of the study.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the final chapter of the study. It discusses the research findings and draws conclusions from the literature study in chapter two as well as the empirical study outlined in chapter three. Suggestions and recommendations will be derived from the conclusions made in this chapter. Possible areas for future studies are also postulated in this chapter.

The guests that make bookings for accommodation in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve use online booking systems such as:

- In-house online booking systems of Mabalingwe Nature Reserve (for example *Timeshare*)
- Online booking systems that the rental agencies make use of (for example *Mabalingwe Game Reserve VEA Transfers*)
- Open online booking systems (such as *Booking.com*, *Lekkeslaap*, *SafariNow* or *Agoda*).

Mabalingwe Nature Reserve includes several kinds of timeshare properties as well as privately owned properties. When owners of privately-owned houses rent out their houses in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve, they either advertise their houses on social media or at travel agencies in Limpopo or they make use of booking platforms like Lekkeslaap, Booking.com, SafariNow, Agoda, AirBnB and more. If owners do not advertise their houses, the guests will not be able to locate it on the electronic booking platforms, and therefore no booking can be made. Listing accommodation on the booking platforms is, therefore, essential for owners. Privately owned houses in Mabalingwe are advertised on either one online booking system or on multiple online booking systems; therefore, the owner or manager of that house is responsible to manage the bookings on the different platforms. Some owners make use of a channel manager like Nightsbridge to assist with the integration of the different booking systems. A channel manager is a service provider that links the property management system (PMS) that the owner uses to manage their rooms and prices, with online platforms like Booking.com. This allows the owner to automatically update their accommodation rates, availability and reservations on several platforms all at once (Booking.com, 2019). Therefore, it is evident that owners and property managers should determine who their target market is and list their properties

accordingly to reach those intended to target. Owners and property managers can list their properties on multiple booking platforms.

The conclusions and recommendations in this chapter focus on the following factors:

- Validity and reliability of the data
- Analysis of the 12 brand loyalty antecedents
- Possible future research studies

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations can be made regarding the validity of the questionnaire and the reliability of the data.

4.2.1 Conclusions 1 & 2

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were proven by Moolla and Bisschoff (2012b:105) as an acceptable measure to establish that the data was suitable for factor analysis and were therefore also employed in this study. The KMO values for the twelve brand loyalty antecedents ranged between 0.826 and 0.485. *Perceived value*, *Repeated purchases*, *Brand performance* and *Involvement* was the only antecedents that scored less than 0.6 but higher than 0.5 except *Involvement* which scored the lowest with 0.485. ***It is, therefore, concluded that the sample population was fair to satisfactory to use for analysis, This conclusion is substantiated by the theoretical background of Moolla and Bisschoff (2012b:105) that the KMO value must be greater than 0.6, preferably more than 0.70 (Field, 2009:668) to have an adequate sample size which was suitable to represent the population of guests making online bookings.***

Bartlett's tests revealed that, in all cases, suitable significance exist ($p \leq 0.05$). ***It is therefore concluded that suitable sphericity exists and that the data could be used for multivariate analysis. This is substantiated by fact that the Bartlett's test is blow the required score of 0.05, indicating that the data are not constrained by excessive internal correlations. This supports the use of exploratory factor analysis (Field, 2009:669).***

4.2.2 Conclusion 3, 4 and 5

Factor analysis was used to determine if the measuring criteria actually measure the respective antecedents. According Pett et al. (2003), in support of Thompson (2004), state that the main objectives for factor analysis are to reduce the number of variables or factors, assess if multicollinearity exists among variable or factors, determine the construct validity of the unidimensional constructs. The criteria all did (with the exception of one criterion that was discarded) measure their respective antecedent and returned acceptable variances explained for each of the antecedents. ***It is therefore concluded that statistically, the questionnaire is a valid questionnaire to measure brand loyalty of online booking platforms.***

Given the case study application setting of the questionnaire, ***it is also concluded that the questionnaire is valid for the specific resort and that those to operationalise it into a wider audience should bear this limitation in mind.***

Exploratory factor analysis also identified 13 factors explaining a cumulative variance of %. These latent variables simplified the data set significantly. ***It is concluded that the factors provide a structured framework for management to manage their online brand loyalty.***

4.2.3 Conclusion 6

From the analysis and culmination of results, a new model was developed to measure brand loyalty of online booking platforms. ***It is concluded that managers, academia and other interesting parties could apply the model to measure and manage brand loyalty of online booking platforms in practice (bearing Conclusion 4 in mind).***

A total of six online booking platforms was identified as booking platforms relevant to Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. They are:

1. Lekkeslaap
2. Booking.com
3. Safarinow
4. AirBnB

5. Trivago
6. HolidayClub

According to the inferential statistics (the mean, frequency and percentage statistics were used), it is evident that Lekkeslaap and Booking.com are the two market leaders. Lekkeslaap is a South African Booking platform while Booking.com is an international one; both platforms seem to be equally successful in generating online bookings at Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. It is evident that all 12 the original antecedents in the brand loyalty model used, are important in measuring the brand loyalty of online booking platforms. The model also shows the relative importance of each of the antecedents in percentage format, and it is evident that *Brand Trust* (80.6%) and *Customer satisfaction* (79.2%) are the two most important antecedents in booking platform loyalty. *Culture* is the least important antecedent in online booking platforms (46.8%). Regarding the factors, the model shows that *Brand quality* and *Brand relationship* are the most important latent variables (explaining a variance of 13.1% and 8.7%, respectively). *Economic conditions* represent the least important latent variable (3.0%).

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The numbers of the recommendations correspond to those of the conclusions. This means that Recommendation 1 is based on Conclusion 1.

4.3.1 Recommendations 1 and 2

Based on the success of the Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin test for sample adequacy and Bartlett's tests, ***it is recommended that future researchers also use these statistical tests to determine that the data is suitable for statistical analysis.***

It is also recommended that these researchers employ professional statistical software to analyse the data.

4.3.2 Recommendation 3, 4 and 5

Factor analysis proved to successfully validate measuring criteria for the respective antecedents. The statistical principle is sound and can be applied in similar and also other application settings. ***It is, therefore, recommended that future researchers also validate their questionnaires using this methodology.***

Regarding a limited application setting such as a case study approach that was used in this study, ***it is recommended that future researchers take care not to operationalise the model without caution.***

Regarding the management of Mabalingwe Nature Reserve, ***it is recommended that the results from this study be scrutinised and that managerial interventions are developed to actively manage the loyalty of their guests on the booking platforms.***

It is further ***recommended that they should heed the popularity of the booking platforms and make an effort to specifically manage their offerings at the more popular booking platforms.***

Regarding the latent variables which were identified by the factor analysis, ***it is recommended that managerial interventions should focus on the factors explaining the most variance first. In this way, a better return on managerial interventions will realise.***

4.3.3 Recommendation 6

Regarding the final model, it is recommended that ***managers, academia and other interesting parties apply the model to measure and manage brand loyalty of online booking platforms in practice.***

Customers are loyal to two main online booking platform brands (Booking.com and Lekkeslaap). Although these customers are loyal to the online booking platforms for a number of reasons, the two main reasons are *Brand trust* and *Customer satisfaction*. Other online booking platforms can learn from this finding and focus specifically on these two brand loyalty antecedents to improve their brand loyalty by:

- Meeting the customers' needs and expectations that can be determined using an acknowledged customer service model (Buttle, 2004),
- Providing quality product or services,
- Open communication channels between online booking platforms and customers, and to

- Always deliver on what was promised.

Continuous improvement of service quality is needed to enhance brand loyalty, because of the rapid changes in customers' demands and expectations. Service quality is multi-faceted, and the process to constantly evaluate and improve service quality to keep up the demands of the customers requires active managerial interference. Typically, these would include constant evaluation and re-evaluation of:

1. Recognising the quality problem.
2. Determining the target group's expectations (Chand, 2019).
3. Developing the necessary service products (Haliva, 2016).
4. Creating an 'empathy and trust' culture.
5. Finding customer-oriented measures to improve 'quality'.
6. Improving physical equipment.
7. Making the service easy to understand (Ankur, 2018).
8. Encouraging 'word-of-mouth' (WOM) about quality with staff and users.
9. Being reliable.
10. Being open for feedback, to be able to know where to improve (Sarlas, 2017).

4.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The following future research studies may be worthy of pursuit:

- Expansion of the study to include other nature reserves with different activities and features that attract a different type of tourist that visit the resorts for various reasons. People booking accommodation for different travel reasons might have different opinions regarding brand loyalty.
- A replication of this study but with a larger sample containing respondents from more nature reserves similar to Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. This would confirm and refine the findings of this study and also operationalise the study to a wider population.
- This study only focused on booking platforms used to make booking reservations in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. Future studies can expand into a different segment in the hospitality industry, for example, the camping segment, luxury hotel segment, or even the wedding segment only to name a few. This would contribute

greatly to better understand brand loyalty of bookings made electronically for the South African leisure industry.

4.5 SUMMARY

The primary research objective of this study was to measure the brand loyalty of customers towards online booking platforms in Mabalingwe Nature Reserve. In order to achieve the primary research objective a model was used that had been developed by Moolla and Bisschoff (2012:82) as a basis and the questionnaire was adapted to suit the online booking platform industry. In order to apply the Moolla and Bisschoff model, it was statistically validated for use in measuring brand loyalty of online booking platforms, the reliability of the data determined and the sample adequacy ensured.

Chapter one identified the primary as well as the secondary research objectives of this study. It also addressed the need to measure the brand loyalty of customers in the online booking platform industry in South Africa. Chapter one further provides an outlined structure of the study and describes the statistical methodology executed.

Chapter two provided a theoretical analysis of brand and brand loyalty and the benefits of both. It also presents a literature study on brand, brand loyalty and online booking platforms. In chapter two the Moolla and Bisschoff model as well as the identified 12 brand loyalty antecedents was discussed in detail.

Chapter three presents the research methodology followed as well as the data analysis and the empirical results of the study. The empirical results focus on the validity of the questionnaire, the sample adequacy and the reliability of the data and results.

Chapter four represents the final chapter of this study and provides conclusions regarding the results acquired within this study. A recommendation is made on all conclusions as well as suggestions for future research studies in the online booking platform industry.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Proposed questionnaire

Questionnaire number:

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Brand loyalty survey toward online booking systems

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Wehmeyer Joubert, a MBA student from the School of Business and Governance at the North-West University of Potchefstroom.

Please note the following:

This is an **anonymous study** and your name will not appear on any of the documents the researcher will only give each research participant combine result of this study upon request

- The answers to give will be treated as strictly confidential as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give
- Your participation in the study is very important to me you may however choose not to participate and you can also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences
- We should not take more **than 10 minutes** of your time
- Please note there will be biographical information that will need to be completed but the information will be confidential and anonymous as you do not need to complete your name.

Result of the study will be used for academic purposes only.

The research will have no negative effect on you as mentioned previously it is your perception and it will remain anonymous and confidential at all times.

The demographic data is only for profiling purposes.

Please indicate that

- I agree that my demographic data can be used for profiling purposes and that the other data may be used for loyalty research" ☐
- I do not agree that my data can be used ☐

Screening questions:

1. Did you make use of an online booking system in the last 2 months to make a booking for accommodation?	Yes
	No

If your answer is 'Yes' to the question, please continue to complete the questionnaire.

If your answer is 'No' to the above question, do not complete the rest of the questionnaire.

SECTION A: BIO & GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
(The demographic data is only for profiling purposes)

1. What is your age?

Age Group	
18 – 30	
31 – 40	
41 – 50	
51 – 60	
61 +	

2. How often do you use online booking systems for accommodation?

How often do you use online booking systems?	
At least once a month	
At least once every 2-3 months	
At least once in six months	
At least once a year	
Less than once a year	

3. Who made the booking for your previous accommodation visit?

Who made the booking?	
Self	
3 rd Party (such as company)	

4. What is your reason for booking an accommodation?

Reason for bookings	
Business	
Leisure	
Conference	
Wedding	

5. Please indicate your top 3 online booking systems.

1).....

2).....

3).....

6. Please answer the following questions in regards with booking system loyalty?

6.1 Do you always try to use the same booking system brand?		Yes	No
6.2 Does you preferred online booking system have a customer loyalty program?	I DON'T KNOW	Yes	No
6.3 If answered yes in previous question, Do you make use of the loyalty program		Yes	No

SECTION B: BRAND LOYALTY

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following statements apply to the online booking system that you have used? Please respond to each question by indicating 1 to 5 on the options in the following 5-level Likert scale: 1 [Strongly disagree], 2 [Disagree], 3 [Not sure], 4 [Agree], 5 [Strongly agree].

Section B1: Customer satisfaction

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
7.1	I am very satisfied with the online booking system that I use					
7.2	Distinctive attributes of the booking system I am currently using keep me loyal towards the brand					
7.3	My loyalty towards the booking system increases when I am a satisfied customer					
7.4	I do not book again on the same booking system if I am dissatisfied about the brand					
7.5	I attain pleasure from the booking system I am loyal towards					

Section B2: Switching cost

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
8.1	I do not switch booking system because of the high cost implications					
8.2	I do not switch booking system because of the effort required to reach a level of comfort					
8.3	I avoid switching online booking system due to the risks involved					
8.4	I switch online booking system according to the prevailing economic conditions					
8.5	I prefer not to switch online booking systems as I stand to lose out on the benefits from loyalty programs					

Section B3: Brand Trust

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
9.1	I trust the online booking system I am loyal towards					
9.2	I have confidence in the online booking system that I am loyal to					
9.3	The online booking system I make use of has consistently high quality					
9.4	The reputation of the online booking system is a key factor in me maintaining brand loyalty					

Section B4: Relationship Proneness

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
10.1	I prefer to maintain a long term relationship with the online booking system					
10.2	I maintain a relationship with an online booking system in keeping with my personality					
10.3	I maintain a relationship with an online booking system that focuses and communicates with me					
10.4	I have a passionate and emotional relationship with the online booking system I am loyal to					

Section B5: Perceived Value

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
11.1	My online booking system loyalty is based on service quality and expected performance					
11.2	I have an emotional attachment with the online booking system I am loyal towards					
11.3	Price worthiness is a key influence in my loyalty towards an online booking system					
11.4	The online booking system that I am loyal to enhances my social self-concept					

Section B6: Involvement

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
12.1	Loyalty towards an online booking system increases the more I am involved with it					
12.2	Involvement with an online booking system intensifies my arousal and interest towards that brand					
12.3	I consider other online booking system when my involvement with my online booking system brand diminishes/decreases					
12.4	My choice of an online booking system is influenced by the involvement others have with their brands					

Section B7: Commitment

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
13.1	I have pledged my loyalty to a particular online booking system					
13.2	I book at other online booking systems if my preferred brand is not available					
13.3	I identify with the online booking system and feel as part of the brand community					
13.4	The more I become committed to an online booking system, the more loyal I become					
13.5	I remain committed to an online booking system even through price increases and popularity decreases					

Section B8: Repeat purchases

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
14.1	My loyalty towards an online booking system is purely habitual					
14.2	I do not necessarily book at the same online booking system all the time					
14.3	I always sample new online booking systems as soon as they are available					
14.4	I establish an booking pattern and seldom deviate from it					
14.5	Loyalty programs are reason I repeatedly book at a certain online booking system					

Section B9: Brand affect

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
15.1	I attain a positive emotional response, booking at a certain online booking system					
15.2	The online booking system that I am loyal towards makes a difference in my life					
15.3	I am distressed when I am unable to book at a particular online booking system					

Section B10: Brand relevance

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
16.1	The online booking system that I am loyal towards stands for issues that actually matters					
16.2	The online booking system that I am loyal towards has freshness about them and portray positive significance					
16.3	I know that an online booking system is relevant through the brand messages communicated					
16.4	The online booking system that I am loyal towards are constantly updating and improving so as to stay relevant					

Section B11: Brand Performance

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
17.1	I evaluate an online booking system based on perceived performance					
17.2	I will switch online booking system should a better performing online booking system be available					
17.3	I am loyal only towards the top performing online booking system					

Section B12: Culture

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
NO		1	2	3	4	5
18.1	My choice of online booking system is in keeping with the choice made by other members in my race group					
18.2	My loyalty towards an online booking system is based on the choice of online booking system used by my family .					
18.3	Religion plays a role in my choice and loyalty of online booking system					
18.4	Family used online booking system indirectly assures brand security and trust.					

Thank You

APPENDIX B: EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE



Dynamic Language &
Translation Specialists

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CC No: 1995/017794/23

Thursday, 07 November 2019

To whom it may concern

Re: Confirmation of language edit, typography and technical precision

The MBA dissertation by HW Joubert (27998622), "Measuring the brand loyalty of customers towards online booking platforms" was edited for language, typography and technical precision. The referencing and sources were checked and comply to the author guidelines specified by the targeted journal.

Final, last minute corrections remain the responsibility of the author.

Antoinette Bisschoff

BA Languages (UPE – now NMU); MBA (PU for CHE – now NWU); Translation and Linguistic Studies (NWU)

Officially approved language editor of the NWU since 1998
Member of SA Translators Institute (no. 100181)

Precision ... to the last letter

APPENDIX C: ETHICS CERTIFICATE



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Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)
Tel: 018 299-1427
Email: Bennie.Linde@nwu.ac.za

30 August 2019

Prof C Bisschoff
Per e-mail
Dear Prof Bisschoff

EMS-REC FEEDBACK: 30082019
W Joubert (27998622)(NWU-01320-19-A4)
MBA – Prof C Bisschoff

Your ethics application on, *Measuring the brand loyalty of customers towards online booking platforms*, that served on the EMS-REC meeting of 30 August 2019, refers.

Outcome:

Approved as a minimal risk study. A number **NWU-01320-19-A4** is given for three years of ethics clearance

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Linde'.

Prof Bennie Linde
Chairperson: Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)
Potchefstroom Campus